

SIKH RELIGIOUS  
PHILOSOPHY: GOD  
AND THE HUMAN  
CONDITION

- Guru Granth Sahib is authority for MOST Sikhs.
- Dasam Granth are the compositions of the Tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh

# God

- Strictly monotheistic
- No gender – Waheguru, strictly an “IT”
- Basic beliefs about God in Mul Mantar/Mool Mantra – very beginning of GGS
- The Mul Mantar:
  - IK ONKAR* – There is one and only one God,
  - SATNAM* - Truth is his Name,
  - KARTA PURKH* – The Creator,
  - NIR BHAI* – Without fear,
  - NIR VAI* - Without hate,
  - AKAL MURAT* – Immortal,
  - AJUNI* – Beyond births and deaths,
  - SAIBHANG* – The Enlightener,
  - GURPURSAD* – He is known by the Guru’s Grace.

- Everything dependent on God
- God is the True Name – Waheguru, Satnam, Satguru
- Usage of Allah and Ram also
- God is transcendent – NIRGUNA
- God can be experienced – SAGUNA
- Bhakti (loving devotion) central to Sikh teachings –
- God is immanent in hearts of human beings
- Human birth = golden opportunity

# The human condition

- Human predicament is entrapment in samsara
- Reincarnation, escape is MUKTI
- Mukti only through the human birth – not guaranteed though – HUKAM AND NADAR
- 2 categories of humans:
  - bhaktas (GURMUKH)
  - samsaris (MANMUKH)
- Haumai is the ego, obstructs
- Law of karma/karam is operative in Sikhism

# activity

Discuss the concept of reincarnation with a partner:

- Do you believe we have a “soul” – explain your views.
- Why do you think the concept of reincarnation is central to Indian religions?
- What do you believe?

# The *man* (mind)

- No overall definition – but in loose terms the *man* is the mind, our thoughts.
- Also implications that it is our heart – our attitudes to others that determine our actions.
- According to McLeod:
- The *man* is mind and it is heart, and it is also that human attribute which does not perish with physical death and which man must seek to unite with God, which he must strive to have carried across the ocean of Existence.
- Mukti only possible if the *man* is pure

# maya

- Concept of maya very different to illusory implications found in Hinduism and Buddhism.
- World very much real – arena – the karam bhoomi (action ground)
- Gurmukh: ultimate dependency on God, world is not permanent
- Manmukh: temporary pleasures of world more important than becoming a gurmukh



# Nam simran

- Nam – Name
- Simran – meditation
- Nam Simran is central to Sikh philosophy
- Strictly no images of God – therefore it is the Name that becomes a central focus for the mind
- No overall Name of God -
- Bhakti and Nam Simran compliment each other
- Gurmukh (through nam simran) stands in opposition to 5 vices: Kam (lust), krodh (anger), lobh (greed), moh (attachment) and ahankar (pride).
- Guru Nanak emphasized no ritual (no brahmins) since the essence of God is within one's heart. Sikhism = interiorized religion.
- Guru Nanak's rejection of the sacred thread
- Sabad (the word of God) also important way of reaching God.

# The grihastha stage

- The stage of the householder, family life is very important
- No renunciation of life in the world in Sikhism
- Raising family is emphasized – men and women equal in raising family.
- Balance needed nevertheless between indulgence and abstinence
- Social relationship with the community is important through:
  - Kirt karna (performing good deeds)
  - Vand chakna (Sharing one's fortune)
  - Nam Japna (mediation and association with others)

# Activity

- Look at the Mul Mantar carefully – in your opinion, how does it emphasize that a loving relationship with the Ultimate is important?
- It has often been suggested that Sikh philosophy has many similarities with the Buddhist Middle Way. This promotes a balanced livelihood without over-indulgence. Do you think Sikhism also promotes this balance? Explain your answer as fully as possible.