

A Brief Introduction to Sikhism

By

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FOREWORD

With perhaps 22 to 25 million adherents, Sikhism is one of the five largest religions in the world. Also nearly 10 percent of the Sikhs live outside India, the land where the religion took root and flourished 500 years ago. Sizeable communities of Sikhs have existed in Singapore and adjoining lands for over 150 years and in the United Kingdom and North America for over a century. Yet the oft-heard lament is how little our neighbors know of our religion and its very rich tradition. This reality becomes even more poignant when we see how uninformed of their own roots are the second and third generation of Sikhs that are going up in this worldwide diaspora.

In the meantime, the world has shrunk to a global village. We coexist with a variety of non-Sikh neighbors. We, and our neighbors, need to learn from and about each other. Non-Sikhs are curious about us and Sikhs too need to discover the history and meaning that underlie the magic and mystery of their religious beliefs and practices. These are two very fundamental and interrelated issues.

By this small book Nottingham-based Gurbachan Singh Sidhu has very ably stepped up to the plate to fill this void. He has taken up questions that we are asked every day by young Sikhs of the diaspora as well as by our non-Sikh neighbors – questions that one would normally expect to be dealt with in a sentence or two in a catechism. They span the gamut from “Are there any food restrictions and what is the place of women in Sikhism to esoteric and challenging questions like what is the reality of the universe or of the human soul, and do Sikhs believe in transmigration?”

Mr. G.S. Sidhu has done ample justice to his inquiries by the copious citations from the *Guru Granth*. His book, though not encyclopaedic, is therefore, much, much more than a simple catechism, and considerably more user friendly than an

encyclopaedia. Written in a very easy to read style, this small book is indeed a labor of love and an extremely useful resource on the very modern and relatively young tradition of the Sikhs. It should find much appreciation in interfaith communication.

I.J. Singh

Acknowledgments

This book was first published as a four page leaflet in the year 1968. At that time there was hardly any information about Sikhism available in the printed form in Britain. Fifty thousand copies of the leaflet were circulated throughout Great Britain. One copy of the leaflet fell into the hands of Rev R. Vivian Buddle of Saffron Walden College, Saffron Walden (Essex). Mr. Walden suggested expansion of the leaflet into a small booklet which could be used in schools for disseminating information about the beliefs and practices of the Sikhs.

The leaflet was transformed into a small booklet containing the beliefs of the Sikhs and their brief history up to the time of partition (1947). 10,000 copies of the revised booklet were published in 1973 with a foreword written by Mr. Walden. Since then the book has been gaining popularity year after year and has been published and re-published in 1977, 1983 and 1994. The book was not written for any pecuniary gains. It was made available free of charge but some unscrupulous people in Canada and America surreptitiously published extracts from this book and sold it.

One of the surreptitiously produced booklets reached the hands of Mr. Hardev Singh Shergill, who has once again persuaded me to have it re-printed at his cost for the benefit the Sikhs living in America and Canada. The book has now been revised once again

and a number of additional questions have been added. The history has been curtailed and kept to the minimum so that it covers only the Guru period.

I am grateful to Mr. Hardev Singh Shergill for showing so much interest in the book. My thanks also go to Mr. Bakhtawar Singh Sehra of Nottingham who has, as usual, spent a lot of time in preparing the book for the press. I am also obliged to Sardar Malkiat Singh Hayer, President of Guru Nanak Sat Sang Gurdwara Nottingham for agreeing to have the booklet printed for local youngsters.

My grateful thanks also go to Mr. I.J.Singh, a renowned Sikh Scholar of religion, who has very kindly added a concise foreword to the book. His interest in the book goes to prove that this book has some special appeal and can prove significantly useful for the next generation of Sikhs growing up in the western world.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The universally accepted function of religion is to protect society from social and moral degradation and to guide its destiny in such a way as to achieve the greatest good of the greatest number of people. It promotes finer aspects of life and tries to idealise the society. From times immemorial the world has been searching for a universal religion, which may be equally acceptable to all minds. Such a religion, instead of being a collection of dry and drab philosophical doctrines, must of necessity be based on inner realization and social altruism. Universal religion of this concept must “exist and rise up in the soul of man prior to finding expression in his words, customs and institutions”¹

Whenever the universal human values are on the decline, religion is supposed to have failed in doing its duty of guiding the society. The more a religion tends to unite people and to strive for the service of humanity, the nearer it is to its aim. The world has seen many religions at different times. Sikhism is one of them and perhaps the latest.

Sikhism came on the world scene in the fifteenth century. It was an endeavour by Guru Nanak to create a universal religion. It is a union of all those who love God and serve humanity. A Sikh of Guru Nanak’s concept respects the adherents of all faiths

¹ *The Living God* by Nathan Soderblom

irrespective of their creeds or ways of worship. The example was set by Guru Nanak himself who made friends with an untouchable low caste Muslim named Mardana and kept his friendship with him till death without once asking Mardana to renounce Islam. Later the same principle was preached and practised by the Gurus that followed Guru Nanak. For example we find this principle fully reflected in *Guru Granth Sahib* (The sacred book of the Sikhs) compiled by the 5th Sikh Guru and updated by the 10th Guru. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is an anthology of poetry not exclusively written by the Sikh Gurus nor meant exclusively for the guidance of Sikhs alone. Side by side with the Guru's hymns are recorded the hymns of a king, a high caste Brahman, a low caste barber, a Muslim and an untouchable so-called Shudra all professing different traditional religions, coming from different areas and representing different social divisions. The message of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, as the Guru himself put it is, "meant for the benefit of all, friend or foe."² Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs had a number of Muslims in his army fighting against the tyrannical Mughal Empire. Last but not least it was a Muslim Saint Sayeen Mian Mir who laid the foundation stone of the Holiest Temple of the Sikhs. For a Sikh the whole human race is a united family, a brotherhood under one God³

Duncan Greenlees has summed up Sikhism as "the religion taught through Guru Granth Sahib and the whole community of disciples. It is a practical way of life, leading man straight to his goal, and does not involve itself in verbose theorising."

²aupdysM sm imqR sqRh BgvMq Bgiq Bwvni (pMnw 1357) aupdysu kry guru siqguru pUrw guru siqguru praupkwrIAw jIau (pMnw 96) aupdys chuM vrnW kau swJw

³sBy swJIvwl sdwiein qUM iksY n idsih bwhrw jIau (pMnw 97)

Chapter 2

What is Sikhism?

Sikhism is a way of life or self-discipline coupled with a belief in the unity of God, equality of human beings, faith in the Guru's word and love for everybody. The stepping-stone for a Sikh is to accept the existence of God and worship Him and Him alone with his tongue, his mind and his actions. A Sikh puts more trust in God than in his relatives or his possessions and acts in God's name. Gradually he reaches a stage where as the Guru says, "Water mingles with water and the light merges with light, discarding their separate existences."⁴

According to Sikhism, man's salvation lies not only in his faith but also in his character and his eagerness to do active good. "Life without virtue runs to waste"⁵ says Guru Nanak. The Guru gives practical tips to achieve the goal. Every Sikh is expected to replace lust, anger, greed, pride and undue worldly attachment with their virtuous counterparts, self-control, forgiveness, contentment love of God and humility before going to the next step of doing active good. It is like sweeping the floor. As a rule where broom does not reach, the dust will not vanish off itself. "The new thing will fill the vessel only if the existing one is emptied out,"⁶ says the Guru.

⁴ ijau jl mih jlu Awie Ktwnw] iqau joqI sMg joq mwnw (pMnw 278)

⁵ ibnu ismrn idnu rYin ibRQw ibhwie (pMnw 269) ivxu gux kIqy Bgiq n hoie (pMnw4)

⁶ vsqU AMdir vsqu smwvY dUjI hovY pwis (pMnw 474)

The Guru compares this step to a wrestling match where one wrestler is to fight with five (i.e. five evils)

“The Guru has patted me on the back”
And I have defeated the five doughty wrestlers”⁷

The next step is to do three-fold service physical, mental and material. The Sikh is called upon to work with his hands, head and heart (ੴ, ਮਨ, ਠਨ) to help others. The Guru’s command is:

“Those who work hard and share their honest earnings with others, Nanak they alone tread on the true path.”⁸

On the physical level of service a Sikh has to work hard, live by honest earnings, and offer help to others. He is not to live on the charity of other people or by misappropriating other’s earnings. Practical training for this is given to the Sikhs in the Gurdwara (Sikh Temple) where they do manual service with humility and voluntarily offer food and money. There they sweep the floor, clean the utensils, distribute food, dust the people’s shoes and do other manual jobs, however inferior, voluntarily. Out in the world the Sikhs are required to defend the weak, help the needy and stand for truth and justice even if it requires self-sacrifice.

On the spiritual level a Sikh serves by enlightening others about God and by guiding them on the path of righteousness. He is supposed to study *Guru Granth Sahib* (The Sikh Holy Book) and to keep his knowledge up to date. For this purpose his visit to a Gurdwara is a necessity where he can come across the best in Society. The Guru’s instruction is “Pray to God and help others pray to Him.”⁹

⁷ inhqy pMij juAwn mY gur QwpI idqI kMif jIAu (pMnw 74)

⁸ Gwil Kwie ikCu hQhu dyie] nwnk rwhu pCwxih syie (pMnw 1245)

⁹ Awip jphu Avrh nwmu jpwvhu (pMnw 290) Awip jpY Avrh nwmu jpwvY vf smrQ qwrn qrn (pMnw 1206)

On the material level the Sikh has to give alms, donations, and charity for noble causes. The Sikhs run many schools, colleges, dispensaries and institutions for the blind and the handicapped. For this purpose every Sikh is supposed to keep apart at least one tenth (*Daswandh*) of his income for material service of this sort. Some people offer their *Daswandh* in a Gurdwara in cash or kind. (This is akin to tithing - also seen in some churches.)

In doing the three-fold service a Sikh has to be selfless and to expect no reward for his services in this world or the next. "He who serves selflessly meets the Lord,"¹⁰ says the Guru. This type of service purifies the Sikh's senses and liberates him from egocentric judgements. His senses become organs of pure perception and, if focussed correctly, can have the reflection of fully perfected divinity.

The Sikh is now ready for the next step where he surrenders his 'ego' and submits to God's Will. In self-surrender the Sikh has not only to steer clear of the arid rocks of egotism but also to avoid the engulfing whirlpools of nihilism. Unlike a Sufi, he is not to go to the extent of *Anal haq* (I am God) neither is he to withdraw from the world like an ascetic or a hermit. The idea is that the 'I' the 'me' and the 'mine' should be ejected from the Sikh's consciousness. He should surrender his deeper self, or what Plotinus calls 'higher self' to God and act in His name. Call it purgation, self-simplification, or self-negation. The Guru wants the Sikh to feel and say from the innermost recesses of his heart "I am nought, my ego is a nonentity, and nothing do I call my own. *Sadhna* is yours alone Lord, save me in thy mercy"¹¹ "Where there is "I" 'You' are not, Now there is 'You' and 'I' has vanished."¹²

¹⁰ syvw krq hoie inhkwmI] iqs kau hoq prwpiq suAwmi (pMnw 286)
syvw krih syeI Plu pwvih ijn@I scu
kmwieAw (pMnw 432)

¹¹ mY nwhI kCu hau nhI ikCu Awih n morw (pMnw 858)

¹² jb hm hoqy qb qum nwhI Ab qum hhu hm nwhI] (pMnw 339) mY nwhI

Another most important thing a Sikh is required to do is to “remember God through the Guru’s word and to enjoy His blissful presence at all times.”¹³This goes on side by side with the steps outlined earlier and usually starts when the Sikh is a child of school-going age. The parents’ example (and advice) in remembering God is of paramount importance. The Sikh starts from repeating ‘Waheguru’ (O Lord you are wonderful) time and again and then passes on to the basic concept of Sikhism which runs as follows:

“God is one. His name is Truth. He is the all-pervading Creator, without fear, without enmity, immortal, unborn and self-existent. He is the greatest and the bounteous.”¹⁴

It is the firm belief of the Sikhs that God “existed in the beginning; He has existed through the ages. He exists even now and says Nanak He shall exist forever.”¹⁵

At first the Sikh repeats the basic concept mechanically just like a child learning his multiplication tables. This sort of repetition has very limited merit. The Guru Says, “People utter the name of God with their lips but bliss dawns only when it fills their hearts.”¹⁶

Slowly and steadily the Sikh begins to understand the Word and concentrates on its meanings. The object of worship remains the abstract and transcendental Almighty. No idol or human being is thought to be worthy of worship.” The Lord, who gave us everything, should not be forgotten even for a second”¹⁷

pRB sBu ikCu qyrw (pMnw 827)

¹³ ismir ismir ismir nwmu jIvw qnu mnu hoie inhwlw (pMnw 749)

¹⁴ < siq nwmu krqw purKu inrBau inrvYru Akwl mUriq AjUnI sYBM gur pRswi (pMnw 1)

¹⁵ Awid scu jugwid scu] hY BI scu nwnk hosI BI scu (pMnw 1)

¹⁶ rwm rwm sBu ko khY kihAY rwmu n hoie] gur prswdI rwmu min vsY qw Plu pwvY koie] AMqir

goivMd ijsu lwgY pRIiq] hir iqsu kdy n vIsrY hir hir krih sdw min cIiq (pMnw 491)

¹⁷ ieku iqlu pRBU n vIsrY ijin sBu ikCu dInw rwm (pMnw848) eyku

The Guru is very firm with those who forget God and start worshipping the various gods and goddesses. He says, “Why worship gods and goddess? What can you ask from them and what can they give?”¹⁸

The more a Sikh concentrates on **Naam** (the Guru’s word), the sooner he reaches a stage where the sense of duality vanishes altogether and the Sikh is fully in tune with the Creator. “God and devotee become as close as a fish is to water and there is no distance between them.”¹⁹ This ultimate union with God is the goal of the Sikh.

Religion as taught by the Sikh gurus is not only international but it binds humanity together for a higher purpose. For a Sikh, God is one and whole human race is one family. Colour, caste creed, sex and other artificial barriers have no meaning. The Sikh is not to debate about the existence of God but to remember Him and love His creation. It is therefore a religion, which represents humanity and is badly needed in this strife-torn world heading towards mutual annihilation due to internecine wars resulting from hatred, greed, pride and undue worldly attachment.

iDAwiein sdw suKu pwiein
inhclu rwju iqnwhw hy (pMnw 1057) hir eyku ismir eyku ismir
eyku ismir ipAwry (pMnw
679) hir ieko dwqw syvIAY hir ieku iDAweIAY (pMnw 590) hir eyk
ibnu kCu Avru nwhI
Bwau duqIAw jwlIAY (pMnw 461)

¹⁸ dyvI dyvw pUjIAY BweI ikAw mwgau ikAw dyih (pMnw 637)

¹⁹ jl mIn pRB jIau eyk qUHY iBMn Awn n jwnIAY (pMnw 1278)

Chapter 3

Beliefs and practices of the Sikhs

Q 1: -What is the Sikh view of God?

Answer: - The Sikhs believe that God existed before time began to run its course, has existed through the ages and shall ever exist. In Sikhism God is defined by the word '*Truth*'. He is eternal, infinite, omnipresent Creator of the world and is free from birth and death. He can be realized by acting upon the advice of the true Guru, who offers the devotee the wealth of **True Naam (word)**. God has no special temple nor has He any chosen people or nations. His gifts and bounties are showered equally on all. His abode is the conscience of living creatures. He is love and expects the whole creation to act in His love.

Q 2: - What is the Sikh concept of the birth of our Universe

Answer: - According to Sikhism (See *Maru Solhe* in AGGS²⁰ page 1034) there was darkness everywhere. The earth, the sun, the moon, the days and the nights did not exist. The Omnipresent Lord prevailed in the void (**Sunn**). There was no sound, no air, no water, no birth, no death and no planets. Then the Lord expressed His Will (kvwau) and out of the word expressing His Will the universe came into existence.²¹ At first it was a hot nebula

²⁰ Throughout this book AGGS stands for Adi Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs

²¹ jW iqs Bwxw qw jgqu aupwieAw (pMnw 1036) kIqw pswau eyko kvwau

spinning out different planets and then “The True Lord created air. Air gave birth to water. Water brought forth life. God infused His spirit in all his creation.”²²

Question 3: - What is the reality of the universe?

Answer: - The universe comes into existence through God’s creative power (*Maya*)²³ and it ceases to exist at His Will.²⁴ All that He has created is perfect according to His laws and has been created and re-created time and time again. Nothing except Him is eternal, although the duration of the existence of some matter is inconceivably long as understood with the limited faculties of the human beings. According to Sikhism, the creation is a ‘play’ that exists only until He brings the ‘play’ to an end.²⁵ Since the universe is created by the True Lord, we can say that it is a real expression of His Supreme reality and is, therefore, real. But since it appears and disappears at His Will, it has no infinite or independent existence. It is like the ‘shadow’ of a cloud or the bubble on the surface of water. Too much involvement in the creation rather than the Creator is a sin because it turns human beings away from the Creator. Involvement in the service of self produces egoism.

(jpujI pMnw 3)

22 swcy qy pvnw BieAw pvnY wy jlu hoie, jl qy QRBvx swijAw Gt Gt joq smoie (pMnw 19)

Today we know that water is composed of two parts of hydrogen and one part of oxygen. Both hydrogen and oxygen are air. For further information read “Sikh religion and science” by the same author.

23 eykw mweI jugq ivAweI (jpujI pMnw 7)

24 In Sikhism God has no gender. The word “He” used for God throughout this book is simply for the sake of convenience.

25 jw iqs BwvY q isRst aupwey AwpnY BwxY ley smwey (pMnw 292)

Q 4: What is the reality of the human soul?

Answer: - The human soul is a part of the universal all-embracing soul or consciousness. Like sparks arising from the fire or the waves arising from the ocean, the human soul emanates from God at His Will and after serving its assigned duty merges back into Him. As water in the well, in the ocean or in the clouds has the same composition and the same properties so have all souls the same attributes. Having assumed the material body, the soul has got unduly attached to the pleasures of the flesh and thus developed different likes, dislikes, failings and propensities connected with the flesh. This accounts for the perceptible human differences and the universality of the human soul remains clouded from the human eye.

When human beings learn to serve God and always keep His presence in mind, act in His Will and to His glory, then they develop the Godly traits of love, service, humility, gentleness, courage and honesty. Having developed these qualities, the devotee yearns and deserves His Grace, which unites him with God. This process becomes very simple and easy under the expert guidance of the Guru who, by example and precept, awakens true spiritual vision in the heart of the devotee, frees him from ego, dispels his ignorance and unites him with the Lord.

Q 5: - Do the Sikhs believe in transmigration of the soul?

Answer: -The Sikhs believe in the evolution of the soul. The good or the bad deeds done by any person affect his soul.²⁶This causes in the soul some propensities. These propensities determine the future course of the soul.²⁷ For example thieves do not desist from theft because of the propensities of their soul created by acts of frequent thefts.²⁸ Since the Sikhs believe that a soul never dies, the

²⁶ jnm jnm kI iesu mn kau mlu lwgI kwlw hoAw isAwhu (pMnw 651)

²⁷ mn kw AMDw AMDu kmwvY (pMnw 832)

²⁸ corI cor nw plry duK sihx gRTy, rihx nw gxkw vwiVHau vy krmI lTy (BweI gurdws)

effects of the actions follow the soul like a shadow. Salvation or deliverance from these accumulated sins can be obtained through good deeds or by the Grace of God. The grace can only be evoked by prayer. The Sikh scriptures explain the point as follows:

“Mind is the paper on which are recorded our deeds, good or bad, as the sum of our cumulative actions dictates. But the Almighty is merciful for He can turn dross into gold and extinguish all our passions and propensities and obliterate the accumulated sins.”

The Sikhs do not believe in a predestined punishment for the soul. They believe that our present deeds coupled with God’s Grace can alter the course of the soul and set it on a new path. The sum total of our present pious deeds can reduce the past impressions on the soul or efface them altogether. Virtue or sin, therefore, is in the hands of the individuals. The company of the spiritually advanced people or that of a true Guru can help the individual turn a new leaf. Guru Nanak has summed up this idea in Japuji as follows:

“We do not become saints or sinners
By merely saying that we are:
It is the actions that are recorded.
According to the seed we sow, is the fruit we reap
By the Grace of God, O Nanak;
Man must either be saved or continue the cycle of births.”²⁹

The Guru outlines a course of action for deserving God’s Grace. The devotee is instructed to control his lust, anger, greed, infatuation and ego and learn to act in God’s Will. The Guru says that God showers His Grace equally on the hermit as well as the householder and therefore there is no need to shun the society and live as anchorites. According to Sikhism God sends His Grace to those who work at self-purification through obedience to the Holy

²⁹ puMnI pwpI AwKxu nwih] kir kir krxw iliK lY jwhu] Awpy bIij
Awpy hI Kwhu] nwnk hukmI
Awvhu jwhu (pMnw 4)

Word. The virtues such as purity, patience and love are to be practised in daily dealings with others.

The devotee has to choose between God and the false petty self. It is according to this choice and the accumulated deeds (ਸਮੁੱਚੇ ਕਰਮ) that we either remain in blissful presence of God or wander endlessly in the darkness of ignorance. The Guru says that those who succeed in rising spiritually higher will find their faces glow in the very light of God's presence.

Q 6: - What is the fate of those who fail to deserve God's Grace?

Answer: Those who fail to deserve God's Grace suffer from all worldly sins. The results of their egoistic propensities so poison their soul that they get into the endless cycle of birth and death. Their wanderings cease only when they meet a true Guru, repent, change the course of their actions and thus deserve God's Grace. The Guru's instruction opens the soul's eyes to the true reality and enables the devotee to see the Lord everywhere. The Guru's word arouses the devotee's soul to true spiritual effort.

Q 7: - Was Guru Nanak God?

Answer: - All religious leaders were men sent by God to do His work of guiding the destinies of the world, saving it from sin and imparting knowledge about the best way of leading life. According to Sikhism God is never born and He never dies. Men of God like Guru Nanak are so near to God that there is no difference between the Lord and His messengers. To say that a particular religious leader was God is a heresy.

No Sikh Guru claimed to be God and yet all those who met them or heard them in person said that the Sikh Gurus were' God in

human form.’ For example the Bhattas wrote:

“God Himself assumed the form of Nanak,
And existed on the earth.
The invisible became visible to the world.”³⁰

The Bhattas wrote this because they found the Gurus perfect human beings worthy of the highest regard and out of respect differentiated them from the rest of mankind. Just as a personal secretary understands and knows the whims of the Officer so did the Gurus have understanding of God, and whatever they have said is taken by the Sikhs as nothing but the commands of the Lord conveyed to humanity through the Gurus. The Guru Himself writes

“I know not how to speak, O Lord,
I have only conveyed your orders.”³¹

Today the Gurus are not amongst us in human form but their word is making them re-live as such. The Guru’s mind is open to us through the word and that is why the last Guru of the Sikhs declared that after him (after 1708) the faithful would call the Guru Granth Sahib their Guru. Those who want to see the Guru are asked to read, understand and act upon the Guru’s advice contained in the Sikh scripture.

Q 8: - Is it necessary to have a Guru?

Answer: - Yes. Almost all religions agree on the necessity of a religious guide or preceptor. Like all temporal knowledge, ecclesiastical knowledge is difficult to obtain without the help of a teacher. What is quite often forgotten is the fact that it is not the teacher or the guide who is important but his message and the philosophy he teaches.

³⁰ Awip nrwiexu klw Dwir jg mih prvirXau] inrMkwir Awkwru joiq jg mMfil kirXau (pMnw 1395)

³¹ hau Awphu boil n jwxdw mY kihAw sBu hukmwau jIau (pMnw 763)

In Sikhism, therefore, the authority of the Guru was vested in *Guru Granth Sahib* after Guru Gobind Singh. Thus in *Guru Granth Sahib* the personal Guru became the impersonal Guru disseminating the philosophy of Sikhism to the world. At all Sikh gatherings *Guru Granth Sahib* is given a place of prominence and is assumed to preside over all Sikh functions. About the Guru we find the following in Sikh scriptures: -

“As water is contained in an earthen pitcher,
Although the pitcher itself owes its existence to water,
So is human mind disciplined with knowledge,
And knowledge is impossible without a Guru.”³²

Q 9: - How does a Guru help his disciple?

Answer: - The search for answers to questions like ‘What is life?’ ‘Who am I?’ ‘Where do I come from?’ etc bring us in touch with religious teachers or a philosophic treatise. True thirst for knowledge about these and similar questions is never quenched unless a true Guru is found. By the time this thirst is quenched there remains little difference between the Guru and the disciple. They become ‘one soul in two bodies’. Having thus imbibed the philosophy of the Guru, the disciple becomes one with the Guru, and through Him, one with the Almighty. This fact was practically demonstrated by Bhai Lehna who from being a disciple of Guru Nanak so elevated himself that Guru Nanak called him Angad (part of me) and appointed him as the next Guru of the Sikhs. Later Amar Das, a devoted disciple of Guru Angad, once again demonstrated the same fact and became the third Guru. The light of knowledge then passed into Guru Ram Das who, from a poor

³² kuMBy bDw jlu rhY j1 ibnu kuMBu n hoie] igAwn kw bDw mnu rhY
gur ibnu igAwnu n hoie (pMnw 469)

hawker, became the enlightened 4th Guru of the Sikhs. The Guru is peerless and unique.

“The Guru is awakened God, awakening the sleeping God in the disciple. Through sympathy and deep vision, a true Guru sees the Lord Himself suffering in the physically, mentally and spiritually poor. This is why he feels that it is his pious duty to assist them. He tries to feed the hungry God in the destitute, to stir the sleeping God in the ignorant, to love the unconscious God in the enemy, and to rouse the half-awake God in the yearning devotee. By a gentle touch of love he arouses instantaneously the almost fully awake God in the advanced seeker. A Guru is, among all, the best of givers. Like the Lord Himself, His generosity knows no bounds.”³³

The infinite understanding, the infinite love and the all-embracing consciousness of the Guru inspires the disciple and induces in him magnanimity, understanding, compassion and above all loyalty and faithfulness to the Guru and his word. Thus he surrenders his all to the Guru and is cleansed of his ego. He is not buffeted by lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride. The vacillations of his consciousness come to an end and he achieves perfect bliss. He attunes his will to that of the Guru and unquestionably follows the Guru’s instructions to the best of his ability. This stops diffusion of the mind, which can now concentrate more and more on the Guru’s word. The veil of confusion and delusion is rent asunder giving place to humility and the power of discrimination. Having thus cleansed himself, the disciple begins to realise his divine origin and the purpose of life.

In all this process the Guru, not only acts as a guide but also as an ideal to be followed. The Guru lives by divine principles and by his own example demonstrates the spirit of God and His boundless love for all. At this stage the disciple fully realises the

³³ Swami Parmahansa Yogananda.

value of the Guru's word and considers the word of the Guru as the highest scripture.

The Sikhs firmly believe that the medicine of God's bliss is within all of us, but without the Guru, we do not know how to use it. When the perfect Guru administers the medicine with necessary care, all disease is cured once for all.

Q 10: - Whom do the Sikhs call a saint?

Answer: - A person pure in word, thought and deed and dedicated to the divine mission of remembering God and making others remember Him and to act in His name is a saint (ਸਮਞ). He is not fettered by ceremonies, outward symbols, taboos or rituals. He loves humanity as a whole and does not believe in differences caused by national or geographical boundaries. He is an ideal man whose heart always yearns for service to God through humanity.

“He repeats the Lord's name and meditates on Him.

He looks alike on weal and woe and harbours no ill will.

He is merciful to all and is free from all weaknesses.

He enjoys the food of Lord's praise and lives in the world like a lotus on water.

He imparts divine instruction to friends and foes alike.

He listens not to calumny, lives selflessly and considers himself as everybody's slave.

These are the qualities of a saint whom Nanak calls Sadh or friend” (Salok Sahskriti Guru 5)³⁴

³⁴ mMqRM rwm rwm nwmM D'wnu srbqR pUrnH] g'wnu sm duK suKM jugiq inrml invYrxh] dXwlu srbqR jIAw pMc doK ibvrijqh] Bojnu gopwl kIrnqnu Alp mwXw jl kml rhqh] aupdysM sm imqR sqRh BgvMq Bgiq Bwvni] pr inMdw nh sRoiq sRvxM Awpu iq'wig sgl ryxukh] Kt lK'x pUrnH purKh nwnk nwm swD s'ijnh (pMnw 1357)

Q 11: - Are there any saints in Sikhism?

Answer: - The Sikhs recognise those as saints who live up to the Guru's ideals enumerated above. Kabir, Ravidas, Dhanna, Sadhna, Peepa, and Namdev were some saints for whom the Sikhs Gurus had a great regard. Some impostors are now days raising their heads like mushrooms and proclaiming themselves to be saints. Like counterfeit coins they do have some currency among the less informed gullible Sikhs. Unlike the afore-mentioned true saints, none of these impostors has written any hymns or contributed any fresh ideas on the issues faced by humanity. They only interpret the sacred hymns to match up with their own way of life.

Q 12: - What is the attitude of Sikhism towards other religions?

Answer: - Sikhism discredits no other religion. According to Sikhism all religions originated with good intentions and are like different roads leading to one and the same destination. The Guru clearly stated the futility of entering into arguments regarding the veracity, truth and practicability of the ideas expressed by other religious leaders. They encouraged their followers instead to cultivate a rational attitude and find out for themselves what is right and what is wrong. Guru Granth Sahib is full of such instruction as

“Call not the Vedas or the Semitic books false,
Rather he is false who lacks the ability to rationalize.”³⁵

However the Sikh Gurus have clearly stated their point of view where they happened to disagree with the principles of other religions. As a testimony to his all-embracing, egalitarian approach to religion, Guru Nanak kept a Muslim devotee with

³⁵ byd kqyb khhu mq JUTy JUTw jo n ibcwry (pMnw 1350)

him all his life and even visited the holy places of other faiths. Guru Arjan Dev had great affection for a Muslim saint Sayeen Mian Mir who is reported to have laid the foundation stone of the holiest Sikh Gurdwara at Amritsar. To crown it all the Sikh scripture contains hymns of many Hindu and Muslim saints.

A Muslim Pir Budhu Shah was a staunch Muslim *Faqir* and yet he was so intimate with Guru Gobind Singh that he sacrificed his sons and relatives in trying to help the Guru in the teeth of Muslim tyranny and bigotry. Two Muslim brothers Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan risked their lives and whisked the Guru in a palanquin from one place to another at a time when the penalty of concealing the Guru was death for the whole family and relatives. The Gurus laid stress on the purity of thought, word and deed and rejected ritualism and unrealistic blind faith.

When the *Kazis* of Mecca asked Guru Nanak "Which religion is the best Islam or Hinduism?" His reply was, "Both are suffering because of lack of pious deeds."

Q 13: - How does Sikhism differ from other religions?

Answer: - Basically all religions are means for spiritual betterment of human beings and hence are good in their own way. Sikhism as a religion differs from all other religions in one way or the other.

It differs from Hinduism in that it rejects the authority of The Vedas and that of the priestly class. It is opposed to caste system, which has been (and still is) the pivot of Hinduism. The Sikhs bow only before the Holy Granth because it embodies the philosophy of their Gurus. They are against idol-worship. In Sikhism no importance is attached to pilgrimages and austerities. God, according to Sikhism, can be realized easily while leading a family life and there is no need to go to the jungles, resort to asceticism or penances (*Baan Prasth Ashram of Hindus*). Widow re-marriage is encouraged and is common. The institution of *Sati* (immolation of wives on the funeral pyres of their husbands) has been scathingly criticised by the Sikh Gurus.

Sikhism has much in common with Islam but it rejects the finality of Muhammad as a prophet and that of Quran as a revelation. Fasting (*Rozas of Muslims*) according to Sikhism brings no merit to the human soul. For personal physical benefit fasting may be observed but for spiritual benefit, its efficacy is completely ruled out in Sikhism. Women in Sikhism are allowed full freedom of religious worship. They are free to attend social functions or join politics. They are considered as ‘conscience of men.’

The Sikhs do not remove any hair from their bodies and special shaving (Like *Bhadan* of the Hindus) or circumcision (*sunnat of Muslims*) is forbidden to the Sikhs. The Sikhs attach no importance to the worship of relics or graves. The only worship they engage in is the singing of the hymns of their Gurus. In prayer the Sikhs do not have to make any special postures or carry any special objects for worship. Neither are they required to face in any particular direction in performing prayers in the absence of their holy book.

Unlike many other religions, the Sikhs believe in ten spiritual masters called *Gurus*. A *Guru* literally means ‘one who dispels darkness and floods the soul with light’. No *Guru* ever called himself ‘God’ and as such although the Sikhs hold their Gurus in high esteem, they do not call them ‘God’ or ‘the only son of God’

Baptism in Sikhism is not ceremonious and hence no infants are baptised. Unlike many other faiths it is the initiate who has to beg for baptism with folded hands and the five officiating Sikhs (*Pyaras*) conducting the baptism have the authority to refuse if the initiate has not progressed to a certain standard. For baptism no age and no auspicious day is fixed. One may get baptised at any time and at any age. The baptised Sikhs are unique in having five physical symbols, i.e. *Kesh, Kara, Kirpan, Kangha and Kaccha*.

Except for birth days and the martyrdom days of their Gurus the

Sikhs do not have any special days of worship. One special day is *Vaisakhi*. It is the day when Khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. A *Gurdwara* (Sikh Temple) can be visited at any time and on any day. No special day (like Sunday in the west) is fixed.

Although trained Granthis (*priests*) are now a days employed in the *Gurdwaras*, there is no priestly class and anybody having a reasonable proficiency in reading Panjabi can conduct the service and interpret the Guru's word.

Sikhism does not believe in the resurrection of the body³⁶ but believes in the evolution of the soul. The Sikhs believe that transmigration of the soul can be halted by acting upon the Guru's advice, repeating God's name and doing good deeds. So the Sikh belief of transmigration is not fatalistic predestination but an admission of a free will to improve and deserve God's grace.

The Sikhs do not believe in the idea of original sin which is the fundamental concept in the religions of the Old Testament.³⁷The Sikhs believe that humans are created pure but they accumulate sin throughout their lives by getting involved in wrong actions.

Community kitchen (*Langar*) is a speciality of Sikhism. Where there is a *Gurdwara*, there is invariably a refectory attached with it where anyone can go irrespective of caste, creed, colour or country of origin and partake simple food. *Langar* is run on donations from the devoted Sikhs in cash or kind and is a practical example of service, equality and fellowship.

Although aspiring for peace, the Sikhs are prepared to go to war if it becomes inevitable. Their salutation is "Waheguru Ji Ka

³⁶ kbIr mwns jnmU dulµBu hY hoie n bwrY bwr] ijau bn Pl pwky Buie
igrIH bhuir n lwgih fwr (pMnw 1366)]

³⁷ jB Akwru iehu kCu n idRstyqw] pwp puMn qb kh qy hoqw] (pMnw
290) When this world had not yet appeared in any form, who then committed sins and
performed good deeds?

Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh” (The Khalsa belongs to the Lord and the achievements of the Khalsa are dedicated to God). Believing in reform, progress, improvement, and the betterment of society, a Sikh works hard and attributes his success to God thus annihilating his ego. Optimism is the keynote of a Sikh and he asks for *Charhdi Kala* (optimism) everyday in his prayers. Doing all he can do for the society, a Sikh is to remain humble and ask for the gift of humility from God. Guru Gobind Singh is the ideal example for a Sikh to follow. He sacrificed his four sons, his father, his mother, and his property for the people and yet was so humble as to kneel before his Khalsa and ask for a sip of the baptismal water, which He himself had prepared.

Q 14: - Is salvation possible only through Sikhism.

Answer: - No. Sikhism does not claim monopolies. It lays stress on leading a pious life and on deserving the grace of God. The Gurus never claimed that only those who come through them would stand to gain salvation or that only the Sikh Gurus had the key to heaven. All that the Gurus really did was to show a sure, short and simple way of self-realization exemplified by their own lives. Sikhism is one of the ways and perhaps the simplest.

“The world is ablaze O Lord, save it in thy mercy.
Through whichever way (religion) they come, Lord
Pull them up to your bosom. (AGGS Page 853)³⁸

Q 15: - Do the Sikhs believe in miracles?

Answer: - The Sikhs call miracles and occult powers useless and fruitless because they lead one away from God. The Sikhs have been strictly warned not to show any miracles and not to hanker after supernatural powers. All that the Sikhs ask for is the Tue

³⁸ jgqu jlpdw riK lY AwpxI ikrpw Dwir] ijqu duAwrY aubrY iqgY lYhu aubwir (pMnw 853)

Name of the Creator and no miracle is considered greater than just remembering God and controlling one's mind. "To hanker after supernatural powers "says the Guru "is pandering to low taste which detaches humans from God."³⁹ When Guru Tegh Bahadur was asked by the Emperor of Delhi to show miracles he simply smiled and repeated the following hymn of Guru Ram Das:

"The desire to perform miracles is a worldly desire and creates ego.

It is an obstacle in the way of remembering the Lord."⁴⁰

Although the Guru lost his head, he did not show any miracles. The Sikhs like Ram Rai and Gurditta, who showed miracles, were condemned by the Guru. Gurditta died soon after and Ram Rai was excommunicated for this transgression.⁴¹ No Guru ever showed miracles to convince others of their spiritual superiority or occult powers. They said, "Miracles can delude only fools."

Q 16: - What is the code of conduct for the Khalsa?

Answer: - Every organisation has its code of discipline, vows and symbols and so has the Khalsa. Since the Gurus themselves prescribed the code of the Sikhs, the Sikhs observe it without 'ifs' and 'buts' and take pride in it. Some instructions are as follows:

- (1) The Sikhs will worship only God and no other deity. They will not set up idols, gods, goddesses or statues for worship nor shall they worship any human being. The Guru said:

³⁹ iriD isiD sBu mohu hY nwmu n vsY min Awie (pMnw 593)

⁴⁰ iriD isiD sBu mohu hY nwmu n vsY min Awie] gur syvw qy mnu
inrmlu hovY AigAwnu AMDyrw jwie (pMnw 593)

⁴¹ Not only did he show miracles, he also changed a line in the Holy Granth when faced with the Emperor's wrath.

“Burnt be the tongue which utters that God takes birth.”⁴²

- (2) The Sikhs will put faith in no other religious book other than the Holy Guru Granth Sahib, although they can study other religious books for acquiring knowledge and for comparative study.
- (3) The Sikhs will not believe in castes, untouchability, magic, omens, amulets, astrology, *sharadhs*,⁴³ ceremonial hair cutting, circumcision, fasts, frontal marks, sacred thread, graves and traditional death rites.
- (4) The *Khalsa* will remain distinct by wearing 5 Ks but shall not injure the feelings of others professing different religions.
- (5) The Khalsa will pray to God before starting any work. This will be over and above his usual prayers.⁴⁴
- (6) Although a Sikh may learn as many languages as he likes to learn, he must learn Panjabi himself and teach Panjabi to his children.⁴⁵

⁴² sgl prwD dyih loraNI so muK jlau ijqu khih Twkur joni" (pMnw 1136)

⁴³ A *Sharadh* is a ceremony performed by the Hindus. Every year a feast is held at the death anniversary of the deceased. Clothes and other articles are offered to the Brahman in the name of the departed soul. It is believed that the dead soul receives them. The Guru said, jIvq ipqr n mwnY koaU mUeyN isrwd krwhI] ipqr BI bpury khu ikau pwvih kaUAw kUkr KwhI] mo kau kuslu bqvw hu koeI "He does not honor his ancestors while they are alive, but he holds feasts in their honor after they have died. Tell me, how can his poor ancestors receive what the crows and the dogs have eaten up?

⁴⁴ kIqw loVIAY kMmu su hir pih AwKIAY (pMnw 91)

⁴⁵ **gurmuKI AKr jo hYN BweI isK isK sy sIKy jweI (rihq nwmw)

- (7) Every male Sikh should add 'Singh' after his name and every female Sikh should add 'Kaur' after her name.
- (8) Use of Opium, liquor, Tobacco and all other intoxicant are strictly prohibited to the Sikhs.
- (9) Sikh men and women shall not make holes in their ears or noses or pierce any other parts of their bodies. The Sikhs consider that disfiguring the body is going against the law of nature and in some cases such disfigurement also leads to harmful effects.
- They shall have no connection whatsoever with those who kill their daughters. Sikh women will not observe the veil. Women must be considered socially equal to men.
- (10) A Sikh will live only by honest labour and give generously to the poor and the needy, thinking all the time that whatever he gives to others is humbly offered to the Guru.⁴⁶
- (11) A Sikh must never steal or gamble.
- (12) Except for the Kachha and turban there is no restriction on the dress of a Sikh but the dress of a Sikh should be simple and modest.

⁴⁶ nwm jpo, vMf Cko qy Drm dI ikrq kro]

- (14) When a Sikh meets another Sikh he will greet by saying “Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.” (Adapted from Sikh Rehat Maryada PP 18-20 Edition 11 Panjabi 1954). All instructions apply equally to men and women

SOME DON'TS FOR THE SIKHS

The following instructions for strict compliance are given to an initiate at the time of administering baptism.

- (1) You will never remove hair from any part of your body. You will not use Tobacco or other intoxicants or inebriants.
- (2) You will not eat Halaal (Kosher meat prepared through ritual slaughter)
- (3) You will not commit adultery nor have extra marital or Pre-marital relationships involving sex.

Q 17: - What is the significance of the five Ks?

Answer: -

1. *Kachha* (knee-length special-cut shorts): - *Kachha* ensures briskness and agility and is a mark of perpetual readiness. It also stands for chastity.
2. *Kara* (steel bracelet): - *Kara* indicates restraint and the wearer's Indebtedness to the *Guru*. It reminds the Sikh of his ideal behaviour in the event of his weakness likely to lead him to misdeeds.

- 3 *Kirpan* (Sword): - It is an emblem of spiritual power and freedom of spirit. The Sikhs use it as an instrument of defence or for the cause of defending the weak.
- 4 *Kesh* (Hair): - The Kesh remind a Sikh to behave like the saints and *Rishis* of the past. They are a mark of dedication and group consciousness. They indicate a Sikh's acceptance of God's Will.
5. *Kangha* (Comb): - *Kangha* is a sign of cleanliness and is necessary to keep the hair neat and groomed.

The Five Ks enjoin upon the Sikhs not only to look like Guru Gobind Singh but also to behave in an ideal way as He did.

Q 18: -Is it necessary for a Sikh to keep unshorn long hair and a turban on his head?

Answer: - Yes. It is disgraceful for a Singh to shear off his/her hair because by doing so he/she is disobeying the Guru's command. Not to obey the commander and yet to claim to be under his command is a contradiction in terms. Similarly to show lip service to the Guru's instructions and to continue to behave according to the dictates of one's own mind is 'Manmat' (egoism). It must be understood clearly that the most important identity of the Sikhs is their hair. Ms Jeane Cutler explains this as follows:

"Eliminate symbols my Sikhlings and watch the Khalsa crumble. Take off the turban, cut the hair or throw aside the Kara, I can tell you truthfully the result would be embarrassing as well as disastrous. The five symbols have held the Sikhs in united

brotherhood. They serve to make a Sikh feel and act as a Sikh. They endow him with courage to accomplish feats which otherwise would be impossible for an average man .To make a long story short, the five symbols have psychological bearing on the man who wears them. They are a manifestation of the Guru eternal.”

The hair signifies inner dignity and freedom of spirit of those who wear it and advertise their firmness of faith. Thus the hair is necessary for a Sikh and the turban is an essential and complementary adjunct to unshorn hair. Let it not be forgotten that Guru Gobind Singh had aimed at changing his followers into saint-soldiers modelled on himself and his predecessors.

The removal of hair and turban for a Sikh indicates the weakness of faith and disobedience of the Guru's commands. It is far easier to slip than to stick to one's principles. The visible propensity of the Sikhs in the West towards shaving the hair is due to many factors. (a) Some cut off their hair in order to look fashionable and to submit to worldly ways (b) Some find it a bit difficult to get a job and in frustration shear off their hair (c) A majority of the so-called shaven Sikhs unfortunately never have had the opportunity to be able to know the history, philosophy and the tenets of Sikhism fully before deciding to cut their hair off.

Q 19: -Why did Guru Gobind Singh bring in militancy into Sikh religion?

Answer: - The question is wrong. Guru Gobind Singh was not the first Guru who raised the sword. It was Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, who raised the sword and fought many battles. Again the sword, the Keshas, The Kangha etc were not the innovations of the 10th Guru. They were used by the people of India even before him. He only made them compulsory for the Khalsa.

Guru Gobind Singh made no fundamental changes to Sikhism preached by the other nine Gurus. The Sikhs stood against oppression and tyranny right from the days of Guru Nanak, who himself spoke against tyranny and injustice courting arrest and imprisonment. In the days of Guru Gobind Singh Emperor “Aurangzeb ordered the (Sikh) temples to be pulled down. A proclamation was issued requiring Hindus in general to shave off their beards. A great many of them thus had to submit to what they considered the disgrace of being shaved and for a few days the barbers were very busy” (Muntakhab-ul-Lubab Translated by Elliot and Dowson page 413 and 425)

The people had to be prepared to rise up against such insults and high handedness. All the Gurus in their own way did what they could to make the people of India manfully face and destroy the unjust, tyrannical and bigoted rulers lock, stock and barrel. In this process Guru Arjan Dev accepted death on a hot iron plate. Guru Tegh Bahadur accepted to be publicly beheaded. Many faithful Sikhs were sawn alive or boiled in water. All this was necessary to arouse the dormant national spirit of the people and to create the requisite grit and determination to uproot the evil. Guru Gobind Singh’s actions seen against this background are only the fulfilment of the programme outlined by Guru Nanak. Not to take a stand against oppression and injustice would have been a slur on the fair name of Guru Nanak who had said, “*To fight and accept death for a righteous cause is the privilege of the brave and the truly religious*”⁴⁷

No one will deny that the cause of Guru Gobind Singh was righteous and therefore his action was in line with the prevalent tradition and precept of Sikhism.

War is a part of the history of man. Self defence is everybody’s fundamental right. The history of the Sikhs bears witness to the

⁴⁷ mrxu muxsw sUirAw hku hY jo hoie mrin prvwxo (pMnw 579)

fact that they have never been aggressors. By formally baptising his followers and grouping them into a well-knit and well-oiled fighting machine Guru Gobind Singh followed the letter and spirit of the philosophy of Guru Nanak. Nations that could not defend themselves have vanished from the face of the earth and surely Guru Gobind Singh wanted his followers to live with dignity and be the torchbearers for humanity.

Q 20: - How does one become a Sikh?

Answer: - To become a Sikh one must declare one's total faith in the Guru's word, surrender to the Lord's divine will and accept the baptism of the sword administered by five baptised Sikhs in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib (Holy Book of the Sikhs). Having been baptised he or she will have to adopt (and faithfully adhere to) the five Ks, accepting the over lordship of none but God alone. From then on he/she will act and behave strictly according to the Guru's instructions conveyed to him/her at the time of baptism.

Q 21: - Is western culture bringing about degeneration in Sikhism?

Answer: - Different cultures and ways of life do affect religion. However it should be noted that the strength or weakness of a person lies in his faith and convictions. Only those fall who have a wavering mind or faltering faith. There is no dearth of such people in any religion. A religion does not stand by numbers but by principles. The history of the Jews and that of the Sikhs bears witness to this fact. True Sikhism is as strong now as before. It is better to have only a few faithful with strong convictions rather than have many whose faith is shaky. One Judas Iscariot was enough in having Christ impaled and even one faithless Gangu was the cause of having the master's sons bricked alive in a wall. Wavering mind and pretentiousness are dangerous for any

religion. I feel Sikhism has always been shaking off its undesirable followers and is even now putting faith to test. Don't forget that only five people could pass the great test set by Guru Gobind Singh to a gathering of 80,000 in the year 1699. I have heard of very few Sikhs who have abjured their faith and have accepted another religion. Perhaps as many have accepted Sikhism by renouncing other religions.

It is erroneous to think that those who cut off their hair are no more Sikhs. As long as they believe in the Guru's word, they are as much the members of the Sikh community as the baptised Sikhs but of course they are not true 'Singhs.' To be a true Singh they must follow the Guru's instructions in their entirety. The author knows a number of shaven Sikhs who are very deeply devoted and pious and have firm faith in the Guru's word. It is the pressure of circumstances that compelled them to take a retrogressive step. They are not lost to Sikhism forever. There is already a marked trend towards coming back to the fold like the prodigal son. It is never too late to mend and never too late to get baptised.

Q 22: - Do the Sikhs believe in caste system or untouchability?

Answer: - The Sikhs do not believe in caste system or untouchability. The Sikh Gurus adamantly fought against these social maladies all their lives and even suffered ostracism and criticism. In order to counteract these undesirable traditions of society they introduced the institution of **Langar** (common kitchen) where Hindus and Muslims, Brahmans and shudras, princes and paupers all sit down cheek by jowl to partake food. It is not uncommon to find that the food in a Gurdwara is cooked by the so-called low caste people. In the Guru's Langar a high-bow Brahman will have to eat food by sitting with the untouchable shudra. Even Emperor Akbar of Delhi had to sit and dine with sweepers and beggars before he was allowed to see the Guru. Sikhism is a great leveller of people and emphatically declares the

equality of all human beings. “Your deeds betray your caste, my friend,”⁴⁸ said Guru Nanak. It was for his stand against caste discrimination that Guru was stoned and branded as iconoclast.

In order to demonstrate practically that the Gurus meant what they said, Guru Arjan Dev included in the Holy Granth the hymns of various Bhagats some of whom belonged to the so-called low castes. Here on the pages of the Holy Granth one can find the low caste Kabir challenging the high caste Brahmans as follows:

“If you claim to be a highborn Brahman
Do you dare to claim that you were born differently?
How can you claim to be a Brahman?
And brand us as untouchables?
Do you dare call yourself as white as milk?
And label us as polluted blood?”⁴⁹

Side by side with Kabir is Guru Nanak explaining what a Brahman really means

“Let no one take pride in his caste and claim purity,
Understand ye that a Brahman is only he who seeks Braham
(God)”⁵⁰

Q 23: - Is there a priestly class in Sikhism?

Answer: - No. There are no professional priests in Sikhism nor any vows of celibacy for any person acting as such. Sikhism is essentially egalitarian. Any special treatment or concessions allowed to a priest militate against the very basic principles of equality so vehemently preached by the Sikh Gurus. Anybody

⁴⁸ sw jwiq sw piq hY jyhy krm kmwie (pMnw 1330)

⁴⁹ jo qUM bRwhmxu bRhmxI jwieAw] qau Awn bwt kwhy nhI AwieAw] 2]
qum kq bRwhmx hm kq sUD] hm kq lohU qum kq dUD (pMnw 325)

⁵⁰ jwiq kw grbu n krIAhu koeI] bRhmu ibMdy so bRwhmxu hoeI (pMnw 1127)

having a reasonable proficiency in Gurbani can conduct services and there is no need for any particular dress, collar or mat. Women can also conduct services and act as Granthis (Readers of the Holy Granth)

Q 24: -What is the status of women in Sikhism?

Answer: In Sikhism there is complete equality between sexes. Women can visit a Gurdwara, conduct services, read the Holy *Granth*, lead the Sikh armies; vote in elections and enjoy all other rights enjoyed by the Sikh men. They are not required to observe Parda (veil) or commit *sati* (burning alive on the funeral pyre of the dead husband). The Sikhs call a wife '*Ardhangni* (better-half). There is no restriction on their education or movements as long as they follow the Guru's instructions. "Eve" in Sikhism is not regarded as temptation-incarnate but as "the conscience of men."

It is on record that Guru Amar Das appointed women as missionaries of the Sikh faith. Guru Tegh Bahadur once remarked that women of Amritsar were nearer to God than men because they "accepted the will of God readily." In Sikh history the part played by Mai Bhago and others is well documented. They denounced the actions of their husbands, who had deserted Guru Gobind Singh and formed a Woman's battalion to make amends for their husbands' folly. They fought bravely and laid down their lives for the Guru's cause.

Unfortunately some educationally ill-equipped Sikhs still follow some practises here and there which have been condemned and prohibited by the Sikh Gurus. Such practices as dowry, female infanticide and appointment of women *Granthis* still require attention in certain areas of India.

Q 25: - How do the Sikhs solemnize marriage?

Answer: - Sikh boys and girls are married according to Anand Marriage ceremony recognised under the Government of India Anand Marriage Act of 1909. The bride and the bridegroom sit in front of the Holy *Granth*. The responsibilities and duties of married life are explained to them by the *Granthi* (the person who officiates at the ceremony). The bride's father then hands over the groom's sash to the bride to hold and the *Granthi* reads the four Lavan (marriage hymns) of Guru Ram Das, which explain the four spiritual stages of human life. After a stanza is read, the musicians sing the same stanza. The bride and the bridegroom walk clockwise around Guru Granth Sahib and coming back to their place bow to it in acceptance of the advice. After the fourth stanza, the *Anand Sahib* of Guru Amar Das is recited and the ceremony is over. Since the whole ceremony takes place in the presence of the Holy *Granth* no document of marriage registration is considered necessary. However there is no objection to anybody asking for such a document. The Guru has described an ideal marriage as follows:

“They are not husband and wife who only live together,
Only those are truly wed who have one spirit in two bodies.”⁵¹

Q 26: -Do the Sikhs arrange the marriages of their sons and daughters?

Answer: - There are no clear-cut instructions in the Sikh religious lore about the methodology of finding suitable matches. The matter is left for the individual to decide. Some youngsters get married without the consent of their parents where as some value the help of their parents. The practice of arranging marriages has

⁵¹ Dn ipru eyih n AwKIAin bhin iekTy hoie] eyk joiq duie mUrqI Dn ipru khIAY soie (pMnw 788)

been a tradition in India. It has nothing to do with religion.

The practice of arranging marriages is dying out among the Sikhs. However even now many Sikh children, especially girls, still like to depend on the expert guidance and help from their parents for finding a suitable partner. Statistically speaking arranged marriages prove more lasting and successful than those solemnized under free choice. A section of the Sikhs is of the opinion that parents find better partners because they consider suitability, compatibility, status and qualifications before joining in a contract whereas the children, being immature, are guided more by their emotion rather than wisdom.

Q 27: -How is Sikhism reacting towards modern advances in science?

Answer: - Sikhism is basically a religion of action and human freedom. It is based on moral laws, which no science has ever challenged. Whatever the progress of science, man will always require morality to lead a happy life. Only ritualism and formalism suffer with the advancement of science and Sikhism is mostly free from them.

An important feature of modern society is the tendency towards democratic and socialistic pattern of life. Modern democrats are responsible to the electorate. Sikhism was based on similar democracy by Guru Gobind Singh. He had demonstrated that although Khalsa was his own creation, his five Khalsa democrats had the authority to order him and he was bound by their decision. In Sikhism social equality is sought through a classless and casteless society. Practical training in achieving this is provided in the Langar where people of all castes, colours and religions cook and dine together.

The Sikh Gurus were not scientists but the ideas expressed by them in the Holy Granth find full support in modern science. For

example modern science states that there are countless moons and suns. This is exactly what Guru Nanak had said⁵² when science was not much advanced. Some of the laws of science can be traced in Gurbani.

Modern science says that macrocosm is reflected in microcosm. This is exactly what the Guru had said many years ago. “Whatever is in the universe can also be found in the matter”⁵³ (AGGS page 1041)

Modern science is complementary to Sikhism and is in no way opposed to it.

Q 28: - What are the ceremonies observed by the Sikhs?

Answer: - In the strictest sense of the word the Sikhs do not have many ceremonies and rites. Baptism, death and marriage can be listed under this heading. Baptism is administered by five baptised Sikhs in the presence of the Holy *Granth*. They prepare Baptismal water by putting sugar cakes in pure water and saying five prayers as the water is stirred with a double-edged sword (*Khanda*) in a steel bowl.

‘Marriage’ has been described in question No. 25.

On the demise of a Sikh hymns from the Holy *Granth* are read and the body is cremated. No monument is erected.

The Sikhs usually call their ceremonies *Samagam* (Function). *Akhand Paath* (continuous reading of the Holy book) and childbirth are two other smagams. At all Sikh functions hymns are

⁵² kyqy ieMd cMd sUr kyqy kyqy mMf1 dys (pMnw 7)

⁵³ jo bRhmMif KMif so jwxhu (pMnw 1041) jo bRhmMfy soeI ipMfy jo KojY so pwvY (pMnw 695) For further information read our book “Sikh Religion & Science.”

read and sacred food called *Karah Parsad*⁵⁴ is distributed.

Q 29: - Are there any special days on which the Sikh children must absent themselves from school?

Answer: - There are no special days on which a child must be absent and must join a ceremony. However it all depends on the discretion of the Sikh individual how he/ she takes the function. The functions of the Sikhs are not arranged on any days considered auspicious. The Sikh pupils should be allowed to take leave of absence on request from parents to celebrate important Sikh holy days like Baisakhi and the birthdays of the Gurus.

Q 30: -Is there any restriction of dress for the Sikhs?

Answer: -There is absolutely no restriction regarding dress but the Sikh children are asked to avoid immodest and gaudy dress. *Kachha* and turban (*Patka* for the young boys) are necessary for the baptised Sikhs. The Sikh children should not be asked to wear a cap or a hat. They will not remove their *Kara* from their wrist.

Q 31: -Are there set times of prayers for the Sikhs?

Answer: -There are no set times in the sense that missing a time of prayer is to be regarded as sin. The Sikhs are asked to keep repeating the hymns whenever they find time and the mood to do so. Their morning prayer is Japuji and their evening prayer is Rehras. Some people prefer to recite Japuji before sunrise, some after it. Similarly some say Rehras before sunset and some after it. What is important is to say the prayers. Some devoted Sikhs say five prayers all through the day. Sikh prayers do not require special postures or paraphernalia neither do the Sikhs have to face in any particular direction when saying prayers.

⁵⁴ It is made from equal amounts of semolina, sugar, butter and water.

Q 32: -Are there any feast or fast days for the Sikhs?

Answer: -There are no feast days and neither are there any fast days. The Sikhs may have a feast at any time and may observe a fast if it is for health reasons. Fasts are not considered to have any spiritual merits in Sikhism.

Q 33: - Are there any restrictions regarding food?

Answer: - There are no restrictions regarding food provided it is prepared properly in a clean place. However the Sikhs are forbidden from eating meat prepared by ritual slaughter. Many Sikhs do not eat meat anyway. The Sikhs are forbidden intoxicants.

Q 34: - Are there any religious injunctions that may render certain type of employment non acceptable to the Sikhs?

Answer: - The Sikhs believe in dignity of labour and are always ready to accept whatever work they may find. The baptised Sikhs will however refuse to accept a job, which requires them to remove their turban, shave off hair, sell liquor or cigarettes, remove their *Kara* or put away their sword.

Q 35: - What is the place of voluntary service in Sikhism?

Answer: - Service to humanity is a cardinal principle of Sikh religion. The *Gurdwaras* are training places where the Sikhs practise selfless service. Here all usual services like hymn singing, sweeping, fanning, cleaning utensils, cooking, distributing food etc are performed voluntarily. From an early age Sikh children learn to serve in the kitchen and shoulder responsibility.

The Gurus stressed the sense of giving. Guru Nanak said, “The world is a chamber of God wherein the True Lord

resides.”⁵⁵(AGGS Page 463) So “whatever voluntary service we do in this world will secure for us a seat in court of God.”⁵⁶

In Sikhism service is considered to be of three types. It is done with *Tan* (body-manual service), *Dhan* (money-charity) and *Man* (mind-intellectual service). Service can be done anywhere i.e. in the kitchen, on the road, feeding the hungry, caring for the sick, serving the lepers, repairing the temple, dusting the shoes of the congregation, and extending patronage to the weak, needy and the distressed. The Guru attached great importance to selfless service and said, “The aim of life is not achieved without performing *Sewa*. *Sewa* is the essence of life”⁵⁷ Material service involves donating money for socially beneficial organisations like schools, temples, hospitals asylums, wells and other works of public good. The Gurus expect every Sikh to donate at least one tenth of his/her income for such work. In donating money a Sikh is not to take into account the race, religion, sex, colour or social status of the recipient.

Intellectual service involves understanding the Holy Scripture, interpreting the text and educating others. It also involves praying for others and wishing the good of everybody

The Sikh belief is that service done as a labour of love frees man from greed, pride, and undue attachment. It teaches him/her humility, forgiveness, mercy, almsgiving, charity and rational understanding. The Guru’s instruction is:

“If you work hard and share your earnings with others,
You tread on the righteous path”⁵⁸ (AGGS page 1245)

⁵⁵ eyhu jgu scY kI hY koTVI scy kw ivic vwsu (pMnw 463)

⁵⁶ ivic dunIAw syv kmweIAY qw drgh bYsx pweIAY (pMnw 26)

⁵⁷ ibnu syvw Plu kbhu n pwvis syvw krxI swrI (pMnw 992)

⁵⁸ Gwil Kwie ikCu hQhu dyie lnwnk rwhu pCwxih sy (pMnw 1245)

Q 36: - How does Sikhism react towards love?

Answer: - Love is the pivot of Sikhism and is one of the cardinal virtues preached by the Sikh Gurus. In the Holy *Granth* the Gurus have extolled love to the skies. It is the belief of the Sikhs that salvation is not possible without love.

It is a matter of shame that the word 'Love' has been devalued, misunderstood and misrepresented by a majority of people in the modern especially Western society. As a result the divine virtue has become a base coin in the permissive society dominated by lust and carnal perversity. It has become synonymous with 'passion'. The gratification of this 'passion' in public and private is considered to be natural, civilized behaviour under the camouflage of the theories propounded by Sigmund Freud, McDougal and others.

There are moral laws that govern human behaviour just as there are physical laws governing the material universe. Even modern psychologists and biologists seem to agree that spiritual and moral values are a great help in eradicating many of the human maladies today.

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion had realized the necessity of upholding the moral laws 500 years ago. He declared ethics and morality as the basis of his religion. "Truth is the highest virtue," he said, "but higher still is truthful living." According to Guru Nanak 'love' is the key to mental health and ideal social behaviour. It should well up in the human heart and should be free from overtones of sexual indulgence, selfishness and malice. It should be based on giving rather than receiving. He described love as pure, indivisible, inspiring and spiritual. On the spiritual plane the Guru exhorted the disciples to inculcate love for God and take to **Naam Japna** (prayers). On the temporal plane he enjoined the Sikhs to love all human beings irrespective

of their beliefs or ethnic origins. As a corollary to this he asked his Sikhs to earn an honest living (*Dharam di Kirt*) and share it with others.

According to Sikhism, the opposite of love is indifference (ਮਨਮਗ) born out of duality. The self-centred indifference gives rise to *haumain* (ego), selfishness, vanity, and arrogance. It leaves its victim with a sense of superiority. The self-centered, self-seeking victim is left pre-occupied with himself wishing to grab everything.

Since the Gurus considered 'love for humanity' as the only measure of one's devotion to God, they suggested the ways and means of making their followers avoid the pitfall of conceit and selfishness. *Langar* was started where the Sikhs learn to give and serve selflessly. Again this is where they work side by side with women and practise the Guru's instruction, "Look upon women other than your wife, as mothers, daughters and sisters. A lustful glance on the opposite sex is as sinful as eating pork is for a Muslim or eating beef is for a Hindu." (Bhai Gurdas).

Lack of pure self-less divine love and fellow feeling are the causes of most of the world's maladies today. The world is simmering with racial tension, religious bigotry, political exploitation, parochial nationalism and tribalism. Everyday in their congregational prayer the Sikhs pray, "O Kind father, loving Father bring us into the fellowship of only **Men of love** in whose company we may remember thy name. Through Nanak, O God, let thy Name be exalted and **May all prosper according to your will.**" (Sikh congregational prayer)

Q 37: - What is Sikhism's reaction towards music?

Unlike some other religions Sikhism has no aversion for music. The Sikhs consider music as the food for the soul. The sacred

devotional music in Sikhism is called '*Kirtan*'. Wherever a few Sikhs assemble they sing the Gurus' hymns to the tune of musical instruments. It was Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism who first realized the necessity of music for spiritual advancement. He not only composed his teachings in verse but also used popular metres and tunes to sing them. He befriended a bard who was an adept musician. The Guru and the bard would sing the hymns on the *Rabab* (a guitar). The 31 musical scores used in the Holy *Granth* are very rarely sung now a days but all the hymns are sung to a harmonium or another musical instrument using modern tunes.

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs, was particularly interested in music. He kept professional musicians for daily hymn singing and later when these professionals refused to sing and demanded an exorbitant sum as payment, he asked his Sikhs to learn devotional music. Music is thus an important part of Sikh faith and Guru Arjan says, "Devotional music is a valuable diamond. The wise imbibe bliss through it."⁵⁹

Q 38: - Are there any sects in Sikhism?

Answer: - Yes. There are a few sects in Sikhism, which have some differences with one another. The differences are the result of interpretations of the word by different personalities who happened to guide the Sikhs after the Sikh Gurus. Some of them are *Nam Dharis* who followed Baba Ram Singh. Bhasauria Sikhs follow Babu Teja Singh. Essentially all Sikhs believe in the philosophy expounded in the Holy *Granth*. The differences are more of a superficial nature than theological.

Recently some *sants*, who have established their own sects, have come on the scene. Followers of these so-called *sants* do not follow the Rehat Maryada (code of conduct) established by the

⁵⁹ kIrnqnu inrmolku hIrw lAwnMd guxI ghIrw (pMnw893) kIrnqnu swDsMgyx
nwnk nh idRstMiq
jmdUqnh (pMnw 1357)

S.G.P.C but stick to what their particular variation *sant* says.

Q 39: -Can you tell us about the scriptures of the Sikhs?

Answer: - The Sikh scripture is the Guru Granth Sahib, which contains the hymns of 6 Gurus and 15 Bhagats. It was compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs in 1604. Later in 1705 Guru Gobind Singh added to it the hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru. Before Guru Gobind Singh left for his heavenly abode he declared it as the eternal Guru of the Sikhs after him. In its final standardized format and shape it contains 1430 pages. It is written in sublime poetry from cover to cover.

Q 40: -Which places are sacred for the Sikhs?

Answer: - The Sikhs do not accept any place as sacred in the sense that a particular place is the only abode of God. For them every Gurdwara is a sacred place as long as Guru *Granth Sahib* is available there for Sikh services.

The Sikhs have great respect for the places sanctified by their Gurus. Nankana Sahib (birthplace of Guru Nanak), Panja Sahib and Kartar Pur are associated with Guru Nanak and Dera Sahib Lahore is the place of martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev. They are all in Pakistan.

Harimander Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar is the most revered place for the Sikhs all over the world. Akal Takhat (Amritsar), Kesh Garh Sahib (Anandpur), Hazur Sahib (Nander), Patna Sahib (Bihar) and Damdama Sahib (Talwandi) are the five Takhats (seats of authority) of the Sikhs. All these places are in India. The five Jathedars in unison issue general directions to the Sikhs from these five places of authority.

Q 41: - What is Sarbat Khalsa?

Answer: - When the Sikhs assemble to discuss an issue affecting the Sikh nation as a whole, the assembly is called the *Sarbat Khalsa*. Every Sikh is entitled to attend the *Sarbat Khalsa*. *Sarbat Khalsa* used to meet twice a year on Baisakhi day and Diwali day but the practice became dormant when Ranjit Singh became the king of the Panjab. Once again it met in 1925 after the formation of the SGPC. The practice was revived in our times once again in 1986 when the *Sarbat Khalsa* was convened at *Akal Takhat* (Amritsar) to discuss the implications of Operation Blue of June 1984, which had caused harm to *Akal Takhat*, *Harimander Sahib* and 48 other *Gurdwaras* in the Panjab. Decisions made at the *Sarbat Khalsa* are binding on all Sikhs throughout the world. *Sarbat Khalsa* is usually held at *Akal Takhat* (Amritsar). The *Takhat* (literally throne) is situated in front of the Golden temple and was constructed by Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru of the Sikhs in 1609.

Q 42: - How do the Sikhs see environmental degradation in the world?

Answer: - Environmental degradation, global warming, air pollution etc are modern issues but the Sikh Gurus left guidelines about them 500 years ago. The Sikh Gurus advised moderation in consuming the resources and respect for the environment. Guru Nanak said, "Air is the Guru, Water is the father and the earth is like our mother." (AGGS page 8)⁶⁰ Human beings should treat them with as much respect as they show to the Guru, to the father or to their mothers. Sikhism advises respect for all nature. The Guru discouraged indiscriminate cutting of trees when he said, "In all directions, the resplendent Lord manifests Himself through greenery and foliage. Moderation is the best sweet reward." (AGGS Page 1109)⁶¹

⁶⁰ pvxu gurU pwxI ipqw mwqw Driq mhqu (pMnw 8)

⁶¹ dh idis swK hrI hirAwvl suhj pkY so mITw (pMnw 1109)

Q 43: - Do the Sikh Gurus say anything about politics?

Answer: - Yes the Gurus have said quite a lot about politics. They condemned factional rivalries and unprincipled political alliances. The Guru says, “Some form alliances with powerful friends, sons and relatives. Some form alliances with in-laws and influential relations. Some form alliances with chiefs and leaders for selfish motives. My alliance is with the Lord pervading everywhere.”(AGGS page 366).⁶² Thus they advised spiritual alliances instead of petty political and exploitative groupings.

In general the Sikh gurus preferred democracy established through truly religious but socially secular elite. The Guru said, “The person in authority should occupy the seat only if he has the required qualifications.”⁶³ Politics must be guided by the moral power of religion.

Q 44: -What is the Sikh view of education?

Answer: - Sikhism disapproves education geared to the accumulation of wealth and prestige. Sikhism advises that education must teach us the art of living and fellow feeling. The Guru says, “Acquisition of education must make one charitable” (AGGS page 356).⁶⁴ As for the role of the teacher the Guru considered the teacher as the nation builder. The teacher should not join the profession simply for earning livelihood. “A teacher is truly educated only if he practises what he preaches and is

⁶² iks hI DVw kIAw imqR suq nwil BweI] iks hI DVw kIAw kuVm sky
nwil jvweI] iks hI DVw kIAw iskdwr cauDrI nwil AwpXY suAweI]
hmwrw DVw hir rihAw smweI] 1] hm hir isau DVw kIAw myrI hir tyk
] mY hir ibnu pKu DVw Avru n koeI hau hir gux gwvw AsMK Anyk (pMnw
366)

⁶³ qKiq bhY qKqY kI lwiek (pMnw 1039) qKiq rwjw so bhY ij qKqY
lwiek hoeI (pMnw 1088)

⁶⁴ ividAw vIcwrI qW praupkwrI (pMnw 356)

humble.” (AGGS page 937)⁶⁵

Q 45: - Do the Sikhs believe that their Gurus will return to earth?

No. Sikhism believes that a dead person is gone forever. He/she is like “a ripe fruit which falls down from the branch and does not return to it” (AGGS page 1366) ⁶⁶Sikhism believes that what is important is not the person of a religious preceptor but his philosophy. The Sikhs have the spirit of their Gurus in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which enshrines their Gurus’ philosophy.

Unlike many other religions Sikhism believes that religious leaders only show the way. They cannot condone our sins and open the door to heaven. The Guru says, “You reap only what you sow in your field of deeds” ⁶⁷(AGGS page 134)

Q 46: -Do the Sikhs believe in heaven and hell?

Answer: - The Sikh Gurus have neither approved nor denied the existence of heaven and hell. The Guru said, “Heaven is wherever the praises of the Lord are sung” (AGGS page 749).⁶⁸ The Guru advises that one should not aspire for heaven nor should one live in fear of hell. He said, “Never think of attaining heaven nor should you fear going to hell” (AGGS page 337). “Those who remember the Lord will never have to see hell.” (AGGS page 460)⁶⁹ “Only those go to hell, who forgetting the philosophy of the Guru, follow their own mind. Devotees of the Lord will not suffer any hell fire.” (AGGS page)⁷⁰

⁶⁵ pwDw piVAw AwKIAY ibidAw ibcrY sihj suBwie (pMnw 937)

⁶⁶ ijau bn Pl pwky Buie igirih bhuir n lwigih fwr (pMnw 1366)

⁶⁷ jyhw bIjY so luxY krmw sMdVw Kyqu (pMnw 134)

⁶⁸ qhw bYkuMTu jh kIrgnu qyrw qUM Awpy srDw lwieih (pMnw 749)

⁶⁹ nrk n fITiVAw ismrq nwrwiex (pMnw 460)

⁷⁰ ijqny nrk sy mnmuiK BogY gurmuiK lypu n msw hy (pMnw 1073)

Q 47: -Do the Sikhs consider that Sikhism is the only true religion?

Answer: - The Sikhs believe that Sikhism is the true, straight and sure way to spiritualism and is an ideal way of living. They do not, however, call other religions false. The Guru says, “Do not call the Hindu scriptures or the Semitic books false. False is he who does not analyse them.”(AGGS page 1350)⁷¹. The Sikhs pray for the uplift of everybody irrespective of their religion or belief. The Guru says, “The world is burning in the fire of egoism O Lord. Save it in thy mercy through whichever gate (religion) they approach you” (AGGS page 853)⁷²

Q 48: - Do the Sikhs believe in the existence of soul?

Answer: - The Sikhs firmly believe that soul exists and is a spark from God. In the Holy Granth Kabir calls it ‘the part of God’ (rwm kI AMS) and the Sikh Gurus call it ‘The light of the eternal’ (joiq srUp). The Sikhs believe that impious deeds cloud our otherwise pure soul and we need to keep it clean through daily prayers and pious deeds.

The Sikhs believe that the soul never dies. “God resides in our soul and our soul must remain close to God” (AGGS page 1153)⁷³ “When the human soul and the supreme soul become one, the duality of the mind is overcome”⁷⁴ and we loose our identity in God. That is the goal of the Sikh.

⁷¹ byd kqyb khhu mq JUTy JUTw jo n ibcwrY (pMnw 1350)

⁷² jgqu jludw riK lY AwpxI ikrpw Dwir] ijqu duAwrY aubrY iqqY lYhu aubwir (pMnw 853)

⁷³ Awqm mih rwm rwm mih Awqmu cInis gur bIcwrw (pMnw 1153)

⁷⁴ Awqmw prwqmw eyko krY AMqr kI duibDw AMqir mrY (pMnw 661)

Q 49: -Do the Sikhs believe in the existence of Devil?

Answer: - There is no concept of devil in Sikhism but too much involvement in worldly pursuits at the cost of spirituality is thought to be a rebellion against God. This human failing is sinful for humans but, unlike the legendary devil, it can never challenge God.

For the Sikhs the devil is not a personality, which opposes God and stalks human beings. The Sikhs believe that we ourselves become devils through misdeeds and impious actions. Pride, anger, adultery, avarice, sloth, jealousy, lying, fraud, corruption etc are all human failings. The more a human falls prey to these, the more devilish and sinful he becomes. These exist in our mind, which must be kept clean at all times. The Guru says, “Virtue and sin exist in your body brother” (AGGS page 126)⁷⁵. The solution in controlling the devil also lies with us. The Guru says, “Control your mind which wanders after sin all the time like a falcon looking for prey” (AGGS page 776)⁷⁶

Q 50: -Can you sum up Sikhism in a few words?

Answer: - Sikhism is a way of life preached by the Sikh Gurus. It proclaims human equality, futility of caste, sex or race prejudice and fruitlessness of idol-worship. It lays stress on the worship of One God and living a high spiritual life based on the principles laid down and demonstrated by the Sikh Gurus. Social service (*Sewa*) is considered meritorious in Sikhism.

⁷⁵ kwieAw AMdir pwpu puMn duie BweI (pMnw 126)

⁷⁶ vis Awixhu vy jn iesu mn kau [mnu bwsy ijau inq BaidAw (pMnw 776)

Chapter 4

History of the Sikh Gurus

The history of Sikh religion dates from the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469. In his day (as perhaps now) virtue had come to be identified with virtuosity, prayer with pretentiousness, and piety with perjury and welfare with wealth. Political authority was unjust and extortionate. Land was owned by “contractors who fleeced the people to the utmost so as to get enough for their own profits and for the heavy bribes which secured privilege for the future. Corruption and disorder everywhere rampant, the country a prey to brutal murders and dacoits, desolated by cruelty, wastefulness and vice. Honours and places freely bought and sold. The rulers sunk in luxury and vicious debauchery. Terrible famines swept the land. Irrigation was totally neglected. Dynastic wars and rebellions were incessant and travel was excessively unsafe and perilous”⁷⁷

Religion was nothing but a refuge for superstition, bigotry, ritualism and obscurantism. It was “confined to peculiar forms of eating and drinking, peculiar way of bathing and painting the forehead and other such mechanical observances. The priests alone could study the scriptures, and to them alone were accessible the highest truths and consolations of Hindu philosophy. Even they, however, had fallen to the dead level of scribes and Pharisees. Some of them still remembered the scriptures by heart but in their practical life they were mostly the opposites of what they were required to be by their scriptures.

⁷⁷ *Gospel of the Guru Granth Sahib* by Duncan Greenlees page 21

They were required to be good shepherds to their flocks, but the only function of shepherd they performed was to fleece their flocks. As for administering to their spiritual needs; the hungry sheep looked up and were not fed. The springs of true religion had been choked up by weeds of meaningless ceremonial debasing superstitions, the selfishness of the priests and the indifference of the people. Form had supplanted the reality and the highly spiritual character of Hinduism had been buried under the ostentatious paraphernalia of sects.”⁷⁸

On the other hand the Muslims hunted the Hindus like bloodthirsty hounds.⁷⁹ On pages 75-76 of his “History of the Punjab” Mohammed Latif has quoted the sermon of a Muslim priest. He reports, “A drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail than two months of fasting and prayer. He who perished in holy war went straight to heaven. In paradise nymphs of fascinating beauty impatiently waited to greet his first approach. There the gallant martyrs lived forever a life of happiness and bliss, free from sorrows and liable to no inconvenience from excess. They would possess thousands of beautiful slaves and get houses furnished with splendid gardens and with all the luxuries of life to live on.” The intolerance and fanaticism so vehemently preached by the Mullahs could not but lead to bloodshed, tyranny, oppression and high-handedness. Therefore “great jealousy and hatred existed those days between the Hindus and the Mohammedans and the whole non-Muslim population was subject to persecution by the Mughal rulers.”⁸⁰

Hindus were allowed to keep only enough corn for six months. The official orders were,” Hindus are like the earth, if silver is demanded from them, they should with the greatest humility, offer gold. And if a Mohammedan desires to spit into a Hindu’s mouth

⁷⁸ Transformation of Sikhism By G.C.Narang page 20

⁷⁹ rwjy sIh mukdm kuqy] jwie jgwiein@ bYTy suqy] cwkr nhdw
pwiein@ Gwau] rqu ipqu kuiqh o cit jwhu (pMnw 1288)

⁸⁰ History of the Punjab Mohammed latif page 240)

the Hindu should open it wide for the purpose. God created Hindus to be slaves of the Mohammedans. The prophet had ordained that, if the Hindus do not accept Islam, they should be imprisoned, tortured and finally put to death and their property confiscated.”⁸¹

“Temples were desecrated, destroyed or converted into Mosques. Hindus were killed indiscriminately setting flowing seas of blood or forcibly made to renounce Hinduism and work as slaves. Those who did not accept Islam were burnt alive.”(See *Tabaqat-e-Nasiri* by Minhaj-ul-sira). Idols were broken in thousands a day and bathed in Hindus’ blood (see *Twarikh-e-Alai* by Amir Khusrau). As the Muslims treated the Hindus so did the upper caste Hindus treat the Shudras and murdered them with hatred, contempt and social exclusion. So utterly had the Indians degraded and subjected themselves to self-abasement and servility that they had lost all natural manliness. Religious and social revival seemed well nigh impossible.

It was out of this wretched, trampled, hag-ridden nation of cowards that the Guru had to build a nation of self-respecting, pious brave men ready to die as martyrs for the sake of their religious beliefs and country. The rule of law had to be created out of the chaos that prevailed.

Having been born in a Hindu family Guru Nanak knew full well the consequences of his birth and agitation. Very carefully he studied the whole situation and reached the conclusion that constitutional agitation and active resistance to the ruling despotism were out of question. He, therefore, visualised that this gigantic task would have to be done slowly and patiently in more than one generation.

He began his work by ridiculing superstition, snobbery and

⁸¹ From Tazjiat-ulansar wa Tajriyat-ulasar as quoted on page 64 of ‘Glimpses of ten masters.’

sycophancy and by tearing down the caste prejudices, which had appallingly divided the people. On the one hand he awakened the demoralized and disheartened millions from sloth giving them new hope and on the other he started winning and wooing the Muslims over giving them the message to regard all human beings as equal.

The chief features of his teachings were simple and direct. God is one. He is free from birth and death. He is not born so no human being can be called God. Man should worship God alone. Idol worship is useless. God's presence should be felt everywhere. God is unseen and can only be realized in the heart. Rituals, ceremonies, pilgrimages, and fasts have little merit for the soul. Only pious deeds done in the midst of worldly surroundings raise the spirit. Women are equals of men and have equal rights. The human race is one and the barriers of caste, religion, countries and creeds are only impediments in the way of spiritual progress. Man is not sinful by birth and the sins of the forefathers do not descend upon their progeny. "Whoever does his duties without worldly attachment, consecrating his deeds to God, verily, sin does not touch him. Just as a lotus leaf, though in water, is not affected by it," he said.

The Guru's teachings threatened the popularity of the priestly class and challenged the inhumanity of the ruling tyrants. He was stoned, imprisoned, maligned and ridiculed but he weathered all storms cheerfully and travelled far and wide delivering his sermons to millions. Through his efforts the seed had been sown. It had fallen on a good soil awaiting careful nursing to make it yield a plentiful crop.

After the master's death in 1539, Guru Angad, the second Guru of the Sikhs continued the work and made extensive arrangements for education of his followers. He popularised the Panjabi script and like Guru Nanak preached his message in Panjabi language, which was the language of the common people. Guru Angad's

efforts brought out religion and learning from the grip of the pedantic Sanskrit scholars and highbrow Brahmans bestowing it on the man in the street. Knowledge was now not considered as the right of the elite. In addition to undermining the authority of the priests and Brahmans, the Guru's efforts increased the percentage of literacy. For the first time in the history of India, people began to realize that they had direct access to knowledge unfettered by the agency of the greedy and self-opinionated priests.

After Guru Angad the third Guru Amar Das strengthened the second Guru's arrangements for education. He laid extra stress on the equality of all human beings and on spreading the philosophy of the Guru far and wide. For this purpose he attached free kitchen to every Sikh place of worship so that people of all religions and castes could not only have convivial relations, shun untouchability and bias but also learn the Guru's teachings first hand. King Akbar came to visit the Guru and was declined conference unless he sat down and dined with the ordinary people in the Guru's kitchen. The Guru was thus a great leveller. He established 22 *Manjis* (bishoprics) under men and 52 *Peerhis* (seats) under women in various places to preach Sikhism far and wide.

Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru bought some land and founded the city of Amritsar (then known as Chak Ram Das) around a pool of water. Amritsar attracted throngs of people and the Guru's popularity increased by leaps and bounds. Since Amritsar was on the trade route between India and the Middle East, so very soon it became the centre of trade and flourished into a big market place.

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru in turn wrote a lot of hymns, collected the hymns of the predecessor Gurus and compiled them into Guru Granth Sahib (The Sikh Holy Book). The book soon became the sacred and the secular law for the Sikhs. It is written in sublime poetry, which can be sung to the tunes suggested at the head of each hymn or chapter. He added to the sanctity and

splendour of Amritsar by building *Harimander* (the temple of God) in the middle of the pool of immortality. This temple is now called the Golden Temple because the Sikh Maharaja Ranjit Singh later draped it in gold.

Amritsar became the hub of Sikh activity and a rallying point. The Sikhs began to take keen interest in trade and industry. They traded in Turkish horses and travelled to the western Muslim countries. This not only broke the Hindu superstition of sin in crossing the river Indus but also enriched the Sikhs. It also developed in the Sikhs a taste for horse riding and served as a test for religious faith because it required a staunch belief to come out unscathed through the fanatical and aggressive Muslim population of Turks and Afghans with whom they engaged in trade.

The fanatical and bigoted ruler of India, Jehangir, could not tolerate the growing popularity and influence of the Guru. On page 35 of his memoirs **Tuzak-e-Jehangiri** he writes, “At Goindwal, on the river Beas, lived a Hindu named Arjan in the garb of a saint. Many simple-minded Hindus and some ignorant and imbecile Muslims were attracted and ensnared by his ways. He was noised about as a spiritual master and people called him a prophet. Shoals of people came to him from all sides and made declarations of faith in him. This imposturous shop had been running briskly since three or four generations. For years it was coming to my mind either to abolish this emporium of falsehood or convert him to Islam. I was fully aware of his heresies and false cult. I, therefore, ordered him to be arrested and made over his house and family to Murtza Khan. I attached and confiscated his property and issued orders that he should be imprisoned, tortured and executed under some political pretext.

The Guru was arrested and kept hungry for days. Later he was brought out of his cell and hot sand was poured over his body while he was made to sit on a hot iron plate. Burnt and blistered he died on May 30, 1606 AD at Lahore (now in Pakistan).

After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev there was a real danger of mutiny. Therefore Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, was imprisoned at Gawalior. Having been released after some years, the Guru organised the Sikhs into an army under his command. He established a stable of 800 horses and enlisted 300 horsemen and sixty artillerymen. Soon after he was attacked but the Sikhs defended themselves bravely and won four battles against the Government. The Guru did not lay claim to even an inch of territory and fought all battles only in self-defence.

After the death of the sixth Guru, tempers cooled down for some time and the seventh and the eighth Gurus lived relatively peacefully without much interference from the Government. The pot of hatred and fanaticism among the court advisors was, however, still boiling.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, was approached by a number of Brahmans from Kashmir for help against their forcible conversion to Islam under the sword of Emperor Aurangzeb. They reminded the Guru that he had once said to the congregation, *“Sacrifice your head but do not desert those whose hand you have taken as a protector. Fall dead on the ground but do not give up your Dharma (faith)”*⁸² The Guru assured them that he would do his utmost to dissuade the Emperor from resorting to forcible conversion. The Guru was charged of sedition and heresy and summoned to Delhi. Finding the Guru adamant on supporting the helpless Brahmans and unflinching in his faith, the Emperor offered him two choices. He should either accept Islam or death. The Guru accepted the latter and was publicly beheaded at Chandni Chawk Delhi (1675AD). At this time his dear Sikh Bhai Diala was boiled in water and Bhai Mati Das was sawed alive. The bodies of the martyrs were displayed at the gates of Delhi.

⁸²bWh ijnHw dI pkVIey isr dIjY bWh nw CofIey] Dr peIey Drm n CofIey] These lines are **not** from the Guru Granth Sahib.

The whole country began to burn with indignation and revenge at the uncalled for and unprovoked atrocious butchery of the Guru. The Sikhs only wanted a leader under whose banner they could avenge the death of their revered Guru and make amends for the insult done to their religion. Once again they were reminded of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev and the steps taken by Guru Hargobind to strengthen the power of the Sikhs.

The Guru's martyrdom once again stirred up the dying embers of Hindu hatred against the Muslim rule. The Hindus were excluded from all Government offices and had to pay Jazia (a special tax imposed on the Hindus). They were forbidden from riding on horses and their temples were destroyed or desecrated. There was no alternative left for the Hindus but to cast their lot with the Sikhs. They began to accept Sikhism in greater numbers than before. Guru Gobind Singh had only to infuse a new life into the dead bones of the Hindus, make them forget caste differences and present a united front against the cruelty and persecution to which they were exposed day in and day out.

In order to confront the tyrant Government the Guru founded the 'Khalsa' (The army of the pure). Khalsa was free from the prejudices of caste, colour or social status and had to fight voluntarily against all types of tyranny and injustice. The first five people who offered their services to the Guru for this noble cause were reverently called "***Panj Pyaras***" (the five beloved ones). They were baptised by the Guru and were followed by thousands. Very soon the Guru had a formidable army of dauntless warriors ready to lay down their lives at his bidding. For his Khalsa the Guru prescribed five symbols called **The Five Ks**. They were *Kesh* (hair), *Kangha* (comb) *Kara* (a wrist bangle), *Kachha* (shorts) and *Kirpan* (sword).

The Khalsa fought many battles in the course of which the Guru lost all his four sons, his mother and a lot of valuable literary work. Two of his four sons were entombed alive in a wall at

Sirhind and the other two fell fighting in the battle of Chamkaur. For a time the Guru was left helpless and friendless wandering in the forests hotly pursued by the royal army and their spies. When the dust settled down, he gathered a big army once more but very soon the spies of the Government succeeded in stabbing him to death (1708 AD)

Before his death the Guru had edited the Holy Granth and declared that after him the Sikhs will consider Guru Granth Sahib as their spiritual Guru. He also ordained that five fully baptised Sikh leaders will act as the guardians of the Sikh interests and all Sikhs will follow their command.

Chapter 5

Excerpts from the Sikh Holy book

God

God has no mother, father, sons or relatives and He is free from sexual desire.

He has no wife and no ancestry. He is immaculate, infinite and endless.

His light is pervading everywhere. (AGGS page 597)⁸³

.....

You are the Lord of all and do not have to come into the womb.

You create the universe in Your Will and assimilate it within yourself (AGGS page 1095).⁸⁴

.....

There is One God and He is unique, immortal, unborn and above discrimination.

He is inaccessible, unfathomable and without form or feature.

On search one will find Him existing in every creature. (AGGS page 838)⁸⁵

.....

⁸³ nw iqs mwq ipqw suq bMDp nw iqs kwmu n nwrI, Akul inrMjn Apr prMpr sglI joiq qumwrI (pMnw 497)

⁸⁴ qUM pwrBRhm prmysru join n AwvHI ,qUM hukmI swjih isRsit swij smwvHI (pMnw 1095)

⁸⁵ eykm eykMkwr inrwlw Amr AjonI jwiq n jwlw ,Agm Agocr rUpU n ryiKAw Kojq Kojq Git Git dyiKAw (pMnw 838)

Creation

“In the beginning there was indescribable darkness
Neither the earth nor the sky existed; only His unfathomable Will
prevailed.

The sun and the moon were not there,
The night and the day had not taken shape.
The Lord alone existed in His meditative undisturbed mood.
There was no source of life, neither wind nor water.
There was no creation and no destruction.
The infinite Lord sustained the Void with His own device.
He was detached and unlimited.
He had Himself created Void out of Void.
This He does and enjoys” (Page 1034-35) ⁸⁶

.....

From the true Lord was born the air and air gave birth to water.
Water brought forth life in oceans, on land and in the air.
God infused Himself in all life. (AGGS page 19) ⁸⁷

.....

Having created the air He created the earth.
And created life with warmth and water ⁸⁸

.....

⁸⁶ Arbd nrbd DuMDUkwrw Drn n ggnw hukm Apwrw..... (pMnw 1034)

⁸⁷ swcy qy pvnw BieAw pvnY qy jlu hoie, jl qy qRBvx swijAw Gt Gt
joq smoie

⁸⁸ nw iqs mwq ipqw suq bMDp nw iqs kwmu n nwrI, Akul inrMjn Apr
prMpr sglI joiq qumwrI (pMnw 497)

There are skies above skies and earths below earths.
Human mind gets tired of search. It can never fathom the universe.
All knowledge will eventually say the same thing.⁸⁹

.....

There are numerous suns, moons and other galaxies.
(AGGS page 7)⁹⁰

.....

Best Religion

The best of all religions is to pray to the Lord and do pious deeds.
(AGGS page 266)⁹¹

.....

Materialism

The love of materialism in many garbs is the love of illusion.
The material pleasures do not stay.
Why do you love the passing shadow of a tree?
It will not last and you will come to grief.
All that you see as your possessions will pass away.
Why then do you go on stumbling in darkness?⁹²
(AGGS page 268)

⁸⁹ pwqwlw pwqwl lK Awgsw Awgws EVk EVk Bwl Qky vyd khn iek vwqu

⁹⁰ kyqy ieMd cMd sUr kyqy kyqy mMfl dys (pMnw 7)

⁹¹ srb Drm mih sRyst Drmu] hir ko nwmu jip inrml krmu (pMnw 266)

⁹² Aink Bwq mwieAw ky hyq, srpr hovq jwnU Anyq] ibrK kI CwieAw isau
rMg lwvY, auh ibnsY
auh min pCqvvY] jo dIsY so cwlxhwr, lpit rihE qh AMD AMDwr
(pMnw 268)

.....

Having earned a thousand he runs after a Lakh
 He is never satiated even though he goes on gathering wealth.
 He indulges in the pleasures of life,
 But is satiated not and wears his life to death.
 No one is ever satiated without contentment.
 Like the wealth gathered in a dream all his actions come to
 nothing. (AGGS page 279)⁹³

.....

Prayer

O unfathomable, unperceivable, unknowable infinite Lord,
 Shower your blessings on me.
 O Lord of the oceans and of the worlds, You pervade everywhere.
 Your light illumines every heart. (AGGS page 795)⁹⁴

.....

O Lord You are my father, You also are my mother.
 You are my kin, You also are my brother.
 Since You are my protector everywhere,
 No fear can come near me? (AGGS Page 104)⁹⁵

⁹³ shs Kty lK kau auT DwvY, iqRpq n AwvY mwieAw paCY pwvY] Aink Bog
 ibiKAw ky krY, n iqRpqvwY Kip
 Kip mrY] ibnw sMqoK nhIN koaU rwjY, supn mnorQ ibrQy sB kwjY
 (pMnw 279)

⁹⁴ Agm Agocr AlK Apwrw icMqw krhu hmwrI, joi Qil mhIAL Birpuir lIwx
 Git Git joiq qumwrI
 (pMnw 795)

⁹⁵ qMU myrw ipqw qUM hYN myrw mwqw, qMU myrw bMDp qUM myrw BRwqwl
 qUM myrw rwKw sBnI QweIN ,qw Bau kuhw kwVw jIau

.....

Thanks giving prayer

You are the Lord, we pray to you.
You have favoured us with our being and our body.
You are our mother and father; we are your progeny.
In your grace lie many comforts and luxuries.
Nobody can ascertain the limits of Your Glory.
O' Lord, You are higher than the highest.
The whole creation rests upon Your support.
Whatever has sprung from You, follows your command.
God, Your ways are mysterious.
Pleads Nanak: "I am your loving, ardent devotee".⁹⁶
(AGGS page 268)

.....

Voluntary Social Service

Dedicate yourself to voluntary service in the world,
And you get an honourable seat in the Lord's court.
(AGGS page 26)⁹⁷

(pMnw 104)

⁹⁶ qU Twkru qum pih Ardwis, jIau ipMf sB qyrI rwis] qum mwq ipqw hm
bwirk qyry, qmrI ikRpw mih sUK

Gnyry] kie n jwnY qumrw AMq, aUucy qy aUucw BgvMq](pMnw 268)
translation by Dr. Harsimran Singh

New York.

⁹⁷ ivc dunIAw syv kmweiAY, q drgh bYsx pweIAY (pMnw 26)

.....

Render voluntary service in as many ways as you can, Surrender your possessions, life and soul to the Lord in dedication.

(AGGS page 391)⁹⁸

.....

Intoxication

The misguided, who resort to drinking, are the maddest of all, True drunkards are those imbued with the remembrance of the Lord.⁹⁹ (AGGS Page 399)

.....

One person brings a full bottle, and another comes to fill his cup. Drinking it, his intelligence departs, and madness enters his mind. He cannot distinguish between his own and others' — he is struck down by his Lord and Master. Drinking it, he forgets his Lord and Master, and he is punished in the Court of the Lord. Don't drink the false wine at all if it is in your power. (AGGS page 553)¹⁰⁰

The True way

One who works hard for what he eats, and gives some of what he has in charity — O Nanak, he knows the true way of living.

⁹⁸ Aink BWq kr syvw krIAY, jIau pRwn Dnu AwgY DrIAY (pMnw 391)
⁹⁹ durmiq mdu jo pIvqy ibKlI piq kmlI] rwm rswieix jo rqy nwnk sc AmlI (pMnw 399)
¹⁰⁰ mwxsu BirAw AwixAw mwxsu BirAw Awie] ijqu pIqY miq dUir hoie brlu pvY ivic Awie] AwpxwprwieAw n pCwxeI Ksmhu Dky Kwie] ijqu pIqY Ksmu ivsrY drgh imlY sjwie] JUTw mdu mUil n pIceI jy kw pwir vswie (pMnw 553)

(AGGS page 1245)¹⁰¹

.....

Women

It is by women that we are conceived.

It is from women that we are born.

It is with them that we are betrothed and married.

It is the women we befriend and it is women who keep the race going.

When one woman dies we seek another.

It is women that are established in society.

It is women who give birth to great men.

How can then they be called inferior?¹⁰² (AGGS page 473)

.....

Humans are equal

God created light and His omnipotent nature created all human beings.

Since the whole world took birth from the same light,

How can some be superior to the others?¹⁰³ (AGGS page 1449)

¹⁰¹ Gwil Kwie ikCu hQhu dyie] nwnk rwhu pCwxih syie

¹⁰² BMif jMmIAY BMif inMmIAY BMif mMgxu vIawhu] BMfhu hovY dosqI
BMfhu cly rwhu] BMfu muAw BMfu BwIAY BMif
hovY bMDwnu] so ikau mMdw AwKIAY ijqu jMmih rwjwn (pMnw 473)

.....

Filth of mind

If hands and feet are covered with dirt, they are cleaned by washing in water.

If clothes are soiled with urine, they are washed with soap.

If mind gets polluted with sins, it can be cleaned only through prayer.

Mere words do not make one virtuous or a sinner.

It is the deeds that get engraved on our souls and go with us.

Whatever good or bad we do, we suffer the consequence thereof

O Nanak man's fate is tied up with God's unchangeable law.
(AGGS page 4)¹⁰⁴

.....

Sikh congregational prayer

O Death less, timeless Creator,

This creature forgetting thee is attached to worldly pleasures.

¹⁰³ Avil Alh nUru aupwieAw kudriq ky sB bMdy] eyk nUr qy sBu jgu
aupijAw kaun Bly ko mMd
(pMnw 1449)

¹⁰⁴ BrIAY hQu pYru qnu dyh] pwxI DoqY auqrsu Kyh] mUq plIqI kpVu
hoie] dy swbUxu leIAY Ehu
Doie] BrIAY miq pwpw kY sMig] Ehu DopY nwwY kY rMig] puMnI
pwpI AwKxu nwih] kir kir
krxw iliK lY jwhu] Awpy bIij Awpy hI Kwhu] nwnk hukmI Awvhu
jwhu (pMnw 4 pOVI 19)

Without Your mercy how can he extricate himself?

O Great King lust, greed, wrath, jealousy and other evil passions
occupy his mind.

On coming to You these worldly maladies and afflictions are
dispelled.

Show us such favour Lord that we, by word and deed, be Yours.

Grant assistance and support in all our actions.

May our minds be humble but our intellects exalted.

We offer this prayer in Your presence.

Forgive us our sins and errors.

Through Nanak may Your name be exalted.

May the whole humanity prosper through Your Grace.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ This prayer is not recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib. It is the usual practice to pray like this. In a congregational prayer the officiating person who leads the prayer, can change the wording at will.

(To be printed on the outer title page)

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