

RS Revision Pack: AQA

Religious Studies A: Sikhism

<http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/religious-studies/gcse/religious-studies-a-8062>

Paper	Content	Weighting	Time
Component 1: The study of religions. Beliefs, Teachings and Practices.	Christianity: Beliefs and Teachings Christianity: Practices Sikhism: Beliefs and Teachings Sikhism: Practices	Christianity: 25% Sikhism: 25%	1 hour 45
Component 2: Thematic Studies	Theme A: Relationships and Families Theme B: Religion and life. Theme C: Existence of God and Revelation. Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment.	50%	1 hour 45



Sikhism: Beliefs and Teachings

Sikh	A learner or a disciple; a believer in the religion of Sikhism
Guru	A spiritual teacher of wisdom; there are 10 Gurus in Sikh history, followed by the Guru Granth Sahib, the living Guru.
Guru Granth Sahib	The holy scriptures of the Sikh faith, regarded as the ultimate authority
Mool Mantra	The main chant , a statement of all the core beliefs at the beginning of the Guru Granth Sahib.
Gurdwara	A Sikh place of worship; it literally means the door of the Guru.
Creator	The one who makes things and brings things about. For Sikhs, this is Waheguru.
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.
Khand	A stage or a part of human spiritual development.
Liberation	Freedom from the cycle of life, death and rebirth.
Piety	The first stage of liberation; the opportunity for devotion to God.
Knowledge	The second stage of liberation; knowing God through experiencing and learning about God.
Effort	The third stage of liberation; the limit of human development. Doing as much as you can to tune in with God.
Grace	The fourth stage of liberation; the spiritual blessing given by God. Accepting you need God's help.
Truth	The fifth stage of liberation; the realisation of God.
Gurmukh	God-centred; being focused on God and spiritual things.
Manmukh	Man centred; being focused on oneself and material things.
Haumai	Pride or self (ego) relying on oneself, not God.
Amritdhari	A Sikh who has been initiated into the Khalsa; sometimes known as a Khalsa Sikh.
Langar	A free kitchen within each gurdwara.
Khalsa	The community of pure ones; the body of committed Sikhs.
Amrit	A mixture of water and sugar prepared by the Panj Piare, used in the initiation and sometimes birth ceremony.
Sewa	Selfless service
Sangat	The community of Sikhs
Sahajdhari	A Sikh who believes in Sikhism and the teachings of the Gurus, but has not become an initiated Sikh.



Key beliefs

- The nature of God as expressed in the Mool Mantra: the content and significance of the Mool Mantra, Guru Granth Sahib (GGS) 1a.
- God as Creator, including different aspects of God's relationship with creation:
 - God shown in and through the universe
 - God as separate from the universe
- The nature of human life as an opportunity to unite with God, including the development of Sikh virtues such as wisdom, truthful living, justice, temperance, self-control, patience, courage, humility, contentment.
- Beliefs in karma and rebirth, and the aim of mukti; the meaning of mukti, including the different aspects of mukti – positive and negative.
- The five stages of liberation (five khand) and barriers to mukti (illusion, self-centredness, lust, anger, greed, worldly attachment, pride).
- The importance of being gurmukh (God-centred) rather than manmukh (man-centred) and the elimination of pride or ego (haumai).

The Mool Mantra

The Mool Mantra

The **Guru Granth Sahib** opens with the words of the **Mool Mantra**. This is believed to be the first teaching of Guru Nanak after he became enlightened. It is considered the most important Sikh teaching and summarises the Sikh views about the nature of God.

One universal creator: There is only one God that has always existed. The only God to be worship, God is the creator and sustains creation.

The name is truth: God is eternal truth.

No fear, No hatred: there is no fear or hatred in God because God is one.

Undying: God is eternal, beyond time, there has never been a time God did not exist.

Beyond birth: nothing brought God into existence.

Self-existent: Nothing came before God nor is God dependant on anything else.

By Guru's grace: 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.

"One Universal Creator God. The name is Truth. Creative being personified. No fear. No hatred. Image of the undying, Beyond Birth, Self-Existent. By Gurus grace"

Guru Granth Sahib 1



God as 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 (kept it going) 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.
- For Sikhs, God can be understood in different ways: he can be both transcendent and immanent.

Transcendent: God is above human understanding and separate from creation

Immanent: God works within and is part of creation

God is transcendent	God is immanent
- For Sikhs, God does not have a gender. Sikhs refer to God as 'he' so that they have an easy way to talk about God, but God is actually not male or female - God does not have a physical form, and does not have human qualities. Sikhs use the word 'nirgun', meaning without qualities or form. - God is uncreated; he is the creator, but was not created himself. - God is timeless, spaceless and has no limits. - Human language can never really express what God is like. QUOTES TO SUPPORT: 'He is the Perfect Transcendent Lord, from the very beginning, and throughout the ages' GGS 'His limits are not known by anyone' GGS 	- Sikhs believe that every part of the universe reveals something about God. - Having created the world, God is interested in it and directs it, which means that his creative power is in everything. - God is present within every human being as the soul, or divine spirit. - God's presence is in everything, and Sikhs believe this shows his love for creation. - God's creation enables him to reveal himself to human beings. - There are some ways that humans can learn more about God, such as through the teachings of the Gurus, through the holy book (Guru Granth Sahib) or through creation. Sikhs use the word 'sargun' to mean God does have qualities which can be shown in the ways given above. QUOTES TO SUPPORT 'He Himself is the water, He Himself is the earth and its support. He himself abides in each and every heart' GGS 'The Lord is seen to be manifest and present' GGS 'He established the earth, the sky and the air, the water of the oceans, fire and food' GGS

The nature of human life as an opportunity to unite with God: The Sikh Virtues

- Sikhs believe that God has given humans the opportunity to reunite with him. Life is seen as a cycle of life, death and rebirth. The aim of life is to become one with God.
- Humans can do lots to achieve this but they must first accept God's grace and mercy. While Sikhs hope to make spiritual progress during a lifetime, they also accept that it may take several lifetimes before they can be liberated to be reunited with God.
- Sikhs believe that all living things have a soul. They believe in **reincarnation** which means when a human dies its soul is reborn in another body. This cycle of life, death and **rebirth** will keep repeating itself until the soul is liberated and reunited with God - known as **mukti**.
- **Karma** is a term used to describe the sum of a person's actions and words; this will define what happens to the soul in the future.
- Once born as a human, a person has the opportunity to make further progress towards liberation. They can do this by building up good Karma and receiving God's grace.
- Bad deeds can result in suffering in a future life. People can rid themselves of bad Karma by meditating on God's name, hearing his word and serving others.

"The body is the field of karma in this age; whatever you plant, you shall harvest" Guru Granth Sahib 78

Sikh five basic virtues and truthful living.

Truth and truthful living.

Truthful living includes speaking truth, being realistic, working honestly, acting fairly and treating all as equals.

Compassion and patience.

God is merciful, looking with kindness and goodness on everything he has created. He wills the best for his creation, humans should do the same.

Contentment

In remembering God, Sikhs try to live a life that is centred on him and not desiring things they do not have. Contentment leads to happiness because it gets rid of worry for the future.

Humility

The belief that only God is superior and all humans are equal. Humans should not believe in their own self-importance.

Love

Sikhs believe that God is all loving and so in response to God, Sikhs must also be full of love.

Wisdom and courage

To have the wisdom to understand all the Sikh virtues. 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.



Mukti

- Mukti is the release/ liberation from the cycle of reincarnation (known as samsara).
- This is the point at which the soul is reunited with God. To achieve mukti a person must rid themselves of all things that stand in their way of getting close to God.
- They can do this by taking charge of their life, and finding the power and strength to withstand dangers and temptations to do wrong and move further away from God.
- For Sikhs, individuals must go through several lifetimes to achieve **mukti**. No one can explain mukti but Sikhs know that this is the ultimate bliss, happiness, contentment and peace.
- The **negative** side to mukti is having to 'get rid' and be freed from the state we are in. The **positive** side is achieving everlasting peace.

There are five stages of liberation (freedom). These will not usually all happen in one lifetime. Sikhs believe that living in the community with others and God will enable them to experience God and to move closer to **mukti**.

The five **khands** (stages of liberation) are **piety, knowledge, effort, grace** and **truth**.

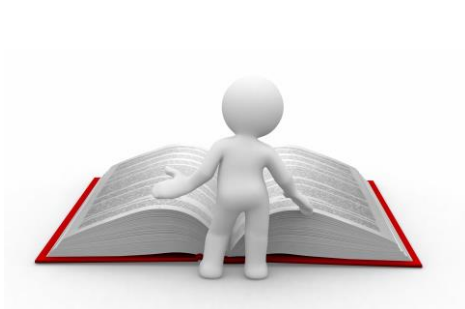
All humans are born into **piety**. This enables them to meet with God through commitment or devotion to him.

Knowledge is gained once an individual has devoted time to God and learned about him. The more a person knows the more aware of how vast the universe is and how little they truly know.

Effort is achieved by devoting oneself to God. The individual will develop their mind and intelligence as far as possible.

Grace is only achieved when God takes part in the development of the individual. God through his love, enables spiritual growth and strength.

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



The 5 Evils/ Barriers to Mukti

Sikhs believe that there are a number of **barriers** to achieving **Mukti**. Sikhs believe that **illusion, self-centeredness** and the **five evils** take people away from God.

One of the difficulties that can stop people from spiritual growth is the illusion that the things in life that will not last, such as material possessions are important. This is considered an addiction and will stop people from achieving **mukti**. **Self-centeredness** sometimes called **ego** prevents people from being close to God and obeying his will.

The 5 evils are seen as the opposite to the 5 virtues. They are:

Anger usually results from a lack of control. Hatred often leads to anger and this is not acceptable for Sikhs when it is directed at a person God created.

Uncontrolled **Lust** and sexual desire outside of marriage is a sign of weakness. This can lead to further wrong doings and make a person unreliable.

Greed, the desire to possess more than one needs for daily life. It is selfish and is a result of self-control. It ignores the principles of equality and justice.

Worldly attachments is connected with greed because both place too great an emphasis on possessions and relationships within the world.

Sometimes the evil of **pride** is sometimes called false pride because it involves being proud of things which are given, rather than achieved.

The importance of being gurmukh (God-centred) rather than manmukh (man-centred)

- Sikhs aim to have their mind set on God at all times. A God centred person (**Gurmukh**) has turned towards God and this is as God intended.
- This person will live according to Sikh teaching and meditates on the name of God.
- He or she is free from **attachment, pride and ego** and free of the evils.
- This person will choose to do good, for the sake of good and with no other motive.

- **Manmukh** describes people who are concerned with themselves.
- They are attached to worldly wealth and things that will not last.
- A **Manmukh** will always want more. They do not concern themselves with the needs of others.
- They concentrate on themselves and their **ego**, and act in a way that satisfies their own desires.
- Their words and actions are controlled by the **five evils** and the **illusion** that convinces them that temporary things are important. This will prevent them from becoming liberated.

- **Haumai** is difficult to translate accurately. It can mean **pride, self-reliance or egotism**.
- Guru Nanak taught that self-reliance can prevent liberation as it can prevent individuals from understanding their dependence of God.
- **Haumai** is sometimes described as a spiritual disease which those who are **manmukh** have. It produces confusion and brings suffering.
- The way to overcome this is to become **gurmukh**, to remember God and forget the self.

Beliefs about the nature of human life

- Belief in the oneness of humanity and in the equality of all, including complete equality of women with men.
- The expression of the equality of all in:
 - the stories of the lives of Gurus, including Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh
 - the Guru Granth Sahib
 - in Sikhism today.
- Sewa: the importance and priority of service to others, including physical (tan), mental (man) and material (dhan).
- The role and importance of the sangat (religious community).

The Oneness of Humanity

- Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism, was born into a country influenced by both Hindu and Muslim religions.
- **Guru Nanak** strongly believe that there was **one God** and more than one way to approach him. This is the reason that Sikhs do not feel the need to convert others.
- Sikhs believe in the **oneness of humanity** and everyone can find their own path to God.
- Sikhism is an inclusive faith and Sikhs are expected to honour the rights of others to practice their faith.
- Sikhs believe that all creatures are created by God. Humans are special as they can make judgments of right and wrong, and within them is the **divine spark** that is from God.
- If God is within all people then no one should be rejected or neglected. Everyone should be treated **equally**. This includes people of all races and religions, and also includes men and women.
- **'All beings and creature are his; he belongs to all'**
- **'Show kindness and mercy to all life'**
- **'We are the sons of the one God; there is no Hindu and no Muslim'.**



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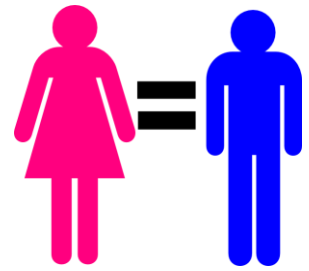
The Langar.

- The belief in **equality** led **Guru Nanak** to introduce the langar, the free meal. It is customary in all **gurdwaras**.
- The practice demonstrates the Sikh belief in equality.
- All people will eat together, everyone is welcome, men, women, rich and poor and people from all faiths.
- The food is always **vegetarian** so that all people can eat it.
- Sikhs will often help in the langar kitchen as an act of **sewa** (selfless service).



In the Gurdwara

- Both men and women take part in worship, reading the Guru Granth Sahib, playing music and serving in the langar.
- Any man or woman, regardless of their status, can be initiated and become **amritdhari Sikhs**.



The Five Ks.

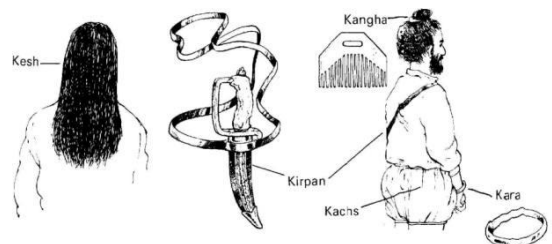
- Amritdhari Sikhs (Sikhs that have been initiated into the Khalsa) will wear the five Ks as a symbol of their faith. Many other Sikhs will also choose to wear them as a symbol of faith and unity.

Kesh (uncut hair) Sikhs believe that the hair is a gift from God. Many will wear a **Turban** to keep it clean. The turban itself is not one of the five Ks.

Kanga (wooden comb) This is carried to maintain the tidiness of the **kesh** and to remind Sikhs to keep their body and mind healthy.

Kara (a steel bracelet) The kara represents the unbreakable bond with God. The steel is a symbol of strength and integrity.

Kachera (cotton underwear) It is a reminder of the traditional role of Sikhs as soldiers. It is modest and a reminder of how a Sikh may need to act quickly and with dignity. It is a reminder for the need for self-control and chastity.



Kirpan (a small sword) The sign that Sikhs are soldiers in the army of God. The kirpan must never be used in anger.

How did Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh promote equality?

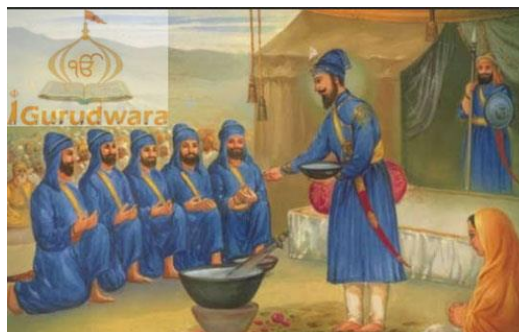
- Guru Nanak is said to have travelled many miles across India and the Middle East. He always showed great respect to those who held different religious views and spent time talking about God.
- Guru Nanak taught that all of humanity was created by God, with equal value. He respected both men and women and believed that they could take an **equal share in worship and within the Sikh community**. In the time of Guru Nanak women were treated less favourably than men.
- Guru Nanak was concerned about the **inequality** caused by Hinduism and the **caste system**. It was from this concern that he created the **langar**. This tradition has continued since the time of Guru Nanak.
- After Guru Nanak the Sikhs were led by nine other Gurus in human form.
- **Guru Gobind Singh** was nine years old when he became the tenth Guru.
- During his leadership the Sikh community developed and was strengthened.
- In 1708, when Guru Gobind Singh knew he would not recover from a wound, he declared that the **Guru Granth Sahib** would be the final Guru. Sikhs now use the exact same copies of the Guru Granth Sahib as he established it.
- One of the most important actions Guru Gobind Singh took was to establish the **Khalsa**, a body of committed Sikhs into which Sikhs would be initiated. He did this at the festival of **Vaisakhi** in 1699.

The Panj Piare

Guru Gobind Singh explained to the Sikhs, who had come to celebrate **Vaisakhi**, that they were living in a dangerous time and it was important that the weakness of the community was replaced with unity and strength. He drew his sword and asked the crowd, "Who will die for God and his Guru?" At last, one Sikh came forward and was led into the Guru's tent. There was a swish of a sword and a thud, the Guru emerged from the tent with blood on his sword. He then asked the same question and again another Sikh came forward. This then happened a further three times and the crowd began to become scared and confused. Then the Guru came out of the tent with the five men, dressed in special clothes. They had shown absolute belief in the Guru. They were given **amrit**, a mixture of water and sugar crystals prepared by the Guru and his wife.

The five men were all from different backgrounds yet all emerged from the tent the same, symbolising equality. The men now became "**Saint Soldiers**" who would defend the faith, work for justice and equality and were committed to God.

The **Panj Piare** were initiated along with Guru Gobind Singh and his wife. The Guru said once initiated a woman would take the surname **Kaur** meaning **princess** and a man the surname **Singh** meaning **lion**. The common last names were intended to eliminate the **caste** system and promote equality for all. The ceremony of initiation is also known as **Amrit Sanskar**.



Equality in Sikhism today

Today there are approximately 30 million Sikhs in the world. All **gurdwaras** have a langar, which accepts people from all backgrounds, if they follow Sikhism. Men and women will both serve **langar** and perform the rituals of worship and perform **Sewa**. Men and women will share the upbringing of children and are both present in the community, doing both paid and voluntary work.

Sikhs believe that **sewa** is an important part of life that will lead them to God and help them to be gurmukh. Selfless service helps Sikhs move away from **pride, greed and self-centeredness**, and develop virtues such as **humility, compassion and love**. Sikhs believe that God is in everyone, so to love others is to love God.

"One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord and Master"

Guru Granth Sahib 286

Sewa means selfless service. It is a way of life for Sikhs. It is a service provided not for personal gain. Serving God is part of what Sikhs do to be close to God. This is one of the reasons Sikhs do not live a solitary existence.

There are three types of sewa;

Tan: Physical sewa. This involves using the body to help others by preparing, cooking or serving in the langar. Any physical task that will benefit others.

Man: Mental sewa. This relates to using the mind and mental skills to help others, for example reading the Guru Granth Sahib or teaching it to others.

Dhan: Material sewa. Sikhs expect to use their material wealth to help others. Many give a tenth of their income to the sangat, the Sikh community.



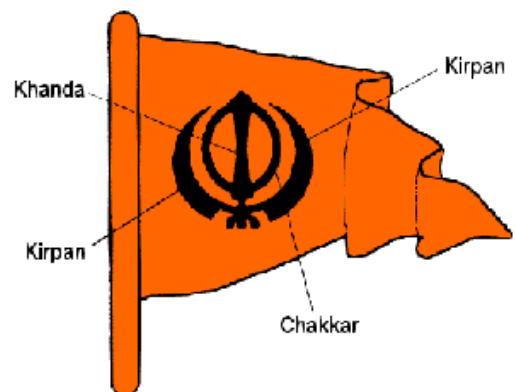
The Gurus believed that being a part of a community of believers would bring people closer to God. These communities are called **sangat**.

“Join the Sat Sangat, the True Congregation, and find the Lord. The Gurmukh embraces love for the Lord” Guru Granth Sahib 22

Today the word sangat remind Sikhs of their duty to develop spiritual understanding and so get closer to God.

The sangat enables people to develop their religious understanding and practice, it is also inspiring. In addition to worship the sangat also provides opportunities for sewa.

The **Nishan Sahib** is the flag flew outside the gurdwara, it is a sign of a Sikh gurdwara in which the sangat meets. The symbol on the flag is called the **Khanda** it represents the most important values in Sikhism, One God, Divine justice and freedom and the need to defend the faith.



Sikhism: Practices

Gurdwara	The Sikh holy building. Translates to 'door to the Guru'
Palki	The canopy above the Takht
Takht	The throne on which the Guru Granth Sahib is kept
Akhand path	A continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib
Gurpurb	A celebration of the birth or death of the Gurus
Golden Temple	A Gurdwara in Amritsar in India. Many Sikhs visit here on pilgrimage.
Amrit Sanskar	The Amrit ceremony - an initiation Sikhism where a Sikh chooses to become a member of the Khalsa. They are then known as an amritdhari Sikh.
Khalsa	The collective name for initiated Sikhs. Members of the khalsa are fully committed to key practices of Sikhism such as wearing the 5 Ks.
Sahajdhari Sikhs	A Sikh who has not fully committed to all practices of Sikhism and has not been initiated e.g. they may not wear all of the 5 Ks, or may still eat meat or drink alcohol
Amritdhari Sikhs	An initiated Sikh who is a member of the Khalsa. They would wear the 5 Ks, be vegetarian, not drink alcohol etc.
Singh	Meaning Lion. If a Sikh man does not already have the family name Singh after his naming ceremony, he would take this name on if he goes through the amrit ceremony and joins the Khalsa.
Kaur	Meaning Princess. If a Sikh woman does not already have the family name Kaur after her naming ceremony, she would take this name on if she goes through the amrit ceremony and joins the Khalsa.
Nam Japna	Meditating on the name of God



Key Practices

Worship and service

- Religious features of the gurdwara: design, furniture, and artefacts; the practices associated with these features and their importance, including the palki and takht.
- The role of the gurdwara within the Sikh community.
- The role of prayer in the home, GGS 305:4.
- The role and importance of the akhand path.
- The meaning and significance of langar as an expression of sewa.
- The significance of meditating on the name of God (nam japna) in daily life and in the gurdwara.

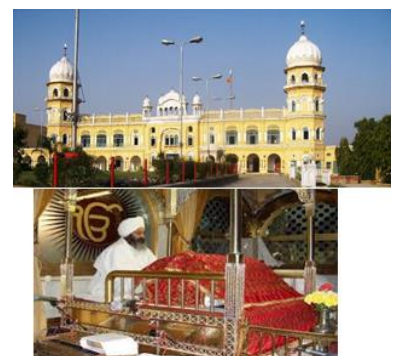
The Gurdwara

A Gurdwara is the place where Sikhs come together for worship. The first Gurdwara in the world was built by Guru Nanak in 1521-2 at Kartarpur. There are about 200 Gurdwaras in Britain. The literal meaning of the Punjabi word Gurdwara is 'the residence of the Guru', or 'the door that leads to the Guru'. In a modern Gurdwara, the Guru is not a person but the book of Sikh scriptures called the Guru Granth Sahib.

It is the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib that gives the Gurdwara its religious status, **so any building containing the book is a Gurdwara**. Although a Gurdwara may be called the residence of the Guru (meaning the residence of God), Sikhs believe that God is present everywhere.

The purpose of a Gurdwara

- It's a place to learn spiritual wisdom
- It's a place for religious ceremonies
- It's a place where children learn the Sikh faith, ethics, customs, traditions and texts
- A Gurdwara is also a community centre, and offers food, shelter, and companionship to those who need it.



Inside the Gurdwara

- There are no idols, statues or religious pictures in a Gurdwara, because Sikhs worship only God, and they regard God as having no physical form.
- Nor are there candles, incense, or bells, or any other ritualistic devices. The focus of attention, and the only object of reverence in the main hall is the book of Sikh

scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib, which is treated with the respect that would be given to a human Guru.

- The Guru Granth Sahib is **kept in a room of its own during the night** and carried in procession to the main hall at the start of the day's worship.

The importance of the Guru Granth Sahib (see below for more detail on the treatment of the GGS)

- The book is placed on a raised platform (Takht meaning "throne") under a canopy (Palki), and covered with an expensive cloth (a rumalla) when not being read.
- During a service a person with a fan called a Chauri waves it over the Guru Granth Sahib.

The Langar Hall

- Every Gurdwara has a Langar attached to it where food is served to anyone, free of charge.
- The term Langar is also used for the communal meal served at the Gurdwaras.
- Although Sikhs are not required to be vegetarian, 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.

Flying the flag

- Gurdwaras fly the Sikh flag outside. The flag is orange/yellow and has the Sikh emblem in the middle. It is called the Nishan Sahib.

Visiting the Gurdwara

- In India many Sikhs visit a Gurdwara before work.
- In Britain 39% of Sikhs go once a week, and while Sikhs do not regard any particular day of the week as a holy day, they usually go to a Gurdwara on Sundays as that fits the UK pattern of work.
- Most Sikhs go to the Gurdwara on Gurpurbs, the festivals honouring the Gurus.
- Anyone, of any faith, can visit a Gurdwara and will be made welcome.

Before going into a Gurdwara

- All visitors to the Gurdwara should remove their shoes and cover their heads before entering the main hall.
- It is forbidden to smoke or take tobacco on to the premises and visitors cannot enter the Gurdwara while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

On entering a Gurdwara

- Sikhs will bow to the Guru Granth Sahib as the first thing they do, touching the floor with their forehead. This not only shows their respect but also indicates that they submit themselves to the truths contained in the book.
- People also place an offering of food or money in front of the Guru Granth Sahib. This is used to run the Gurdwara and the free food kitchen (*Langar*).
- The offering is not charity but a sharing of God's gifts. If a person has no money or food to offer they may offer flowers, or just some words of sincere thanks.



Seating in a Gurdwara

- Everyone sits on the floor in a Gurdwara. This is to be humble before the Guru Granth Sahib and because it gives everyone a place of equal status to sit.
- No-one should sit with their feet pointing at the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Men and women generally sit on separate sides of the prayer hall so that they are not distracted by one another when they should be focusing on God.



Sacred food in the Gurdwara

- Towards the end of a service karah prashad, a sweet vegetarian food that has been blessed, will be served. This should be taken and received in cupped hands as a gift of God.

Worship in the Gurdwara

- Sikhs do not have ordained priests and any Sikh can lead the prayers and recite the scriptures to the congregation.
- Each Gurdwara has a **Granthi** who organises the daily services and reads from the Guru Granth Sahib. A Granthi is not a priest but is the reader/custodian of the Adi Granth.
- A Granthi must be fluent in reading Gurmukhi and must be properly trained in all aspects of looking after the Guru Granth Sahib. They are expected to be an initiated member of the Sikh Khalsa who lives a life that exemplifies the ideals of the Khalsa.

Kirtan

The morning service begins with the singing of *Asa Di Var*, a hymn written by Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism. Other hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib are then sung, accompanied by instruments. This hymn-singing is called *Kirtan* and is an essential part of Sikh worship.

Sermon

A sermon or talk, usually based on a theme from Sikh history, comes next. This is followed by the singing of *Anand Sahib*, a hymn written by Guru Amar Das, the Third Guru.

Ardas

The congregation then stands with eyes closed facing the Guru Granth Sahib for prayer (*Ardas*). During the prayer the word *Waheguru* (Punjabi for 'praise to the Guru') is often repeated.

Hukam

After the prayer, the Guru Granth Sahib is opened at a random page and the hymn found at the top of the left-hand page (*Vak* or *Hukam*) is read. The text is considered to be a relevant lesson for the day.

'Worship in adoration that True Lord; everything is under His Power.' GGS 521

'Worship the True Lord, and believe in the True Guru; this brings the merit of making donations to charity, kindness and compassion'. GGS 688

'Worship and adore Him, and you shall be at peace forever'. GGS 896

How is respect shown towards the Guru Granth Sahib?

- The Guru Granth Sahib is considered the revealed Word of God spoken through Sikh Gurus and other blessed Saints.
- The traditional Sikh belief is that the scriptures contain the actual words and verses spoken by their Gurus.
- The Guru Granth Sahib is written in Gurmukhi (the script in which the Punjabi language is written) and has 1,430 pages. Each copy of the Guru Granth Sahib, regardless of its size, is identical with regard to the layout of the pages.

The Guru Granth Sahib is given the same **respect** that was shown to the human Gurus during their lifetimes.

- In the Gurdwara it is **put to bed** in its own room every evening.
- At the beginning of the day the Granthi, and any other Sikhs present, **form a procession** to carry the Guru Granth Sahib to its position in the Diwan hall (the room where worship takes place) of the Gurdwara.
- The Guru Granth Sahib is **never placed on the ground** and Sikhs **never turn their back** on it.

- While the Guru Granth Sahib is being read the Granthi (the appointed reader of the scripture) **waves a special fan**, called a chauri, over the pages.
- When not in use, it is covered by a silk cloth, a rumalla.



The Role of the Gurdwara in the Community

- In the UK, gurdwaras often act as social centres for the Sikh community, and weddings and funerals often take place in gurdwaras.
- Gurdwaras are run by Sikhs, most of whom do the work needed **voluntarily**.
- There are very few paid posts attached to gurdwaras, e.g. cleaning and maintenance.
- In larger towns and cities, a management team or committee manage the finances and administration.

The Granthi

- Granthi means someone who reads the 'granth', a book and for Sikhs that refers to the GGS.
- Granthis are amritdhari Sikhs, members of the Khalsa. They may be men or women.
- They are expected to be of good character and to live according to the Sikh Code of Conduct (the Rehat Maryada).
- Granthis arrange the daily religious services, including readings. Some may be paid a small salary.
- The most important work for a granthi is taking care of the GGS. They arrange ceremonies to bring the GGS from the rest room to the prayer hall in the morning and to rest in the evening.



The Langar

At the centre of Sikh teaching about equality is the langar (kitchen).

- Every gurdwara has a langar where all people are welcome to a free meal regardless of their sex, colour or religion.
- There are no rituals observed in the langar and everyone eats together.
- All the food is vegetarian so that no religious group is offended.
- Guru Nanak established the langar because he rejected the Hindu caste system where people of different castes do not eat together.
- Guru Nanak wanted to stress the idea that everyone is equal. Everyone shares the tasks of preparation, cooking, serving and cleaning. This shows sewa (selfless service) to the others in the sangat (community), the gurdwara, and the world outside.



- The teaching of the langar was continued by Guru Amar Das (the third Guru) who made a rule that no one, however important, could see him until they had first eaten in the langar.

'The Langar – the Kitchen of the Guru's Shabad has been opened, and its supplies never run short'. GGS 967

Langar Importance

- Perform sewa (selfless service)
- One way that everyone can be involved in service for the good of all.
- Public expression of the Sikh belief in equality.
- Expression that all human beings belong to one brotherhood, and there is a divine spark in each human being.
- Resources of the world should be shared.
- Sikhs believe in living in a community, not on their own.
- Security and protection for all.



Prayer in the home and meditating on God's name

- Sikhs worship God and only God.
- Unlike members of many other religions they worship God in his true abstract form, and don't use images or statues to help them.
- Sikh worship can be public or private.

Private Prayer and Worship

- Sikhs can pray at any time and any place.
- Sikh aims to get up early, bathe, and then start the day by meditating on God.
- The Sikh code of conduct lays down a stern discipline for the start of the day:
- A Sikh should wake up early (three hours before dawn), take a bath and, concentrating his/her thoughts on God, repeat the name Waheguru
- There are set prayers that a Sikh should recite in the morning and evening, and before going to sleep.
- Although the Sikh God is beyond description Sikhs feel able to pray to God as a person and a friend who cares for them.
- Sikhs regard prayer as a way of spending time in company with God.
- Guru Arjan wrote of the importance of prayer: "The praising of His Name is the highest of all practices. It has uplifted many a human soul. It slakes the desire of restless mind. It imparts an all-seeing vision".
Guru Arjan



Meditation on the name of God

- Sikhs have three responsibilities they are expected to fulfil. The first is to meditate on the name of God (nam japna).
- The others are doing honest work while remembering God and sharing all they have and giving to charity.
- Sikhs believe that the more they are able to think about God, the less selfish they will become.
- Doing honest work and giving to charity, as well as performing sewa will flow more naturally once God is at the centre of their lives.

The Akhand Path

- An Akhand Path is a continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib.
- This would be done in shifts, as it is expected to take around 48 hours to complete.
- It is often done at an important event such as a festival, wedding or funeral, and men and women can both be readers in the akhand path.
- Sometimes the Guru Granth Sahib may be taken from the Gurdwara to a new business or a new home to complete an akhand path.
- It is believed to be a great blessing, and not an empty custom to be taken lightly.

Festivals and lifestyle

- Festivals and their importance for Sikhs in Great Britain today, including the origins and significance of the following: • Vaisakhi (Baisakhi) • Divali

Vaisakhi

- Vaisakhi, also spelled Baisakhi, is one of the most important dates in the Sikh calendar.
- It is the Sikh New Year festival and is celebrated on April 13 or 14.
- Vaisakhi is a long-established **harvest festival** in the Punjab.
- In 1699 the tenth guru, **Guru Gobind Singh chose Vaisakhi as the occasion to transform the Sikhs into a family of soldier saints, known as the Khalsa.**

What did Guru Gobind Singh do at the Vaisakhi festival in 1699?

- During the Vaisakhi festival Guru Gobind Singh came out of a tent carrying a sword. He challenged any Sikh who was prepared to give his life to come into the tent. The Guru returned alone with his sword covered in blood. He then requested another volunteer and repeated the same action four times until five men disappeared into the tent. The crowd was very concerned until they saw five men return wearing turbans with the Guru.
- These five men became known as the *Panj Piare*, or 'Beloved Five'. The men were then baptised into the Khalsa by the Guru. He sprinkled them with *Amrit* ('immortalising nectar': the Sikh term for holy water) and said prayers. This is the basis of the Sikh baptism ceremony

Celebrations at Vaisakhi

Vaisakhi is celebrated in much the same way as Gurpurbs. **Gurdwaras are decorated** and visited.

Parades, dancing and singing happen throughout the day. Many Sikhs choose to be baptised into the Khalsa brotherhood on this day.



The festival is marked with *nagar kirtan* processions: processions through the streets (*nagar* means "town") which form an important part of Sikh culture and religious celebrations. *Kirtan* is a term meaning the singing of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book. Celebrations always include **music, singing and chanting scriptures and hymns**. The processions are led by traditionally dressed Panj Piaras. **The Guru Granth Sahib will be carried** in the procession in a place of honour.

Diwali

Diwali, the Festival of Light, comes at the end of October or early November. It's a festival that Sikhs and Hindus celebrate. For Sikhs, Diwali is particularly important because it **celebrates the release from prison of the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, and 52 other princes with him, in 1619.**

Guru Hargobind

- During a time of persecution in 1619, Guru Hargobind and 53 Hindi princes were imprisoned. All were arrested for political reasons.
- The emperor investigated the charges and said to release Guru Hargobind, however, Guru Hargobind demanded everyone be released not just him.
- The emperor replied and said as many as could hold on to the Gurus clothes as he walked out of a narrow gate could be released.
- His coat had 52 long tassels on and each prince was able to hold onto the cloak. All were freed.

The martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh

- Bhai Mani Singh was the granthi of the Golden Temple.
- He had gained permission for a gathering of Sikhs to celebrate Bandi Chhor Divas (A Sikh holiday) in return for a large tax that the emperor demanded.
- However, he later discovered that the emperor was intending to kill many Sikhs at this gathering and cancelled the meeting. The emperor then ordered his death.

So, celebrating Diwali is important for Sikhs as it reminds them about the importance of freedom, and of standing up for injustice, and against persecution.

How do Sikhs celebrate Diwali?

- Having an akhand path (a continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib).
- Street processions
- Spring cleaning and decorating homes with lamps and lights
- Wearing new clothes
- Eating Langar and bringing food to others
- Fireworks
- Visiting the Golden Temple in India.



The Gurmurbh

- Gurmurbh are festivals that are associated with the lives of the Gurus.
- They are happy occasions which are celebrated most enthusiastically by Sikhs.

The most important Gurmurbh are:

- The birthday of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikhism
- The birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, founder of the Khalsa
- The martyrdom of Guru Arjan
- The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

How are the Gurmurbh celebrated?

- Sikhs celebrate Gurmurbh with an *akhand path*
- Gurdwaras are decorated with flowers, flags and lights, and Sikhs dress up in new or smart clothes and join together for special services.
- Hymns are sung from the Guru Granth Sahib and poems are recited in praise of the Gurus.
- In India and parts of Britain, there are processions where the Sikh Scripture is paraded around. Five people representing the first five members of the Khalsa (the Panj Piaras) head the procession carrying the Sikh flag. Musicians, singers and martial artists follow.
- Outside some Gurdwaras, free sweets are offered to the general public, regardless of their faith.

In India:

The Gurmurbh is celebrated on the actual day of the birth or death of the guru.

Schools are closed, and the celebration happens on a large scale in public, with large processions.

In Britain:

The Gurmurbh is celebrated on the closest Sunday to the birth or death of the guru.

Schools are, therefore, not closed for the occasion.

Celebrations centre much more around the Gurdwara and are not celebrated on such a wide scale, although there may be a local procession.



The Golden Temple

The importance of visiting Sikh historical gurdwaras, including the Golden Temple (Harimandir Sahib) in Amritsar.

- Many Sikhs visit a famous historic Gurdwara in Amritsar (Punjab, India). This is the Harmandir Sahib, also known as the **Golden Temple**, and it is a centre of spiritual and cultural identity.
- Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru designed the original gurdwara (in 1604). This was destroyed during the eighteenth century.
- In the early 19th century, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had the Golden Temple rebuilt and **covered the upper part of the building with gold**.
- This is why it is referred to as the Golden Temple.



- The Golden Temple is significant because **it houses the Sikh holy book**, the Adi Granthi, when it was completed in 1604.
- Later on, Guru Gorbind Singh added to the Adi Granth. A copy of this volume, the Guru Granth Sahib, now rests on a throne beneath a velvet canopy decorated with silver and gold thread.
- The **holy book is read out continuously** and Sikhs visit The Golden Temple to hear the reading of this important living Guru.

The design of the Golden Temple

- The design of the Golden Temple is important. There are **four doors** which mark four entrances to the temple. This symbolises the Sikh belief in equality and their view that **all people are welcome** into their holy place.
- The building is surrounded by a large rectangular lake. It was this pool of amrit (holy water) which gave the city of Amritsar its name.
- As visitors walk around the marble pavement that surrounds the pool they see many

shrines and inscriptions of historic importance.

- Next to the Golden Temple stands the Akal Takht, a building which contains the **rest room for the Guru Granth Sahib**
- Everyone is able to visit the Golden Temple to worship.
- At the Golden Temple there is also a **langar**, the free Sikh kitchen which serves a vegetarian meal that is available for all. About 100,000 meals are served every day.



Birth and naming ceremonies including their meaning and significance.

- Sikhs follow the instructions for all ceremonies (birth, naming and marriage) as set out in the Sikh Rahit Maryada (Sikh code of conduct) and by following the holy book the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Prayer is the first action of Sikh women when they find out that they are pregnant.
- When the baby is born, the words of the Mool Mantra (a key prayer, composed by Guru Nanak) are whispered into the ears of the child and a drop of honey is placed inside the mouth.
- It is also customary to visit the temple as soon as it is physically possible after giving birth, this is usually within forty days of the birth of the child.
- Once inside the Gurdwara the Guru Granth Sahib is randomly opened by the Granthi and a passage is read out aloud.
- The family will then choose a name by using the first letter of the hymn on the page opened. The baby's name is announced to the congregation.
- The Granthi will also add Singh (lion) as a surname if the baby is a boy, and Kaur (princess) if the child is a girl. This shows the Sikh belief in equality of all and prevents discrimination based on what caste in India any individual had come from.
- The baby will be given a spoonful of amrit, a mixture of sugar and water. The Granthi stirs the amrit with a Khanda, a two-edged sword. The Granthi then dips the sword in the amrit and lightly touches the baby's tongue and head with the tip of the sword.
- The rest of the amrit is given to the baby's mother to drink.
- To celebrate, Karah Parshad, a sweet dish made from flour, semolina, butter and sugar, is distributed amongst the congregation.



The initiation ceremony (Amrit Sanskar)

The meaning and importance of the Khalsa and the five Ks, and the different perspectives of sahajdhari and amritdhari Sikhs.

Amrit Ceremony

- Sikhs who have been through the Amrit Ceremony of initiation, or Amrit Sanskar, become baptised Sikhs, take new names, and wear the 5 Ks.
- The Amrit Ceremony is the initiation rite introduced by Guru Gobind Singh when he founded the Khalsa in 1699.
- A Sikh can go through this initiation as soon as they are old enough to understand the full commitment that they are making.



The ceremony

- The ceremony takes place in a Gurdwara, before the Guru Granth Sahib, and in the presence of 5 initiated Sikhs (who represent the Panj Piaras, the first 5 Sikhs to be initiated).
- During the ceremony, hymns are recited from the Sikh scripture, prayers are said, and the principles of Sikhism are affirmed.
- Then amrit is prepared. Amrit is a mixture of sugar and water that has been stirred with a double-edged sword.
- The candidates for initiation drink some of the amrit from the same bowl, and have it sprinkled on their eyes and hair.
- Each then recites the Mool Mantra (the fundamentals of Sikhism).
- There are readings from the Guru Granth Sahib and an explanation of rules of Sikhism.
- The ceremony ends with the eating of the ceremonial karah parshad. Parshad is a sweet tasting food which has been blessed. It is made from semolina, sugar and ghee.
- If they have not already taken the name Singh or Kaur, they would do so following the ceremony.

An Amritdhari Sikh, who has been through the Amrit Ceremony, will follow certain rules that a Sahajdhari Sikh may not. These include:

Worship one God

Wear the 5 Ks e.g. do not cut hair

Do not eat meat

Do not cohabit (live) with anyone who is not their husband or wife

Do not use tobacco

Do not drink alcohol

Do not steal or gamble



Sahajdhari Sikhs may choose to follow some of these rules as well, but an Amritdhari Sikh must be fully committed to these rules.

Exam Questions

Beliefs and Teachings

1. Which one of the following is the name of the holy book of Sikhism? [1 mark]
 - a) Guru Granth Sahib.
 - b) Sangat.
 - c) Singh.
 - d) Mool Mantra.
2. Give two examples of how someone might show 'haumai'. [2 marks]
3. Explain two ways in which belief in karma influences Sikhs today. [4 marks]
4. Explain two Sikh teachings about God. Refer to sacred writings or another source of Sikh belief and teaching in your answer. [5 marks]
5. 'For Sikhs, sewa (service to others) is the most important duty.' Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
 - refer to Sikh teaching
 - give reasoned arguments to support this statement
 - give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
 - reach a justified conclusion.[12 marks]

Practices

1. In which city is the Golden Temple? [1 mark]
 - a) Delhi
 - b) Amritsar
 - c) Kartarpur
 - d) Varanasi
2. Give two of the Sikh 5Ks [2 marks]
3. Explain two contrasting ways in which Sikhs show respect for the Guru Granth Sahib [4 marks]
4. Explain two ways in which the Sikh birth and naming ceremonies are important. Refer to Sikh teaching in your answer [5 mark]
5. 'The most important duty of a Sikh is to become a member of the Khalsa' Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:
 - Refer to Sikh teaching
 - Give developed arguments to support this statement
 - Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
 - Reach a justified conclusion[12 marks]