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A wide range of other useful resources can be found on the relevant subject pages of our website: www.aqa.org.uk.

Please note that the Practice Questions in this book allow students a genuine attempt at practising exam skills, but they are not intended to replicate examination papers.
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Introduction

This book is written specifically for GCSE students studying the AQA Religious Studies Specification A, 3.1.7 Sikhism and 3.2.1 Religious, philosophical and ethical studies.

Chapters 1 and 2 cover the beliefs, teachings and practices of Sikhism, including beliefs about God, reincarnation, liberation and equality, and the way Sikhs live out their faith, including worship and festivals.

Chapters 3 to 8 cover religious, philosophical and ethical issues, including Relationships and families, Religion and life, the Existence of God and revelation, Religion, peace and conflict, Religion, crime and punishment, and Religion, human rights and social justice.

For the full course you must study two world religions, and four out of six of the philosophical and ethical themes. There are two examination papers, one on the religions and the other on the issues.

Assessment guidance

Each chapter has an assessment guidance section that helps you to familiarise yourself with the AQA paper. There are multiple choice questions worth 1 mark, short-answer questions worth 2 marks, and longer questions worth 4 and 5 marks that test your ability to retell and explain facts. There are longer evaluation questions worth 12 marks that test your ability to analyse and evaluate different viewpoints.

Examination questions will test two assessment objectives, each representing 50 per cent of the total marks:

AO1: Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of religion and beliefs including:
- beliefs, practices and sources of authority
- influence on individuals, communities and societies
- similarities and differences within and/or between religions and beliefs.

AO2: Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including their significance and influence.

For AO1 questions, the grid below gives guidance on how marks will be allocated:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Marks</th>
<th>Question type</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 mark</td>
<td>Multiple choice</td>
<td>The correct answer chosen from 4 options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 marks</td>
<td>Short-answer (asking for two facts)</td>
<td>One mark for each of two correct points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 marks</td>
<td>Asking for two ways in which beliefs influence Sikhs today OR two contrasting ways in which religion is practised OR two contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about an issue studied in the themes, including one from Christianity and one from another religion or in the case of theme C, non-religious perspectives</td>
<td>For each of the two ways / contrasts: • one mark for a simple explanation of a relevant and accurate way / contrast; • two marks for a detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate way / contrast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 marks</td>
<td>Asking for two Sikh beliefs or teachings OR two Sikh practices OR two religious beliefs about a philosophical or ethical issue PLUS reference to scripture or sacred writings</td>
<td>For each of the two beliefs / practices: • one mark for a simple explanation of a relevant and accurate belief / practice; • two marks for a detailed explanation of a relevant and accurate belief / practice; PLUS one mark for a relevant, accurate reference to scripture or sacred writing</td>
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The grid below gives you some guidance on different levels for the 12 mark evaluation question (testing AO2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
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</table>
| 4      | A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view  
Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information | 10–12 |
| 3      | Reasoned consideration of different points of view  
Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information | 7–9 |
| 2      | Reasoned consideration of a point of view  
A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information  
OR  
Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons / evidence | 4–6 |
| 1      | Point of view with reason(s) stated in support | 1-3 |
| 0      | Nothing worthy of credit | 0 |

For the latest mark schemes, please also refer to the AQA website.

In modern Britain Sikhs practise their religion alongside people from many different faiths. The AQA GCSE specification requires that students understand Christian beliefs on three issues in each of the ethical and philosophical themes and are able to compare these with other faith perspectives, including Sikhism (or between Christianity and non-religious viewpoints in the case of Theme C).

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Theme</th>
<th>Students must be able to explain contrasting beliefs on the following:</th>
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<td>• Contraception • Sexual relationships before marriage • Homosexual relationships</td>
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<td>B: Religion and life</td>
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<td>C: The existence of God and revelation</td>
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<td>D: Religion, peace and conflict</td>
<td>• Violence • Weapons of mass destruction • Pacifism</td>
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<td>• Corporal punishment • Death penalty • Forgiveness</td>
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<tr>
<td>F: Religion, human rights and social justice</td>
<td>• Status of women in religion • The uses of wealth • Freedom of religious expression</td>
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You should also bear in mind non-religious views such as atheism and humanism, and understand the influence of beliefs teachings and practices on individuals, communities and societies.

Spelling, punctuation and grammar (SPaG) is also important so it will be useful to practise the 12 mark extended writing questions. There are 5 marks available for SPaG: 1 mark for threshold performance, 2–3 marks for intermediate performance and 4–5 marks for high performance. You should aim to write correctly using a wide range of specialist religious terms.

Examination grades will be awarded on a scale of 9–1 rather than A* to G. Grade 9 will be the equivalent of a new grade for high performing students above the current A*. Grade 4 will be the same as a grade C pass. The aim of the new grading system is to show greater differentiation between higher and lower achieving students.

**Kerboodle book**

An online version of this book is available for student access, with an added bank of tools for you to personalise the book.
The religion of Sikhism began more than 500 years ago in the Punjab, a part of India in which Hindus and Muslims were living. The word **Sikh** means a learner or a disciple. Today, there are about 30 million Sikhs worldwide, of whom approximately 432,000 were recorded in 2011 as living in the UK. The religion began with the teaching of the first Sikh **Guru**, Guru Nanak, and was developed through the lives and teachings of another nine Gurus. Today, Sikhs believe that their holy book, the **Guru Granth Sahib**, is a living Guru and contains the word of God. It includes the teachings of a number of the Gurus and other holy men.

### The nature of God

Sikhs believe that God is beyond human description. They believe that God has no gender and so is not male or female. Sikhs do use ‘he’ and ‘him’ but only to be able to talk and write easily about God. They believe that any words used to describe God are inadequate because they are human words and so cannot describe fully the ‘greatness’ that is God. Sikhs believe that God can be experienced because he reveals himself to individuals. Therefore, some of the words often used by Sikhs about God show him as someone who communicates with humans, for example Satnam (which means true name, personality); Shabad (word); and Guru (one who teaches or enlightens).

Sikhs believe that God has no limits. God is immanent and so is in everything. At the same time he is transcendent, above and beyond creation. Sikhs have many names for God but none can describe properly the nature of God. Waheguru (Wonderful Lord or Teacher) is one name which Sikhs use in worship.

### The Mool Mantra

The Guru Granth Sahib opens with words of the **Mool Mantra**, meaning ‘main chant’. Sikhs believe that this was the first teaching of Guru Nanak, after he had become enlightened. It is the most important part of the Guru Granth Sahib and summarises Sikh belief about the nature of God.

‘**One (Ik Onkar) Universal Creator God**’: God is One. He has always existed. Sikhs are **monotheists**, believing that there is only one God, the Absolute Reality. Only this one God is to be worshipped. Worshipping an image of God is forbidden. God is the creator of all things, the creator who sustains the universe.

---

**Research activity**

Use the internet to find out about other names Sikhs use for God. Start by looking up ‘Akal Purakh’.
‘The Name Is Truth (Satnam)’: the word for truth is Sat and God is sometimes addressed as Satnam. God is eternal Truth and can be reached by humans if they reflect on truth.

‘Creative Being Personified’ (Karta Purakh): God is present in the creation that he made. He is present in the souls of human beings who can therefore understand what is right and what is wrong; so it is possible for humans to have a personal relationship with God.

‘No Fear (Nirhau). No Hatred (Nirvair)’: there is no fear or hatred in God because God is One and there is nothing else. Fear and hatred can only arise if someone or something causes it and another is affected by it. God is not subject to any other being. He is One.

‘Image Of The Undying (Akaal Moorat)’: God is eternal, beyond time, and there has never been a time when God did not exist. God is changeless.

‘Beyond Birth (Ajooni)’: God is not born and cannot die. God is immortal, unlike humans who exist in a cycle of birth and death.

‘Self-Existent (Saibhang)’: nothing brought God into being. God was not caused by anything that came before God nor is he dependent on anything else.

‘By Guru’s Grace (Gur Prasad)’: God makes himself known through his word. If Sikhs try to understand God’s word, through worship and prayer and in the way they live, they will receive God’s blessing. Sikhs believe that this one God is the God of all religions, the God everyone worships. Therefore, different religions are all paths that humans take to reach the one God.

### The importance of the Mool Mantra

The Mool Mantra is the most important statement for Sikhs and summarises Sikh beliefs. Sikhs say the Mool Mantra daily in their prayers. It is also recited in worship and in the ceremony of initiation at the gurdwara. The first words of the Mool Mantra, ‘Ik Onkar’, as written in Punjabi, are used as a symbol of the Sikh religion. They can be found in the gurdwaras or in Sikh homes.

### Activities

1. What does the word ‘Sikh’ mean?
2. Explain the word ‘monotheist’.
3. Explain the importance of the Ik Onkar symbol for Sikhs.
4. Why do Sikhs have many names for God?

### Summary

You should now understand Sikh beliefs about the nature of God and the importance of the Mool Mantra.
God as Creator

God the Creator

Sikhs believe that God created everything: the world, the universe and any other universes that may exist. There are no creation stories in Sikhism. God brought into existence creation, including all universes, and has sustained it since then. Sikhs accept scientific views about how life was created, such as the theory of evolution, but believe that all is done through God’s will. God wills the universe to exist and gives order to everything. Sometimes the world is described as God’s ‘pastime’ or his ‘play’. This does not suggest that the world is a trivial thing that God does not take seriously, but rather indicates the greatness of God compared with the world in which humans live, and the fact that God created it.

God as separate from the universe

Sikhs understand that God is beyond complete human understanding and beyond names. God has never assumed any physical form. Nor does he have ‘qualities’, although many human qualities are used to try to describe him. Sikhs use the word ‘nirgun’ (without qualities or form) to describe this. God is uncreated. He has no limits and is free and therefore different from his creation. He is timeless and ‘spaceless’, that is, he does not occupy any space. He was present before the creation when there was nothing else. Human language cannot express what he is like because God is different from anything humans experience or could experience within space and time.

God shown in and through the universe

Sikhs believe that every part of the universe reveals God. Having created the world, God is interested in it in a kindly way and directs it, which means that his creative power is constant and in everything. God is in all

Key term

- Creator: the one who makes things and brings things about

Objectives

- Understand Sikh beliefs about God as Creator.
- Consider how God may be shown in and through the universe, as well as being separate from the universe.

He established the earth, the sky and the air, the water of the oceans, fire and food. He created the moon, the stars and the sun, night and day and mountains; he blessed the trees with flowers and fruits. He created the gods, human beings and the seven seas; He established the three worlds.

Great is the Play of God! He Himself laughs, and He Himself thinks; He Himself illumines the sun and the moon. He Himself is the water, He Himself is the earth and its support. He Himself abides in each and every heart.

He is the Perfect Transcendent Lord, from the very beginning, and throughout the ages.
things and is present within every human being as the soul or divine spirit. God’s presence in everything shows his love for the creation and enables him to reveal himself to human beings. Sikhs use the word ‘sargun’ (with qualities or with form) to describe God in this way. This shows that there are ways in which God can be grasped by humans, such as through the teaching of the Gurus, through the word of God (the Mool Mantra, for example), or through creation. Sikhs look at the created world and into their own hearts and souls to find God. All creation is valuable to God, but humans are special because only they know the difference between right and wrong and can make decisions involving free will.

Sikhs believe that there is no part of the universe that God does not order. As he created everything, he is everywhere. There is a well-known story about Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, which demonstrates this belief:

**Stories from Sikh tradition**

Guru Nanak made several long journeys during his lifetime, teaching about God. It is said that one journey he visited Makkah. He was tired and lay down to rest. He went to sleep with his feet pointing towards the famous shrine there, the Ka‘aba. A night watchman, doing his rounds, found the Guru and kicked him and asked him how he could dare to point his feet towards the holy shrine – it was a sign of lack of respect for God. Guru Nanak replied, ‘Kindly turn my feet in the direction where God is not.’

Religions which are monotheistic, like Sikhism, believe that God is both separate from the universe but at the same time present throughout the universe. Equally, God is without and beyond qualities, but also has qualities: ‘He possesses all qualities; He transcends all qualities’ (Guru Granth Sahib 290). Sikhs believe that God is greater than anything that a human being could imagine or understand. So it is perfectly possible to believe that God is, at the same time, both separate from the universe and yet within the whole created universe.

**Activities**

1. Explain the importance of the Sikh belief that God is the Creator.
2. Explain why it is important to Sikhs that in the beginning was God and nothing else. Consider the words on the Mool Mantra on page 9 to help answer this question.
3. In what ways do Sikhs understand that God reveals himself within the universe?
4. Explain why Sikhs believe that God is both separate from the universe and shown in and through the universe.
1.3 The nature of human life

**Union with God**

Sikhs believe that God has given humans an opportunity to reunite with him. Life is seen as a cycle of birth, death and rebirth but the aim of life is to become one with God. This means being able to move from the cycle of life and death into an existence which God has planned, which he wills for humanity, and which is a blissful, perfect state. Humans can do much to achieve this through the kind of life they live, although God’s grace and mercy need to be accepted as well, since human nature is not perfect. While Sikhs hope to make good spiritual progress during a lifetime, they accept that it may take several lifetimes before they can be liberated and reunited with God. Sikhs believe that there are five basic virtues and many others that can be developed during the life of any human.

**The virtues**

**Truth and truthful living**

God is truth and so to get close to God, Sikhs need to live a truthful life. Truth is involved in many aspects of daily life. **Truthful living** includes speaking the truth, being realistic, working honestly, acting fairly and treating all as equals. In fact, **justice** is another virtue that is part of truthful living because it recognises unfairness and seeks to put right the wrong. Justice recognises the rights of all people and works to protect them; it will respect all equally, and oppose exploitation.

**Compassion and patience**

Sikhs believe that **compassion** is a quality that God possesses. God is seen as merciful, looking with kindness and goodness on everything he has created. He wills the best for his creation and so human beings should do the same. In practical terms, this means being aware of the needs of others, their suffering and their vulnerability, being careful and kindly in speech, and serving others. In this way, compassion also involves **patience**. Sikhs should be tolerant of others, forgive their faults or weaknesses, and be prepared to make sacrifices for others. It needs determination and an ability to recognise God in others; patience is part of kindness.

**Contentment**

In remembering God, Sikhs try to live a life that is centred on him and not on desiring things they do not have or on gaining material possessions. Sikhs are encouraged to accept the life that has been given to them by God and to try to do God’s will. They believe that **contentment** leads to happiness because it gets rid of worry for the future and fear of the unknown. This may seem to be good
Chapter 1 Beliefs and teachings

Summary
You should now understand the Sikh belief that human life provides an opportunity to unite with God and that to do so means developing Sikh virtues.

Activities
1. Explain how Sikhs can reach union with God.
2. How do Sikhs try to achieve contentment?
3. Describe ways in which a person could achieve ‘truthful living’ in relation to their friends.
4. What difference would truthful living make to relationships?

Study tip
Write a list of the Sikh virtues and try to learn them so that you can refer to them when writing about Sikh life.

Humility and self-control

Humility is an attitude which Sikhs believe should be shown towards God and others. It is a recognition that before God, humans should not believe in their own importance because God is the ultimate reality. His greatness and power cannot be described and in comparison with God, humans must be humble. Equally they should not be self-important in their dealings with other people or believe that they have more to give or more important things to say than others. Self-control is therefore very important in developing and achieving the ability to be humble. Sikhs should engage in self-discipline, regular prayer and bringing God to mind. Another word for self-control is temperance, which means to act, think or speak in moderation, making sure that one is in control. By meditating on God’s name and so eliminating evil thoughts, humility and self-control can be developed.

Love

Sikhs believe that God is a loving God and so in response to God, Sikhs must also be full of love. A loving attitude means that Sikhs accept everyone with whom they come into contact for the people they are, and they treat them with kindness and respect. Sikhs should not hate anyone and should forgive any wrong that is done to them. They believe that part of their loving response to God is to serve others and show love towards them.

Wisdom and courage

In a sense, to have wisdom means to understand the importance of all the Sikh virtues. Wisdom involves the knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and principles, and an ability to put this knowledge to good effect in daily living. For Sikhs, wisdom will result in living a good life, with high moral standards and a desire to live a life as close to God as possible. No one expects to find this easy and so Sikhs believe that courage is another important virtue. There are many people in Sikh history, including the ten Gurus, who have shown great courage in remaining true to their faith and to Sikh principles. Courage takes great spiritual strength, often in the face of suffering; some of the Gurus showed such courage in sacrificing their lives for their beliefs, and for the right of others to practise their faith.
1.4 Karma, rebirth and mukti

■ Rebirth

Sikhs believe in reincarnation which means that when a human being dies, their soul is reborn into another body. Such a rebirth is part of a cycle of being born, dying and being reborn. The cycle will keep repeating itself until the soul is liberated or freed from this pattern and becomes united with God.

Those who do not serve the True Guru [God], and who do not contemplate the Word of the Shabad – spiritual wisdom does not enter into their hearts; they are like dead bodies in the world. They go through the cycle of 8.4 million reincarnations, and they are ruined through death and rebirth.

Guru Granth Sahib 88

Sikhs believe that all animals, including human beings, have souls, and at death the soul changes its form of life and will be reborn into a new stage of its existence. The goal is to achieve liberation from rebirth.

■ Karma

Karma is a term which Hindus and Buddhists use as well. It refers to the sum total of a person’s actions and words, which determine what happens to that individual in the future. So, given that individuals may have many rebirths into this world, the actions they have done previously will affect both their future and the kind of existence they have. Sometimes karma is described as ‘destiny’ because it relates to what will happen in the future.

The body is the field of karma in this age; whatever you plant, you shall harvest.

Guru Granth Sahib 78

The belief in karma means that for Sikhs, rebirth is not a random event but something that depends on what they have done previously. Sikhs believe that being born as a human being on Earth indicates that an individual has done good things in previous lives and that God’s will has caused this to happen. Once born as a human, a person has the opportunity to make further progress towards liberation, and needs to make the most of what God has given. They can do this in two ways. First, they can build up good karma by doing good and behaving well towards others, and second, by receiving God’s grace.

If people do bad deeds, there will be consequences. For each bad deed, there will be some suffering in a future life. People can only rid themselves of past bad karma by meditating on God’s name, hearing his word, and serving others.

Key terms

- reincarnation: being born again into a new body
- rebirth: the return of the soul, born into a new body
- karma: destiny; consequences of one’s actions
- mukti: the ultimate goal of human life; liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth

Study tip

Make sure you know how the key terms used on these pages are connected.
Chapter 1 Beliefs and teachings

Activities

1. Explain what karma is.
2. Read the story above about the blind man.
   a. If you were telling this story to children, explain what you would want them to learn from it.
   b. List the things that this Sikh might have done to change his life after the conversation with the blind man.

Summary

You should now understand the meaning of karma, rebirth and mukti, and be able to explain their importance to Sikhs.

Mukti

The word mukti means ‘liberation’, ‘freedom’, ‘release’ and is also translated sometimes as ‘salvation’. It is the final goal for Sikhs. This is the point at which an individual soul rejoins God and becomes reunited with him. To achieve mukti, a person must rid themselves of all that stands in the way of getting close to God. This is the negative aspect of mukti. They can do this by taking charge of their life, and finding the power and strength to withstand dangers or temptations to do wrong and move further away from God. Mukti may be achieved while someone is alive, and this is known as jivan mukti.

For Sikhs, individuals need to go through several stages to reach mukti, when the soul is free to find God and be complete in him, which is the positive aspect of mukti. No one can describe what this is like because no one can describe what it would be like to be united with and within God. Mukti will just need to be experienced but Sikhs know that this is ultimate bliss, happiness, contentment and peace.

Research activity

Use the internet to search for Sikh descriptions of mukti. Divide your notes into two columns headed ‘Positive’ and ‘Negative’, and decide where the descriptions you find best fit.

Discussion activity

With a partner, consider the events that have happened in your own lives during the past 24 hours. Discuss whether things might have been different if you had decided in advance to keep a list of the good and bad actions you had taken during that time.

Stories from Sikh tradition

There was once a man who thought he understood all about karma. He knew that what happens to a person is the result of previous actions in their life or in past lives. However, he was proud; he thought he knew everything. One day, he saw a blind man trying to get up some steps and failing. He did not help him and as he passed by, he thought to himself, ‘He deserves to be blind. In the past he must have refused to see something important and so he now is blind.’

Then he heard the blind man laugh and asked him why he had laughed. The blind man told him that he was right. He had been born blind because of karma in a past life. The man was shocked that the blind man knew what he was thinking and asked him what had been the important thing he had refused to see. The man replied that he should be very careful or the same thing would happen to him. The proud man was now worried and feeling more humble. He begged the blind man to tell him what he had failed to do that had made him blind. ‘I just refused to see the things I could do to help others,’ said the blind man. ‘I forgot that God is in all of us.’ He then explained that in a previous life he had failed to help someone who was sick and instead had judged people. ‘Now,’ he said, ‘you are like me – you are judging rather than helping; you are proud but not kind.’
The five stages of liberation

Sikhs believe that there are five stages (khands) through which a human being can pass and that will lead to God, the Ultimate Truth or Reality. These stages are like the stages of a journey and usually they will not all happen within one lifetime. As Sikhs move through these stages, there is no suggestion that they should withdraw from the world to concentrate on God. Sikhs believe that living in community is what God intends for human beings and that it is through daily life that God is revealed. These stages of liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth can be passed through while living a normal life, provided that a person becomes God-centred.

The five khands

The five khands are piety, knowledge, effort, grace and truth. All human beings are born into the stage of piety, which enables them to meet with God through commitment or devotion to him. Knowledge is gained once an individual has begun to devote time to God and learn about him. With knowledge, they begin to be aware of how vast the universe is and how little they know about God or their own existence. The more a person knows, the more they realise how vast is the amount of knowledge to be gained and how little they know of it. This helps them to become humble, spiritually aware and open to God.

By devoting oneself totally to God, an individual develops their mind and their intelligence as far as it is possible for a human being to do. The person has made the effort to ‘tune in’ to God and develop their personality and gifts as far as they can.

Grace is only reached when God takes a part in the development of the individual. God, through his love, enables spiritual growth and strength. Grace is a blessing from God; it results in the person being at peace in themselves, knowing God.

The final stage involves finding God in his completeness. God is truth and this stage cannot really be described at all, just experienced.

Barriers to mukti

Sikhs believe that if they understand what gets in the way of spiritual progress, or moving closer to God, they will be more able to avoid or control it. Sikhs believe that illusion, self-centredness and the five evils take people away from God. The five evils are regarded as opposites to the virtues that Sikhs need to develop.
Illusion and self-centredness

One of the difficulties that can prevent individuals from spiritual growth is the illusion that the things in life that will not last, which are brief and impermanent, are the things that are permanent and valuable. This illusion is like an addiction that prevents people from seeing the truth. It means they cannot escape the cycle of life, death and rebirth.

Self-centredness, sometimes called ego, prevents people from getting close to God and obeying his will. The development of the Sikh virtues, such as humility, contentment and the willingness to serve other people (sewa), helps Sikhs to turn away from self-centredness.

The five evils

The five evils are anger (krodh), lust (kam), greed (lobdh), worldly attachment (moh) and pride (ahankar).

Anger results usually from a lack of self-control. This emotion causes someone to stop thinking and to act without balance. For Sikhs, hatred, which often leads to anger, is not acceptable when directed at a person whom God created.

Uncontrolled lust and sexual desire outside marriage is seen to result in weakness and lack of balance. It can lead people to further wrongdoing and may encourage untruthfulness and lack of reliability. Sikhs believe that sex within marriage is good and part of God’s will, but sex outside marriage, or within marriage when it is against the partner’s will, leads people further away from God.

Greed results in a desire to possess more than what one needs for daily life, and possibly leads to a wish to possess what belongs to someone else. It is selfish and self-centred. It results from a lack of self-control and from ignoring the principles of equality and justice. It centres life on material things, and spiritual life is neglected.

Worldly attachment is connected with greed because both place too great an emphasis on possessions and relationships within the world. As a result, they may remove the desire for spiritual growth and the development of the mind needed to recognise God. It moves a person’s priorities away from God.

Sometimes the evil of pride is called ‘false’ pride because it involves being proud of things which are given, rather than achieved, or things that are not important, such as intelligence, talent or material wealth. Pride leads people away from humility and the basic belief in the equality of all, and makes them feel more important than others. It encourages unhelpful reactions in others, such as jealousy or rivalry, or simply makes people unhappy with their own situation.

Activities

1 What do Sikhs mean by ‘illusion’?
2 Explain why self-centredness prevents individuals from approaching God.
3 ‘For Sikhs, it is easier to avoid the five evils than to develop the Sikh virtues.’ Evaluate this statement, giving two points of view and developed arguments to support them.

Those who are committed to the Nam, see the world as merely a temporary pasture. Sexual desire and anger are broken, like a jar of poison.

Guru Granth Sahib 153

Study tip

You do not need to learn the Punjabi terms for the five stages or the five evils, but try to learn the English translations and what they mean.

Summary

You should now understand the five stages of liberation, and understand how illusion, self-centredness and the five evils act as barriers to muki.

Activity

Draw a diagram with a person in the centre. On one side place all the Sikh virtues and on the other the barriers to mukti, including the five evils. You can refer to this diagram when studying.
1.6 The importance of being God-centred

**Gurmukh (God-centred)**

Sikhs aim to have their mind centred on God at all times. A God-centred person (gurmukh) has turned towards God and is in this sense becoming a perfect person, as God intended. Such a person lives in accordance with Sikh teaching and meditates on the Name of God. He or she is free from attachment, pride and ego, and from the evils that can overwhelm a person, and instead does good because it is good, not for any other motive.

![Image: The Gurmukh attains infinite spiritual wisdom and meditation.](image-url)

*The Gurmukh acts in harmony with God’s Will; the Gurmukh finds perfection.* The mind of the Gurmukh turns away from the world … he merges in the True Lord. He truly practises Truth forever; true devotion is implanted within him.

*Guru Granth Sahib 1058*

**Manmukh (man-centred)**

Manmukh describes people who are centred on themselves and their own desires. They are attached to worldly wealth and things that will not last. They are not content with life because they always want more. They are not aware of the needs of others and so their way of life is selfish and self-centred. They constantly think about ‘I’, the ego, and act in the world in a way that will satisfy their own desires. Their words and actions and their lifestyle are controlled by the five evils and by the illusion that convinces them that temporary material things are permanent and important. This prevents them from being liberated and achieving mukti.

![Image: The foolish self-willed manmukh does not remember the Lord, and shall regret and repent hereafter. Thus says Nanak: O mind, you are full of pride; loaded with pride, you shall depart. O mind, don’t be so proud of yourself, as if you know it all …](image-url)

*Guru Granth Sahib 144*

![Image: The self-willed manmukh is blind in the world; his mind is lured away by sexual desire and anger … The Gurmukhs earn the wealth of the Lord, contemplating the Word of the Guru’s Shabad. They receive the wealth of the Naam; their treasures are overflowing … they utter the Glorious Praises of the Lord … Within the Gurmukh is intuitive peace and poise …](image-url)

*Guru Granth Sahib 1414*
Haumai

Haumai is difficult to translate exactly; it can mean ‘pride’, ‘self-reliance’ or ‘egotism’. For many people, self-reliance would be seen as a good thing, a virtue, and of course in some ways it is. However, Guru Nanak taught that this quality often prevented individuals from understanding their dependence on God and from wanting to seek liberation. He wanted people to understand that while they try on their own to affect what happens in the present or in the future and do not listen to or obey God, there is no chance of release from rebirth. Haumai is sometimes described as a spiritual disease which those who are manmukh have. It produces confusion and brings suffering. It takes over a person’s life and the only way to overcome it is to become gurmukh, to remember God and to forget self.

Stories from Sikh tradition

The two villages

Guru Nanak and his disciple Mardana came to a village and wanted to rest for a while. They knocked on the door of a house and asked where the inn was. The man shut the door in their face with the words, ‘Visitors are not welcome here.’ They went to several other houses but people were rude, unhelpful and unwelcoming. ‘Go away,’ they said. ‘There’s nowhere like that around here; we don’t like visitors.’

Guru Nanak decided to walk on to the next village. A man saw them coming. He said that he could see they were thirsty and hungry and he asked them if they would like a drink of water. Then he asked them whether they needed a place to stay and told them that he had a friend who would give them a meal and rooms for the night. As they talked, other people came past and were friendly. They had a good night’s sleep and went on their way.

As they walked, Guru Nanak said, ‘I hope that village is uprooted and scattered.’ Mardana was amazed and suggested that surely it would be better if that happened to the first village. ‘No,’ said Guru Nanak, ‘if the selfish people in the first village were scattered across the world, the whole world will become selfish. If the people in the last village were spread across the world, they would make it a better place.’

Sikhs believe that some people are able to live moral lives and sometimes do good things, but they do not understand that too great an attachment to worldly things causes suffering and prevents someone from seeking God, the eternal and ultimate reality. It may be that the ‘happier’ one is with life, the less likely one is to recognise the need for God.

Activities

1. Explain the difference between gurmukh and manmukh.
2. Suggest three things that Sikhs might do to become gurmukh, and three things that would lead them to becoming manmukh.
3. Explain the meaning of the story of ‘The two villages’.

Summary

You should now know and understand the meaning of the key terms of gurmukh, manmukh and haumai, and be able to explain their importance for Sikhs.
Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born into a country influenced by both the Muslim and Hindu religions. After his revelation, he strongly believed that God was One and that there were many ways of approaching God, not just one way. He said, ‘God is neither Hindu nor Muslim and the path I follow is God’s’. Sikhs believe in the oneness of humanity and do not feel the need to convert others to Sikhism – they believe that there are many different paths to God and each individual can find their way, with support from their community and by God’s good grace. All these approaches to God are equally valid and deserve respect. Therefore, Sikhism is a tolerant and inclusive faith. Sikhs are expected to honour and protect the rights of others to practise their faith.

Sikhs believe that all creatures are created by God. God intended them to be created and it is his will. People do not know why they were created; this is something that only God knows. However, humans are unique among the creatures. They can make judgements, they can distinguish between right and wrong, and within them is a divine spark that is from God.

Guru Ram Das taught: ‘There is only one breath; all are made of the same clay; the light within all is the same. The One Light pervades all the many and various beings.’ (Guru Granth Sahib 96). So humans are ‘one’ and of equal worth. There can be no distinctions that are made by humans which God recognises.

If God is within all people, then living and working with others in peace and harmony is essential. No one should be rejected or neglected.

The langar: equality in practice

It was the belief in the equality of all that led Guru Nanak to introduce the langar, a free meal. All gurdwaras continue this custom. The practice demonstrates the Sikh belief in the oneness of humanity and the equality of every human being. All eat together, men and women, rich and poor, people of different faiths and of none. The food is always vegetarian, which means that those who have different rules about how meat is prepared and

Guru Granth Sahib 62

Call everyone exalted; no one seems lowly. The One Lord has fashioned the vessels, and His One Light pervades the three worlds.

Guru Granth Sahib 319

... the Lord is said to be permeating each and every heart. He looks alike upon the high and the low, the ant and the elephant. Friends, companions, children and relatives are all created by Him.

Guru Granth Sahib 349

Recognise the Lord’s Light within all, and do not consider social class or status; there are no classes or castes in the world hereafter.

Study tip

Learn two or three key phrases from the quotations on this page. This will help you when discussing the oneness and equality of human beings.

Links

To find out more about the langar, see pages 22–23 and 42–43.
Chapter 1 Beliefs and teachings

Equality within the Sikh community

Within the Sikh community, all are regarded as equals. Everyone is treated with respect and honoured, irrespective of gender, disability, race, class or wealth, and the importance of the unity of the community is emphasised. Both Sikh men and Sikh women take part in worship, reading the Guru Granth Sahib, playing music, and cooking or serving in the langar. Any man or woman, regardless of their status, can be initiated and become amritdhari Sikhs.

The five Ks

Amritdhari Sikhs are required to wear the five Ks to remind them of their faith, wherever they are and whatever they are doing. Many other Sikhs, who are not yet initiated, also wear some or all of the five Ks. These items are a symbol of the unity and equality within their faith community. In whichever part of the world Sikhs live, the five Ks can be seen, and are daily reminders of the Sikh faith. They also remind Sikhs of their responsibilities as members of the community of Sikhs.

1 Kesh (uncut hair): Sikhs believe that their hair is a gift God has given to all humans; it was intended to be worn naturally and not cut. It is covered with a turban (seen as a ‘crown’) to keep it clean. The turban itself is not one of the five Ks.

2 Kanga (a wooden comb): This is carried to maintain the tidiness of the kesh and to remind Sikhs of the need to keep their body and mind in a healthy state.

3 Kara (a steel bracelet): As a circle the kara symbolises the unbreakable bond with God. It is like a slave bangle, so a reminder that Sikhs should obey God and do God’s will. Steel is also a symbol of strength and integrity.

4 Kachera (cotton underwear): This underwear is comfortable and modest. It is reminder of the traditional role of Sikhs as soldiers, being prepared to act quickly and with dignity, and of the need for self-control and chastity (and also a reminder not to commit adultery).

5 Kirpan (a small sword): This is a sign that Sikhs are soldiers in the army of God, fight for justice, and protect the weak and vulnerable; it is also a sign for self-defence. The sword must never be used in anger.

Activities

1 List the different ways in which Sikhs show that everyone is equal.

2 Draw a grid with two columns, headed ‘The five Ks’ and ‘Importance’. In the left-hand column, draw each of the five Ks. In the right-hand column, write the meaning of each one.

3 ‘Wearing the five Ks reminds Sikhs of their belief in the equality of all! What is your opinion? Give reasons to support your point of view.

Discussion activity

Discuss the importance for Sikhs of wearing the five Ks. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of wearing visible symbols of a faith?

Summary

You should now understand Sikh beliefs in the oneness of humanity and the equality of all. You should also understand the symbolism and importance of the five Ks.
Key beliefs – summary
You should now be able to:
✔ explain about the nature of God as expressed in the Mool Mantra
✔ know and understand the significance of the Mool Mantra (Guru Granth Sahib 1)
✔ explain the Sikh belief in God as Creator, including different aspects of God’s relationship with creation; God shown in and through the universe and God as separate from the universe
✔ understand the Sikh belief that the nature of human life is an opportunity to unite with God, including the development of Sikh virtues: wisdom, truthful living, justice, temperance, self-control, patience, courage, humility, contentment
✔ explain Sikh beliefs in karma, rebirth, and the aim and meaning of mukti, including the different aspects of mukti (positive and negative)
✔ understand the five stages of liberation and the barriers to mukti (illusion, self-centredness, anger, lust, greed, worldly attachment and pride)
✔ explain the Sikh understanding of the importance of being God-centred (gurmukh) rather than man-centred (manmukh) and the elimination of pride or ego (haumai).

The nature of human life – summary
You should now be able to:
✔ explain Sikh beliefs in the oneness of humanity and in the equality of all, including complete equality of women with men
✔ know and understand the expression of the equality of all in the lives of the Gurus, including Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, in the Guru Granth Sahib and in Sikhism today
✔ explain the Sikh practice of sewa: the importance and priority of service to others, including physical (tan), mental (man) and material (dhan)
✔ explain the role and importance of the sangat (religious community).
Sample student answer – the 4-mark question

1. Write an answer to the following practice question:

_Explain two ways the Sikh belief in sewa influences Sikhs today._ [4 marks]

2. Read the following sample student answer:

“Sikhs show their belief in sewa by taking part in the langar. Guru Nanak set up the langar to show the equality of all people, so Sikhs offer their service voluntarily in the preparation or serving of food and drink to all those who wish to take part. Sikhs give money to provide the food and do not employ caterers because sewa is seen as an important part of the worship of God.

Sikhs also give money as part of sewa. This is called dasvandh. They give a tenth of their income to the Sikh community so that it can be used to help others, for example by providing free food and drink to the public at festival times.”

3. With a partner, discuss the sample answer. Can you identify two different ways in which beliefs influence behaviour? If so, are they simple or detailed? How accurate are they? Can the answer be improved? If so, how?

4. What mark (out of 4) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO1). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?

5. Now swap your answer with your partner’s and mark each other’s responses. What mark (out of 4) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.

Sample student answer – the 5-mark question

1. Write an answer to the following practice question:

_Explain two Sikhs teachings about God the Creator._ Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. [5 marks]

2. Read the following scripture or sacred writings in your answer:

“Sikhs believe that God is the creator of the world and he created everything in it. In fact he created the universe and any other universes which may exist. The holy book says this. They also believe that God is present in all things he created and is present in the heart of all human beings who understand the difference between right and wrong, unlike the other creatures. So God is able to show himself to people because they can see him through the creation and in the hearts of people.”

3. With a partner, discuss the student answer. Can you identify two different pieces of relevant and accurate teaching? If so, are they simple or detailed? How accurate are they? Is there a clear reference to scripture or sacred writings? Is there anything important missing from the answer? How can it be improved?

4. What mark (out of 5) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO1). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?

5. Now swap your answer with your partner’s and mark each other’s responses. What mark (out of 5) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.
Sample student answer – the 12-mark question

1. Write an answer to the following practice question:
   ‘Guru Gobind Singh taught Sikhs more about equality than Guru Nanak.’
   Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
   • refer to Sikh teaching
   • give detailed arguments to support this statement
   • give detailed arguments to support a different point of view
   • reach a justified conclusion. [12 marks]

2. Read the following sample student answer:

   “I believe that Guru Gobind Singh taught Sikhs more about equality because he was the Guru who set up the Khalsa and made it clear that all Sikhs were equal. When initiated the five Panj Piare who came from different sections of society drank out of the same bowl and all wore the five Ks. The Khalsa sent a clear message of equality to people about the equal worth of everyone. He believed in the value of every human being whom God had created and the equality between men and women and showed this by expecting all Sikh men to take the name Singh (lion) and all Sikh women to take the name Kaur (princess). He also established the Guru Granth Sahib as the living Guru and because it is a book which contains writings from the Hindu and Moslem faith as well as writings of the Gurus, it shows that he expected all Sikhs to believe in equality. It also meant that there could be no dispute about the leadership of the Sikhs which could have divided them and made one group feel they were better than another.

   However some people would say that Guru Nanak did more for equality because he showed by the company he kept that people who had different religions could mix with each other. He knew and respected Hindus and Muslims and Mardana, whom he went on his travels with, was a Muslim. He said ‘There is no Hindu and no Muslim’ and believed that all religions were making the same effort to get close to the One God. He first established practices which showed his dislike of the caste system and his belief in equality, the most obvious of which was the langar. All were welcome to eat and all food was vegetarian so no one could be offended by not having meat prepared in the right way. Sikhs were expected to share in the tasks of preparing and serving food – this was to demonstrate equality and lack of status. Traditionally castes in India did not mix and would not eat together.

   Although both Gurus did a great deal to work for equality I think Guru Gobind Singh did more by establishing the Khalsa.”

3. With a partner, discuss the sample answer.
   • Does it accurately refer to and develop Sikh teachings, applying them to the quote?
   • Is the first argument developed well?
   • Is the alternative point of view well developed?
   • Is there a valid conclusion and does it reflect the arguments it is based on?
   • What is good about the answer? How would you improve the answer?

4. What mark (out of 12) would you give this answer? Look at the mark scheme in the Introduction (AO2). What are the reasons for the mark you have given?

5. Now swap your answer with your partner’s and mark each other’s responses. What mark (out of 12) would you give the response? Refer to the mark scheme and give reasons for the mark you award.
Practice questions

1. Which one of the following describes liberation from the cycle of birth, death and rebirth?
   A) Karma   B) Mukti   C) Sewa   D) Gurmukh  [1 mark]

2. Give two words which are used to describe God in the Mool Mantra.  [2 marks]

   ⭐️ Study tip
   If a questions asks you to ‘give’ a piece of information, you do not need to give any explanation.

3. Explain two kinds of service which Sikhs may offer.  [4 marks]

4. Explain two Sikh beliefs about the nature of human life.
   Refer to scriptures or sacred writings in your answer.  [5 marks]

   ⭐️ Study tip
   Make sure you read the question carefully and provide everything it asks for in your answer.

5. ‘Service to others is the most important Sikh belief.’
   Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
   • refer to Sikh teaching
   • give detailed arguments to support this statement
   • give detailed arguments to support a different point of view
   • reach a justified conclusion.  [12 marks]

   ⭐️ Study tip
   This question is worth as many marks as the previous four questions. You should think carefully about the quote before you start writing. When you have finished writing, make sure you read what you have written to make sure you have included all the question asks you to provide.

⭐️ Study tip
These five questions try to cover as much of the section on key beliefs as possible. You should aim to revise this section thoroughly.