

EDUQAS COURSE

World Faith

SIKHISM NOTES – BELIEFS

2023

Main areas of study:-

Nature of God

Mool Manter, Creator God, Relationship with Humans, Humai, Naam Japna as one of the 3 Principles, Basics of a Gurdwara, Act of worship – respect to GGS

Oneness of Humanity

Early Guru Nanak story on Equality, Equality in worship, Equality in the Gurdwara – inc langar, Equality in modern times (UK), Purpose of Khalsa Sikhs and importance of 5k's, Differences between Amritdhari/Sehaj/kesh dhari, Role of Guru Amardas (marriage/preachers), Daswandh/charities

Gurmukh

Being Gurmukh and less Manmukh, Khalsa Sikhs, veil of humai, 3 principles, vices and virtues

The Sangat

Gathka, Naam simran/japna, Guru Arjans centre of ethical training, types of sewa, langar as sewa, Nihangs – who/what and sewa, Spirituality of sewa and the sangat, The Khalsa – acts/role/purpose/community, 5k's, Pangat-link to equality

The Afterlife

Salvation and Liberation/ The analogy, The stages, Pre-determinism/ point of good karma, Achieving mukhti – reason for being The Afterlife

NOTE: Most of the concepts/beliefs in this part of the course are inter-changeable and can be used across the different headings, for example the idea of sewa (selfless service) fits in every heading from Nature of God to the Afterlife.

THE NATURE OF GOD

The Mool Mantar (Mantra)

Ek Onkar	There is only one absolute God
Sat Nam	Truth is his name
Karta Purkh	Creator
Nir Bhau	Fearless
Akaal Moorat	Timeless
Ajoni	Unborn/immortal
Saibhang	Self-existent
Gur Prasaad	Realised through the Guru's grace
Jap	Mediate on the name
Aad Such	True in the beginning of time
Jugaad Such	True when the ages began
Hai Bhi Such	True now
Nanak Hosi Bhi Such	Says Nanak God with be true forever

The mool mantar is the BASIC CREED (statement of belief) of the Sikhs. Mool means 'essence' and Mantar means 'sacred speech'.

Main points:-

- These words were placed at the beginning of the Adi Granth (later referred to as the Guru Granth Sahib when the 10th Guru declared it as the last 'living' Guru) by Guru Arjan Dev
- it is believed that Guru Nanak composed the mool mantar
- it is like a summary of beliefs about God because there was such a variety of beliefs prevalent at the time especially in Hinduism
- it explains that God is not an idea of illusion, he is ever-changing, never the same, always evolving
- these beliefs in God are shared by many of the major religions (Islam, Christianity)
- it shows that God is beyond human comprehension
- it shows that God can be known by many names (the Granth Sahib includes a multitude of other names such as Waheguru, naam, Satnam, Ram etc)
- Guru Nanak said "my God is one, truly, my God is one" GGS350
- Guru Granth Sahib says "The universe came into being by Gods will" (GGS1)

- The last five words of the mool mantra were believed to have been added later. The whole verse collectively is usually known as the **Jap Ji**.
- The whole verse explains the nature of God, his skills and characteristics
- God is omnipresent (all pervading/everywhere) and omnipotent (all powerful)
- Recited in all Gurdwara services everytime the Guru Granth Sahib is read
- Said in meditation by individuals in own prayers
- Usually the first 'verse' that is taught to children

“The entire creation came from God, as it pleases him he creates the expanse” GOD AS CREATOR GGS 294

How should Sikhs connect with human life?

- Sikhs can connect with the world by helping others, sharing their skills, and by caring for their environment. (sewa, 3 principles etc)
- GGS states that the purpose of human life is to achieve a blissful state and live in harmony with the world and all that is in it as it is God creation (Sikhs accept that the world came about by evolution but as and when God willed it – Hukam means Gods will).
- Guru Har Rai showed Sikhs how to live in harmony with the environment, he loved parks and gardens and all creatures
- GGS says “Air is the Guru, Water is the Father, and Earth is the Great Mother of all”
- Guru Nanak stated that as humans we create a vision around us that is a reflection of our **inner state** – this means that because we are not living in harmony with others and ourselves this is shown in the way in which we treat the environment and abuse it.
- The Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) started by Guru Har Rai and completed by Guru Arjan is a testament to how the environment can create calmness, peace and harmony, especially the sarovar (water surrounding it).

These examples show we should help others and the environment as everything is interconnected as One. God is One, and oneness of the planet should be appreciated. There is only One human race. God has given humans free-will , but this must be used responsibly.

Nirgun and Sargun

[NIRGUN = without qualities or attributes, not incarnated;

SARGUN = with highest attributes, supreme form (but not human)

In Sikhism the description of Waheguru (God) is so unique that for many it goes beyond understanding. Many times what may appear as an apparent contradiction is only due to lack of knowledge and correct understanding of GGS teachings. Sikhism holds Waheguru as the absolute power, pure truth, the only creator, without fear, without hatred, beyond time and limitless. He is everywhere and nothing is without Him. He is within His creation and beyond. To many it seems

impossible to understand that Waheguru can be Nirgun (without attributes) and Sargun (with all attributes) at the same time.

ONENESS OF HUMANITY

Oneness of humanity is evident in the Mool Manter too – by expressing the idea of one God (Ik Onkar) creating everything (Akal Purkh) one can infer God created humanity to be equal as no differences between humans are mentioned.

Equality of human beings GGS 349: “Recognise the Lords light within all and do not consider social class and status , there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter”

What is Sri Guru Granth Sahib?

- It is a religious scripture – a holy text inspired by God, written down by many
- A compilation of spiritual/mystical hymns writtin by many Bhagats (saints) and poets from various faiths and backgrounds who lived between the 12th and 17th century.
- This scripture is also called Adi Granth (Adi means original & Granth means scripture) to differentiate it from another Scripture written by the tenth Sikh Guru (Dasam Granth)
- Guru Gobind Singhs work is called the **Dasam Granth** (dasam meaning tenth)
- Bhai Mani Singh put the Dasam Granth together 26 years after Guru Gobinds Singhs death
- The Dasam Granth is treated with respect but not as highly as the Guru Granth Sahib
- It is used in many Gurdwaras as additional meditation material
- The opening verse of the Dasam Granth is called jap Sahib *“God has no colour/caste mark of symbol/shape or dress/ God is self existent ... no one can measure Gods might”*
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- The GGS was originally compiled and completed by the fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev in 1604.
- The most unique feature of this scripture is that it contains a **universal message** of spiritual living for the whole human race.
- The volume was written by **Bhai Gurdas** under the direction of Guru Arjan Dev and included all the previous 4 Gurus teachings - all written in separate tents by the two!
- Guru Arjan Dev installed the original Holy Book (still known as the Adi Granth at the time) in 1604 at Harmandir Sahib, at Amritsar.
- A famous Sikh follower by the name Baba Budha was appointed as the first Granthi or keeper of the scripture.
- Guru Gobind nearing death gave direction to his followers to consider the scripture as the **eternal Guru.**
- Hence the scripture’s full name is **Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji** (Guru means teacher or guide, Granth means a holy book, whereas Sri & Sahib are respectful adjectives
- Some famous writers include Farid and Kabir (eminent Muslims) and others such as Ravidas and Namdev (Hindu poets)
- Guru Granth Sahib contains 5894 hymns., on 1430 pages originally written Arabic, Sanskrit, Persian, Punjabi, Hindi and other languages – all now translated into PUNJABI
- The main theme of Guru Granth Sahib is:
 - a. Search of God
 - b. Means to communicate with God

- c. Religious commandments on a spiritual level
- d. Sikh theology – morals/spirituality



- The GGS lays down **moral and ethical** rules for the development of the soul
- Reading the **rhythmic poetry** of Guru Granth is considered by some as healing in itself.
- Its **chant** is frequently prescribed to patients for relief of their symptoms and to reduce/cope with illnesses.
- The hymns of the Guru Granth **show imagery** taken from everyday life to simplify subtle thoughts and profound concepts.
- The Gurus were keen lovers of **nature** and as such, have written glowing descriptions of panoramic environmental beauty, to show **love** for the One Creator.
- A description of God is given in the very opening sentence of Guru Granth Sahib, which is called Mool-Mantar (basic creed). There is One God, He is the **Eternal Truth**, the Creator, Without Fear, Hate or Enmity, All-Pervading & Everlasting Divine Spirit, Self-Existent, and He is realized by Guru's Grace.
- We are guided to live a family life and make a **truthful living** and **share** the earning with the less fortunate.
- Hymns tell us that the following human attributes take us away from the path of spirituality: Anger, arrogance, self-righteousness, hate/animosity, bigotry, apathy/unconcern for others, being punitive, greed, attachment with worldly goods or beings, lust and falsehood/corruption.
- Hymns give us a **direction** not to treat women as inferior and to shed barriers that divide human race, such as racism and the caste system.
- The Sikh philosophy as embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib is chiefly a **philosophy** of action, deed and consequence.
- The emphasis is on shared **communal experience – the Sangat**
- The extinction of the **ego** (also known as MAYA) or self is the corner-stone of Sikhism. .

WAYS IN WHICH THE GGS IS USED IN PUBLIC WORSHIP

- treated with care and respect in the Diwan hall
- Rumallas, chanani and other covering regularly changed
- The CHAURI is waved over as symbolism of respect, clearing the air and kingly status of the GGS
- Everyone bows down to the GGS on entering
- Everyone partakes in karah prashad that has been blessed by the GGS
- Everyone has langar blessed in the presence of the GGS
- All should maintain silence when listening to the GGS
- All major rites of passage in life are celebrated using the GGS
- To show respect one must not turn their back on the GGS deliberately
- To show respect one should not point their feet in the direction of the GGS
- It is an HONOUR to have the GGS brought to your home for events
- Everyday the GGS is put on the DIAS (Manji) early morning

Every evening following the evening prayer (Rehraas) and nighttime prayer (Kirtan Sohila) the GGS is taken with great pomp and music to its 'bedroom' the SACH KHAND

GURU AMARDAS (1479-1574)

- Guru Amardas was quite old when he took over the Guruship in 1552 at the age of 73. He led a simple and devotional life, and his love for God's people attracted many Hindus and Muslims to join his fellowship.
- Guru Amardas's major contribution to Sikhism was the establishment of twenty-two MANJEES, which were centres of religious learning and worship for his ever increasing followers.
- Eight of the twenty-two Manjees established were in the care of women. This was, probably, the first time in the history of world religions that women had been very visibly given the same status as men for preaching religion.
- He made sure the LANGAR (free kitchen) originally started by Guru Nanak and Guru Angad, became an established institution, and indeed, a permanent part of Sikh congregational worship. Every visitor, irrespective of caste, creed or status, was invited to share food sitting on the same floor, before he could see the Guru.
- Guru Amar Das also led a protest against the practice of SATTI (burning alive of a widow with her dead husband). He called it a social evil and prohibited his followers from participating in this inhuman and cruel act, instead he encouraged the re-marriage of widows among Sikh families.
- The use of alcohol and wine was another social vice he preached against and told his Sikhs to stop taking intoxicants of any kind.
- Guru Amar introduced simple ceremonies for birth/marriage and death.
- Guru Amar promoted the idea of EQUALITY among all – especially women.

GURU GOBIND SINGH (1666 – 1708)

"The Khalsa is my own form;

I manifest myself through the Khalsa.

So long as the Khalsa remain distinct;

I bestow all glory on them."

Guru Gobind Singh

- Guru Gobind was born in December 1666, Gobind Rai was only about nine years old when he became the spiritual leader of the Sikh community (his father Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred in Delhi).
Guru Gobind wanted to change the shape and psyche of the Sikh community for ever.
- Like Guru Nanak, two hundred years before him, Guru Gobind Rai was pained to find that the tyranny and oppression, which had prevailed in the country, was not only political but also religious.
- The Muslim rulers and their high officials were treating the ordinary people as vermin without and soul or strength.
- On the day of Vaisakhi (harvest festival) day he called a large meeting to which Sikhs from all parts of the country were invited.
- This was the day which decided that the Sikh followers were sufficiently mature for a momentous step forward into full nationhood and brotherhood.
- The title 'Khalsa' was formally adopted as if a new nation was born.

- Henceforth, the Sikhs were formally initiated into a system of belief where keeping unshorn hair and a turban with certain other articles of faith was the order, where prejudice and privilege had no place, where caste and class had no value, where equality and justice was the rule, and where service and sacrifice was the duty. (5K's)
- The Guru also formed the name SINGH (lion) for males, and KAUR (princess) for females to break away from the old system whereby one surname use to give away which caste or occupation you were part of.
- This formalisation of identity, name and discipline added to the self-respect and dignity of the Sikhs with a complete change in their psyche.
- With the establishment of the Khalsa Panth came the wrath of Emperor Aurangzeb, peace did not last long.
- On 22nd December 1705 both of the Guru's older sons were slain with their escorts as they made a gallant attempt to break through an enemy siege.
- The Guru's two younger sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, aged 7 and 9, were also captured by the Mughals and asked to accept Islam, they refused. They were bricked alive to their death.
- On 7th October 1708 the Guru was stabbed while asleep.
- The Guru Gobind Singh's greatest achievement was the formal establishment of the **Khalsa Panth** and the associated initiation ceremony called Amrit Sanskar and the 5k's, he also declared the ordination of Adi Granth to the status of GURU GRANTH SHAIB, thereby rejecting any claims of Guruship by any other living person among the Sikhs, forever.

FIVE K'S

SIKHS COULD BE CATEGORISED AS:-

- ♦ Sahajdhari (no outward signs, or possibly a few such as the kara)
- ♦ Keshdhari (Long hair kept and males wear the turban)
- ♦ Amritdhari (a Sikh who has taken baptism (Amrit) and **wears all of the 5Ks**)

KESH

- ♦ Long unshorn hair. The keeping of hair in its natural state is regarded as living in harmony with the will of God.
- ♦ An outward commitment.
- ♦ Cherished symbol handed down by Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

KANGA

- ♦ Small comb worn in a Sikh's hair.
- ♦ Represents the importance of discipline and is used to keep the hair clean and untangled.
- ♦ Promotes orderliness and spiritual discipline

KARA

- ♦ Steel bracelet usually worn on the right hand, but not always.
- ♦ A symbolic reminder of the commitment of a Sikh to God.
- ♦ Signifies allegiance to the Khalsa
- ♦ Circle is also a symbol of restraint – a constant reminder to be good/truthful
- ♦ Symbol of unity/equality

KIRPAN

- 'KIRPA' + 'AAN'. '*Kirpa*' means an act of kindness, a favor; and '*aan*' means honor, respect, self-respect.
- Symbol of courage, dignity and honour

- By wearing a Kirpan a Sikh makes a commitment to stand up for the Truth and against oppression (self-defence/power and freedom)
- The Kirpan is not a dagger as it is not an article of violence or harm
- US, Canadian and British courts have always upheld Sikhs' right to wear the Kirpan as an article of faith
- Sikhs have won all known Kirpan cases that have gone to court in the United States and Canada; some cases have been dismissed by the courts that have recognised it as an article of faith.
- According to the Sikh code of conduct, the *kirpan* is to be worn using a *Gatra* (a strap that enables a kirpan to be suspended near one's waist or tucked inside one's belt). The implication of this explicit requirement is that the Kirpan cannot be worn as a miniaturised symbol, although some people do. To neglect to wear one or more of the Five Ks represents a serious lapse in the Sikh religion, and more so for Amritdhari Sikhs

KACHERA

- Long boxer-like underwear – breeches.
- Represents the commitment of a Sikh to monogamy and sexual restraint.
- Symbolises high moral character - modesty
- Practical in those times/useful.
- Emphasised the importance of cleanliness

Outward symbols are a sign of:

- Identity (especially for Amritdhari/Khalsa Sikhs)
- belonging
- pride
- being recognised
- standing up for the faith
- standing up against injustice (kirpan)
- discipline (Kesh)
- modesty/sexual restraint (kachera)
- cleanliness
- dedication (kesh, kanga,)
- belief in one God (kara)

QUESTIONS:

i) HOW IMPORTANT ARE THE 5KS TO SIKHS TODAY?

ii) IS IT NECESSARY TO HAVE THE 5KS AS OUTWARD SIGNS?

iii) HOW DO THE 5KS AFFECT THE LIFESTYLES OF SIKHS IN THE UK?

(for iii) need to say that some Sikhs are Amritdhari and wear all of the 5k's, others do not, varying degrees of compliance, but may be working towards doing so in the future. Almost all young Sikhs wear Kara as identity from early age etc).

ROLE AND STATUS OF WOMEN

At the time of the Gurus women were treated as second class citizens and held no positions of power or authority – even in the home her position was second to the men of the house.

Many poorer families practised infanticide (killing of baby girls) as it was uneconomical to bring up a daughter.

Guru Nanak challenged the inferiority of women, he said

*"In a woman man is conceived,
From a woman he is born,
With a woman he is betrothed and married,
With a woman he contracts friendship.
Why denounce her, the one from whom even kings are born ? From a
woman a woman is born,
None may exist without a woman."*

The Gurus gave women equal status to men. They spread the fact that it is through women that men learn discipline, are taught right from wrong and can become better men. Therefore her role is very important. Guru Amar Das condemned the Hindu custom of Sati (where the wife of a man threw herself of her husbands funeral pyre to go with him to the next life).

In Sikhi women are: -

- central to every rite of passage (birth, naming, marriage, Amrit sanskar, other services, and death)
- women can conduct all services in the Gurdwara and in the home
- women are not restricted from worship if they are menstruating as they are in some faiths
- women partake in langar, karah prashad along with everyone else
- women are allowed to remarry and even divorce, woman have the right to fight for access to their children in cases of separation and divorce
- women were appointed as special devotees to spread the word of Sikhi by the Gurus
- women fought in battles in early Sikh history
- women are not barred from any professions
- women can do any type of sewa – taan, mann and dhan
- women can become Khalsa (amritdhari) Sikhs
- Mata Gujri (wife of 9th Guru is an example of a brave Sikh woman who fought in battles)

SEWA

Sewa is service that contributes to the welfare of the local, national and international community.

Can be split into :-

Tan (physical) – helping in the langar, building/maintenance, cleaning

Man (mental) – committee work, education, raising awareness of issues

Dhan (material) – giving money, goods, giving things to charities/helping needy

GGs says :- *“there can be no worship without performing good deeds”*

**SIKH WAY OF LIFE IS SERVICE TO GOD,
TO THE KHALSA PANTH AND TO HUMANITY !**

Sewa gives the Sikh:-

- sense of awareness of others
- empathy with others
- sense of equality and sharing
- common purpose and cause
- better community relations
- spiritual fulfilment
- practical benefits and sense of achievement
- morally uplifting
- focuses the mind on nam japna
- educational - teaches children from a young age to be selfless
- teaches everyone to not expect reward for everyone you do in life
- sewa means to serve and to worship and revere God all in one
- sewa is a DUTY
- through sewa you are serving God
- "he who turns to the Guru finds joy in sewa" Guru Amar Das
- Sewa, such as collecting or contributing to international disaster funds ensures that Sikhs are aware of their responsibilities to humanity

LANGAR

Every Gurdwara has a Langar attached to it where food is served to anyone without charge. When sitting and eating devotees are known as a Pangat. The term Langar is also used for the communal meal served at the Gurdwaras. The food served in the Langar must be simple, so as to prevent wealthy congregations turning it into a feast that shows off their superiority. Although Sikhs are not required to be vegetarian (except Amritdhari's), only vegetarian food is served in the Gurdwaras. This ensures that any visitor to the Gurdwara, whatever the dietary restrictions of their faith, can eat in the Langar. The meal may include chapati, dal (pulses), vegetables and rice pudding. Fish and eggs are counted as meat and excluded. Langar is open to Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike. In the **Rahat Maryada** (this is the Sikh Code of Conduct devised and managed by the Akal Takht in Amritsar) it says that *langar is the laboratory for practising sewa* (service to others).

The meaning of langar

- The Sikh Langar or free kitchen was started by the first Sikh Guru.
- It is designed to uphold the principle of equality between all people of the world regardless of religion, caste, colour, creed, age, gender or social status.
- Langar expresses the ethics of **sharing, community, inclusiveness** and **oneness** of all humankind. "...the Light of God is in all hearts."
- Langar ensured the participation of Sikhs in a task of service for mankind = SEWA
- even Sikh children help in serving food to the people (Pangat)
- Langar also teaches the etiquette of eating in a community situation
- People from all classes of society are welcome at the Gurdwara.
- Food is normally served twice a day, on every day of the year.
- Recent reports say some of the largest Sikh community dining halls in Dehli prepare between 50,000 and 70,000 meals per day.
- the biggest langer in the world is at the Golden Temple serving up to 100,000 meals a day

- All the preparation, the cooking and the washing-up is also done by voluntary helpers, known as Sewadars.

KARAH PRASHAD = also called ‘the great equaliser’

WHAT IS IT AND WHY IS IT GIVEN?

In Sikhism, prashad is a blessed pudding made from equal amounts of semolina, sugar, butter and water, cooked into a thick paste. It is shared from a communal bowl (indicating equality) and used in all services (ordinary services such as japji, kirtan, rehraas – evening prayer) and special occasions such as birth/naming ceremony, wedding, death, remembrance etc). A Granthi will put his Khanda into the bowl of prashad to bless as soon as Ardas (general prayer) has been said.

Significance of prashad:-

- a divine food made from equal portions
- indicates equality of all
- easy for all to consume
- sweet tasting as the word of God is
- signifies that God will feel everyone
- prashad is cooked with devotion
- during cooking process nam japna takes place
- food that has been blessed in the presence of the GGS
- if dropped it should be picked up and eaten if possible or disposed of with respect
- signifies of the importance of a **sangat** sitting together –sharing and enjoying

PRIORITY OF SERVICE TO OTHERS – DASWANDH/WEALTH/POVERTY

- Gurus did not accept the notion of caste and how it affected ones status in life and consequently how rich or poor they were
- Guru Nanak preached Kirt karni and Vand chakna as they felt you should earn your living and if you can't (i.e unable to work), then Vand chakna by others is paramount
- Sewa is there to ensure you share and treat everyone equally
- Sikhs have no issue with working hard and earning money and being successful at what they do
- Sikhs believe you should share your wealth for good causes *“He who works hard and shares honestly for what he eats and shares with others has found the true path” GGS*
- The story of Guru Nanak and the food he was once offered by a rich man and a poor man – milk came from the poor man's food but blood came from the rich man, because the rich man had earned it falsely and by hurting others.
- Sikhs accept that not everyone has the same skills and abilities but they should thank God for their skill and wealth by helping others
- Concept of equality (sewa, langar, gender equality) is important to uphold justice and ensure a better life now and do good karma in this cycle of rebirth
- Daswandh is giving to charity from your wealth no matter how much you have (10% of earnings)
- Sikhs are encouraged to give to charities such as Christian Aid, Oxfam, Comic Relief and for collect for specific disasters)
- Begging and being lazy is unacceptable, everyone can do some sewa in some way

GURMUKH (God-centred)

GURMUKH :

- Sikhs should endeavour to be more Gurmukh
- This means be more like the Guru's
- They should accept the Guru's teachings and live life according to the Guru Granth Sahib Ji
- They must throw off the veil of humai
- A Gurmukh person will eventually achieve spiritual liberation
- They should practise DASWANDH

MANMUKH

- This is the opposite of Gurmukh
- Manmukh is to be more concerned with MAN – material things
- A Manmukh is self-centred and full of humai
- A Manmukh does not follow the teachings of the Gurus
- This person only pays lip-service to the Guru Granth Sahib Ji
- This person hold on to the vices and does not respect God

Ideas of Gurmukh

From GGS verse 125

"The Gurmukhs are celebrated in life and death.

Their lives are not wasted; they realize the Word of the Shabad.

The Gurmukhs are honored in the Court of the Lord.

The Gurmukhs eradicate selfishness and conceit from within.

They save themselves, and save all their families and ancestors as well.

The Gurmukhs redeem their lives. ||3||

The Gurmukhs never suffer bodily pain.

The Gurmukhs have the pain of egotism taken away ..."

GGS Verse 538

"Under Guru's Instructions, hold your mind steady; O my soul, do not let it wander anywhere."

Ideas of Manmukh

From GGS verse 226

"The self-willed manmukh is lured by another man's wife.

The noose is around his neck, and he is entangled in petty conflicts."

Five Vices and Five Virtues

One way to becoming more Gurmukh (besides all the other teachings such as the 3 principles, is to avoid the 5 vices and follow the 5 virtues

The Vices

KRODH = ANGER, rage, wrath and uncontrollable tantrums

Can be controlled by patience and forgiveness.

Guru Arjan said "Do not be angry Live in the world with humility".

KAM = LUST

Lust is a moral sickness (normal sexual activity is acceptable ie in marriage)

Can be overcome by Naam (nam japna)

Guru Arjan said "Oh kam ... your pleasures are illusory and make us unsteady".

LOBH = GREED (including temptation)

Considered a weakness of human personality, foolish and unhealthy view of wealth. Guru

Arjan said "He alone who cherishes the Lords feet is rid of desire".

MOH = WORLDLY ATTACHMENT

Worldly attachment to things is delusional/unreal, it makes people ignorant and narrow-minded. Must become more Gurmukh to get rid of these desires.

GGs says "why involve yourself in pleasures and attachments for naked do we come and go".

HANKAR (AHANKAR) = EXCESSIVE PRIDE

This refers to excessive pride, including too much ego about beauty, possessions, intelligence and power and sense of superiority. To overcome hanker one should serve society (sewa) with humility and compassion

The Virtues

SAT = TRUTH

Live a truthful life. Very important quote is "TRUTH IS HIGH, HIGHER STILL IS TRUTHFUL LIVING" by Guru Nanak

Sat means more than honesty, it means living in tune with nature/environment.

Attachment to maya (wealth) can keep you off the on the truthful path to God. Selfless service (sewa) is essential.

SANTOKH = CONTENTMENT

Must accept our circumstances, achieve calmness of mind, and moderate personal wants and desires.

DAYA = SYMPATHY, COMPASSION AND MERCY#

Very important quality to have, a divine quality, lack of it means lack of spiritual development. "If you have no compassion, the Lords light does not shine on you" GGS 903

NIMRATA = HUMILITY

Should all practice humbleness, humility has to be nurtured, wrong to think you are better than anyone else or more important.

PYARE (PIARE) = LOVE

Must love God for creation and all humanity, God is loving, and when the mind is full of love a person can overlook deficiency. "Sing, listen, and let your mind be full of love" GGS 48

THE SANGAT

Sangat and Saad Sangat essentially mean the same thing – Congregations. The term Saad Sangat is sometimes used to mean a very devout group of Sikhs – all with the same purpose/vision and feelings of spirituality, for example Khalsa Sikhs and Khalsa Sikhs who are also Nihangs. However Sikhs who are non-Khalsa still form the Sangat. This means that anyone can be part of a Sangat when they are in the presence of the GGS. Some Sikhs like to use the term Saad to show a higher level of devotion and commitment to the faith.

CENTRE OF SPIRITUALITY

Sangats (congregations) can be found in all Gurdwaras.

The Golden Temple, Harminder Sahib, in Amritsar India is the Sikh centre of religious devotion

The Golden Temple was finalised by Guru Arjan (5th Guru)

Despite this Guru Arjan said:

“Of all places, the most sublime place, O Nanak, is that heart in which the Name of the Lord abides”.

Concept of a SADH SANGAT (company of devotees) is now used to mean a ‘Centre of Spirituality’.



GURU ARJAN’S ‘CENTRE OF SPIRITUALITY’

- **Sadh Sangat** is a ‘company of devotees’ likeminded and committed, to the same ideals as yourself on the same journey of self-realisation and *ethical training*
- Every Sikh should seek out their own Sadh Sangat on their quest to become Gurmukh
- Guru Arjan said:-
“If you are entangled in emotional attachment and the veil of Maya ... by Chanting the Name of the Lord, sorrow is dispelled. If you wish to erase your sorrows ... renounce humai in the Sadh Sangat ... the supreme person is the one who gives up his egotistical pride in the Company of the Holy”. Ggs 266

In Sikhism Sangats are important for all rites of passage. They play a vital role in witnessing important parts of a persons life, The only thing more important is the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, but next the role of the Sangat is important, especially if an individual is trying to become more Gurmukh and learn about their faith. Sangats witness the following:

BIRTH – Couples will bring in their baby for the naming ceremony, it will be the babys first visit to the Gurdwara, The family of the baby might receive a romalla (as a gift) for their baby and this will be witnessed by the Sangat.

MARRIAGE – the whole laavan ceremony is said with the GGS as the central feature. The couple sit in front of it so they are exposed to the awe/importance and role of the GGS. The vows are taken by walking round the GGS 4 times. The Sangt will witness the vows.

DEATH – The final Ardas prayer is said by all the sangat at the reception following the cremation. All the Sangat will pray for the deceased soul (atma) to re-unite with Waheguru.

FESTIVALS: Such as Diwali (Bandi Chor Divas) celebrating Guru Hargobind's release from prison is remembered by all sangats. Recitals and hymns are sung. The festival of Vaisakhi, the biggest celebration in the Sikh calendar in April, can last a week long and a 3 day reading of the GGS called an Akand Part is read and listened to by the sangat with the help of Granthi's (priests). Musicians, called Ragi's, will get the sangat to join in with many popular prayers and recitals, accompanied by musical instruments.



THE KHALSA PANTH

This group of Sikhs was formed by Guru Gobind Singh (see above for story of the Khalsa and the five beloved ones). In order to become a member of the Khalsa, a person has to

- give up his or her previous religion/ or other faiths
- give up the practice of ritualistic or superstitious behaviours
- give up any caste distinctions

Teachings and purpose of the Khalsa

- 1) To have regards for each other with mutual love and affection. LOVE/UNITY
- 2) To pray together, addressing God by the names assigned to Him in any and every language, with equal affection and regard. PRAY
- 3) To break bread with each other, side by side, regardless of status, caste, belief, or even non-belief. EQUALITY
- 4) To spread righteousness and to collectively and systematically oppose repression or injustice. JUSTICE
- 5) To end the hatred for individuals of different faiths. TOLERANCE
- 6) To show self-confidence and encourage people to stand up for their rights, live a humble but not weak life, and to serve society. SERVICE/SEWA

The Khalsa Code/responsibilities – incumbent on all Sikhs who have undertaken the 'Baptism' initiation ceremony called Amrit Sanskar

- Meditation (Nam Japna and Simran):
- Honest Living (Kirt Karni):
- Sharing With Others (Vand Ke Chhakna)
- Wearing of the 5ks (panj kakke)
- Respecting women ('for they give birth to kings and warriors')
- Refrain from drugs and alcohol (as it intoxicates the mind away from nam japna)
- To not eat meat (Amritdharis Sikhs must not eat meat) Others Sikhs may well do so – but halal meat is forbidden as the Gurus did not feel it appropriate to eat meat that has been ritually slaughtered
- Worshipping the Eternal Lord (Akal Purakh):

- Understanding Gurbani (GGS)
- Appreciating the Sikh Rehat Maryada – the Sikh Code of Conduct
- Working and wishing well for Humanity
- Accepting the Will of God (Hukam)
- Maintaining moral behavior.

NIHANGS

- Nihang is a Persian word meaning crocodile.
- Nihangs were suicide squads of the Mughal army and wore blue uniforms.
- The Sikhs took the name and colour of uniform.
- Nihangs constitute an order of Sikhs who **do not fear death**, they are always **ready for martyrdom**
- They are uninterested in worldly possessions only **SEWA**
- They wear blue/yellow robes and have bare legs from the knee down, and many steel discs on their turbans
- They are **Khalsa** (Amritdari) Sikhs. They are considered a devout Saad Sangat.

They carry spears, swords, daggers and shields and belong to a martial tradition begun by Guru Gobind Singh called GATHKA. During times of persecution the Nihangs defended Sikh shrines and the Sikh way of life. They see their role as an act of worship ie SEWA. They are known for their bravery against all odds, most are baptised. Nowadays they go to festivals, staging displays of horsemanship and martial skills. The annual Hola Mohalla (a festival to showcase military poweress) and Vaisakhi are especially notable for the Nihangs' colourful displays of pageantry.

THE AFTERLIFE

BELIEFS ABOUT DEATH (SAMSARA, KARMA AND MUKHTI)

SAMSARA = ROUND OF REBIRTH

KARMA = ACTION

MUKTI = RELEASE

ATMA/JIVA = SOUL

- Sikhs believe in the TRANSMIGRATION of the SOUL. i.e when you die the soul is born again in another body.
 - THE SOUL NEVER DIES. The **atma** is a part of God. Every person/ living life form is a part of God and will return to God.
 - COMBINATION of good works (karma) and religious devotion will eventually REUNITE you with God – this may not happen for a long time i.e will be REBORN many times before BEING ONE WITH GOD. [8,400,000 times – a figure quoted in The Guru Granth]
 - Do not believe in heaven and hell. But metaphorically heaven is like virtues and hell is like vices
- I.
- Sikhs believe that the true disciple of God has **no desire** to go to heaven – but does not fear hell – if there is one – he is above virtue and sin, therefore above heaven and hell. Anyone, including even saints, will only wish for one thing and that is to remain at the FEET OF GOD.
 - Therefore heaven is not an ideal for Sikhs. Pictures of hell are depicted by some writers in the Granth (taken from pagan/Hindu beliefs at the time).

“There is a stream of fire from which emerge poisonous flames, there is none else there except the self, The waves of the ocean of fire are aflame, And the sinners are being burnt in them” (GGS ung 1026)

KABIR an author in the GGS said *“ Which is the hell? And which is the poor heaven? The saints condemn both. We have nothing to do with any by the grace of our Guru. (GGS 969).*

What is Karma?

- The law of karma states that man is the product of his actions in a past life.
- Man reaps what he sows.
- All causes have an effect (law of causality).
- Every event has a cause and a result.
- Guru Nanak said a person receives the due reward according to the good and the bad that he does in life. (Hence the similarity of the law of **karma** with Hinduism – only Hindu’s also include caste/and duty in their beliefs which affect their position in society and reincarnation).

Big Question?

One of the big questions is that **if God is all powerful and the creator and destroyer of karma, then there appears to be no point in trying to change things in life as a persons future is pre-ordained,**

pre-agreed, already mapped out by God; in other words man does not have the power to change what is already pre-destined and decided by Hukum (the cosmic will of God).

Sikhs believe emphatically that man is **not a helpless puppet**. The belief is that although God as a ruler may control the overall destiny of the individual, he has given man **free-will and reason** to control his own individual actions, decisions and course of life. A good analogy would be the sun and rotation of the earth. The earth revolves round the sun and is influenced by it, but it also has its own revolving motion. God, as the sun, controls the universe and is all powerful and will exert his influence, but ultimately the earth, that is the individual, also revolves, under its influence, but also of its own accord.

Basically Sikhism has modified the theory of Karma, stating that the efforts of the individual are necessary in order to improve his own condition. Man is responsible for himself, so **cannot blame God for his destiny**. He has to think of the present and the future. Essentially karma can be changed by prayer and by the grace of God (**khudrat**).

What is Mukti?

Mukhti is the word for salvation in Sikhism.

Salvation, according to the Semitic religions (i.e Christianity), is where an individual is finally saved from sin through a process on the Day of Judgement. On this day the deeds of each soul on earth will be taken into account and evaluated and then depending on these, he will be dispatched to heaven or hell.

In Hinduism, man can obtain liberation on earth through good deeds, which effectively means he will achieve salvation immediately upon death. However if he has failed to earn liberation, then he will have to be born again according to his caste (varna) and station in life. (Sikhs reject idea of Caste as a concept)

Sikhism subscribes to both of these approaches to varying degrees. Without accepting the doctrine of the Day of Judgement or the Caste system, it accepts the idea of a running balance sheet of good and bad deeds in a persons life. Similar to some Hindu beliefs and the Indian culture during the Guru's times, Sikhism believes in the doctrine of a round of births and rebirths, known as **samsara**.

In Sikhism human life is considered to be final stage in a soul's progress to divinity (mukti). It is the job of every individual to make the most of each opportunity on earth in human form to end the *cycle of transmigration*.

The Sikh has no fear of death. A true devotee actually welcomes death as it is a step closer to be merged with God. Conversely an evil person is likely to dread death, as it will lead to an unending cycle of births and re-births.

In Sikhism the ultimate objective is to break away and release the soul from this rounds of births and re-births (samsara). **Mukhti** is achievable by anyone who strives to achieve it. So the individual has power and control over their lives but they can only achieve 'oneness' with God through devotion to God with a mind free from egoism. The Guru Granth says;- *"No one is saved by mere talk and speech, nor by reading lots of books, the body does not achieve purity without loving devotion to the Lord"* (GGS 59).

God and the individual soul is effectively one and the same thing. The human body has to be sustained and looked after because it is part of Gods creation and the 'vehicle' or 'vessel' of the soul. Sadly, humans tends to regard himself as a separate entity because of egoism and the trappings of a material existence centred around clothes, food, ornaments, comforts and luxuries (Manmukh). Anything to do with the soul and the spirit are neglected, especially in a modern society where these things are highly regarded. This huge wall of egoism shrouded in material existence has to be knocked down so that man can realise his true identity with God by being more Gurmukh. With the help of Gurbani (sacred words) contained within the Guru Granth Sahib man can progress on the *journey* along the spiritual path (the path to liberation!).

FIVE STAGES OF LIBERATION

Sikhs believe that in order to become God-centred (Gurmukh) and follow the path of God, a person needs to become more spiritual and put aside human pleasures/wealth/ego and the five vices and follow the virtues. Only then can they become a Jeevan Mukhti soul (atma) which has found God.

They must concentrate on the FIVE stages of liberation:-

1. Dharam Khand: the realm of righteous **action**

This stage is about doing the right thing on Earth. It includes your duties and responsibilities in life and moral awareness and carrying out the right action in situations as God will judge these alongside all other Karma.

2. Gian Khand: the realm of **knowledge**

This stage is not just intellectual knowledge but knowledge about God, creation, the earth and the awe and wonder of the planet and God being part of ones universe.

3. Saram Khand: the realm of spiritual **endeavour**

This stage is spiritual endeavour. Man must try and throw off any last bit of ego and become truly humble. This requires a lot of discipline as it means that the individual must go deep into their consciousness and destroy egotistical ideas or extreme earthly attachments.

4. Karam Khand: the realm of **grace**

In this realm the individual is with God. The atma has achieved its goal. It is a state of bliss. This stage means that the soul has won over ego. And only if God permits will the next stage be permitted.

5. Sach Khand: the realm of **Truth**

This is the final stage. It is described as the abode of 'the Formless One', sach khand is not a geographical place, but the final state of the evolution of human consciousness. One can only experience it, but not describe it. The atma/jiva is liberated in the presence of God, united with God.

These stages are a spiritual **JOURNEY** in life that show true commitment. These stages are mentioned in JAPJI by Guru Nankak. Guru Nanak laid down these stages as a way of spiritual discipline. The devotee should exercise control over their mind and body, strive sincerely to walk on the spiritual path, use their reason when confronted with problems, fear no one and ceaselessly repeat the Divine 'Name'. Such persons will radiate joy and peace to all people who come near them.

The Gurus and Mukhti

- It is accepted that the soul of each Guru was a liberated soul – free from samsara
- The Guru's had already obtained Mukhti and was at Gods feet.
- They were living in the divine presence of God when they were commanded to resume a human form to preach God's message to humanity.
- Therefore the Guru's differ from other people in the nature of their birth.
- Karma explains the birth of most people because human birth is the consequence of past deeds, but not so with the Gurus.
- When God commanded them to take human form again to bring knowledge and a sense of spirituality back to humanity they were in awe, as described in a poem by Guru Gobind Singh

*“When God gave me the order. I assumed birth in the dark age,
I did not desire to come as my attention was focused on God's feet.
God remonstrated with me and sent me into the world”.*

OTHER IDEAS ON LIFE AFTER DEATH

- UPON DEATH THE SOUL (ATMA) HAS MOVED ON – THE RITES ENSURE THIS
- ALL FAMILY HOPE THE SOUL HAS ACHIEVED **JEEVAN MUKHTI** FOR THEIR LOVED ONE
- ALL FAMILY WILL WEAR WHITE/PALE COLOURS TO REFLECT THE BELIEF IN THE SOUL AND LIBERATION FROM THE ROUNDS OF REBIRTHS (SAMSARA)
- NO REMEMBRANCE MONUMENTS/ROOMS/ARTEFACTS OF PICTURES OF THE DECEASED WILL BE WORSHIPPED THUS ENSURING PASSAGE OF THE SOUL
- ASHES WILL BE SCATTERED ON WATER AGAIN TO SIGNIFY RE-EMERGENCE WITH THE EARTH'S ELEMENTS AND PASSAGE OF THE SOUL – IN THE HOPE OF IT ABSORBING WITH GOD – AND ACHIEVING FINAL LIBERATION !

Funerals : Sikh death rites (which include prayers such as a full Akand parth, reading of GGS, mourning time, possible viewing of the body at the home, reception at a Gurdwara for final services with special prayers such as the KIRTAN SOHILA, Ardas Prayers, repeated reference to the atma, speeches, hukum, karah prashad, and langar) all reflect SIKH BELIEF and the importance of it being a RITE OF PASSAGE that all the community (the Sangat), even if they only knew the deceased vaguely, can be a part of as they are not just attending the services for the deceased alone, but more importantly are there to offer support and comfort to the family of the deceased.

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