

Section 2 Matters of life and death

Topic 1.2.2 Sikhism and life after death

Revised

Sikhs believe in life after death because:

- it is taught in the Guru Granth Sahib which Sikhs regard as their living Guru and so must be believed; many Sikhs regard the Guru Granth Sahib as the words of God
- the Ten Gurus all believed in life after death and Sikhs should follow both the examples and the teachings of the human Gurus, and so should believe in life after death
- Sikhs believe that God would not have created humans without a purpose; a good God is bound to have created a life after death for his creatures
- many Sikhs feel that for life to end at death does not make sense; they believe that reincarnation, which rewards the good and punishes the evil when they die, makes sense of this life
- Sikhs also believe in life after death because of the evidence for reincarnation, such as children born knowing things they could not know unless they had been on Earth before.

How Sikh beliefs about life after death affect the lives of Sikhs

- Sikhism teaches that souls are reborn (samsara) until they are pure enough to reach mukti (release from rebirth) and the way to mukti is to move from being human-centred (manmukh) to being God-centred (gurmukh) and enter paradise. This is bound to affect a Sikh's life as they try to follow the Gurus' teachings on how to reach paradise.
- Following the Gurus' teachings involves abstaining from alcohol and drugs and only doing honest work, all of which affect a Sikh's life.
- To become gurmukh, a Sikh must give service to God, the gurdwara and other people. These are bound to affect a Sikh's life.
- Many Sikhs believe that to become gurmukh they must join the khalsa and wear the five Ks.

Evaluation of Sikhism and life after death

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What do Sikhs regard the Guru Granth Sahib as?
- 2 What do Sikhs believe rewards the good and punishes the evil when they die?
- 3 What is mukti?
- 4 What is the way to mukti?

Answers at end

Topic 1.2.7 Sikhs and abortion

Revised

Some Sikhs believe that abortion can only be used if the mother's life is in danger or she has been raped because they believe:

- life is sacred and begins at conception, so abortion is wrong
- only God has the right to take life
- in the lesser of two evils – the death of the foetus is less evil than the death of the mother.

Some Sikhs allow abortion according to UK law. They have this attitude because:

- Sikhs regard each individual as important and a part of God's essence, therefore the mother is more important than the child

- they believe that sanctity of life involves more than just the baby (it involves the lives of the parents and siblings as well) and is also connected with the removal of suffering (babies who would suffer greatly if born).

Evaluation of Sikhism and abortion

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 Who do some Sikhs believe has the only right to take life?
- 2 How do Sikhs use the lesser of two evils to justify abortion?
- 3 What do some Sikhs connect sanctity of life with?
- 4 What do Sikhs believe each individual is a part of?

Answers at end

Topic 1.2.10 Sikhs and euthanasia

Revised

Most Sikhs are against all forms of euthanasia because:

- Sikh teaching on violence to humans means that euthanasia would bring bad karma and prevent mukti
- according to the law of karma, God alone must give and take life at the right time
- the Rahit Maryada says that murder is wrong
- euthanasia would be damaging a soul, which is condemned in the Guru Granth Sahib
- to practise euthanasia is making oneself equal to God, the worst form of manmukh, and would create a massive amount of bad karma.

Many Sikhs are against euthanasia but allow the switching off of life-support machines and not striving to keep alive because:

- if someone is brain-dead their life has already ended, so it is not being taken
- striving to keep someone alive is preventing the soul from moving on, so it is stopping the law of karma
- release of the soul is the aim of Sikh life, so people should not be kept alive artificially.

Evaluation of Sikhism and euthanasia

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 Why could euthanasia prevent the soul from gaining mukti?
- 2 What is the worst form of manmukh?
- 3 Which Sikh book, other than the Guru Granth Sahib, says murder is wrong?
- 4 Why is striving to keep alive stopping the law of karma?

Answers at end

Summary of Sikhism and matters of life and death

- Sikhs believe in life after death because it is the teaching of the Guru Granth Sahib and the Ten Gurus. Their beliefs about life after death affect their lives because they will try to gain mukti by living a good life which is God-centred.
- Many Sikhs believe abortion is wrong except for when the mother's life is at risk or she has been raped. Some Sikhs believe in the UK law on abortion because they believe sanctity of life involves removing suffering.
- Most Sikhs are against euthanasia because they believe life and death should be in the hands of God, and that killing brings bad karma and so will prevent mukti. Some Sikhs accept not striving to keep someone alive and switching off life-support machines because not to do so would prevent the release of the soul.

Section 3 Marriage and the family

Topic 1.3.3 Sikhs and sex outside marriage

Revised

Sikhs believe that sex outside of marriage is wrong because:

- the Gurus did not have sex before marriage and all Sikhs should follow their examples
- the Rahit Maryada says there should be no sex before marriage
- marriages are usually arranged by families; having sex before marriage would make this more difficult
- adultery breaks the marriage union and would be manmukh behaviour, making attaining mukti more difficult
- adultery is forbidden by the Rahit Maryada
- all the human Gurus were faithful husbands who never committed adultery, and all Sikhs should follow their examples
- adultery is likely to harm the family, which should not be harmed as it is where children learn to be good Sikhs.

Evaluation of Sikhism and sex outside marriage

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 Which Sikh examples did not have sex before marriage?
- 2 Which Sikh book says there should be no sex before marriage?
- 3 What type of behaviour is adultery?
- 4 Who were faithful husbands who never committed adultery?

Answers at end

Topic 1.3.5 Sikhs and divorce

Revised

Most Sikhs believe that there should be no divorce because:

- two souls are united in a Sikh marriage, and they should not be split by divorce
- none of the Gurus divorced, and Sikhs should follow the example of the Gurus
- the Rahit Maryada disapproves of divorce and all good Sikhs should follow the guidance of the Rahit Maryada
- as Sikh marriages are often arranged, there are family pressures against divorce.
- they follow the culture of the Punjab where divorce is common
- if a couple live in hatred and discord they will gather bad karma, but divorce might allow the soul to gain mukti
- they believe divorce is a lesser evil than forcing a couple to live in hatred and bitterness.

Evaluation of Sikhism and divorce

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Some Sikhs believe that divorce should be allowed if a marriage has broken down because:

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What are united in a Sikh marriage?
- 2 What Sikh book disapproves of divorce?
- 3 What is accepted in the Punjab culture?
- 4 What are a couple likely to gather if they live in hatred and discord?

Answers at end

Topic 1.3.7 Sikhs and family life

Revised

Family life is important in Sikhism because:

- Sikhism teaches that the family was created by God as the basic unit of society and as the only place in which children should be brought up
- Sikhs believe that God is present in the home and the Guru Granth Sahib often refers to God as 'our father and mother'
- the human Gurus married and had families, showing how important the family is
- the Guru Granth Sahib teaches that family life is the highest form of life

- without the family, children would not learn the difference between right and wrong
- the family is very important for Sikhism to continue and grow as it is the family that brings children into the faith.

Evaluation of Sikhism and family life

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What do Sikhs believe God created the family as?
- 2 What does the Guru Granth Sahib often refer to God as?
- 3 How did the human Gurus show the importance of family life?
- 4 What does the Guru Granth Sahib teach about family life?

Answers at end

Topic 1.3.9 Sikhs and homosexuality

Revised

Many Sikhs still think that homosexuality is wrong because:

- Sikhism expects all Sikhs to marry and raise a family
- the human Gurus married and had families, showing they were heterosexual; Sikhs should follow their examples
- although the Gurus and the Rahit Maryada do not mention homosexuality, they do restrict sex to marriage.

Some Sikhs accept homosexuality and think homosexuals should be treated in the same way as anyone else because:

- if homosexuality is wrong it would have been banned by the Guru Granth Sahib or the Rahit Maryada

- they believe that Sikh homosexual rules on marriage and being faithful to one partner should be applied to homosexual partnerships
- as scientists now believe that sexual orientation is natural, it must be given by God
- Sikhs should respect all of God's creation and so homosexuals should be respected.

Evaluation of Sikhism and homosexuality

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 How does the example of the human Gurus show homosexuality as wrong?
- 2 What do the Gurus and the Rahit Maryada say about homosexuality?
- 3 What do some Sikhs think the Guru Granth Sahib and the Rahit Maryada would say if homosexuality were wrong?
- 4 Why do some Sikhs think homosexuality must be given by God?

Answers at end

Topic 1.3.11 Sikhs and contraception

Revised

Some Sikhs think that it is wrong to use contraceptives because they believe:

- God gave sex to humans to have children
- contraception is killing life, which is banned in the Guru Granth Sahib
- Sikhs should follow the example of the human Gurus, who had large families.

Most Sikhs believe contraceptives can be used to limit family size after two children because:

- they believe life does not begin until the moment of conception
- the Guru Granth Sahib says that God does not intend humans to suffer and contraception stops suffering
- having a small family is still following the examples of the Gurus.

Some Sikhs think married Sikhs can use any form of contraception because:

- contraception is not mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib or the Rahit Maryada
- the teaching of the Guru Granth Sahib on God not wanting humans to suffer means that they should only have wanted children.

Evaluation of Sikhism and contraception

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 How does the example of the Gurus make some Sikhs disagree with contraception?
- 2 Why do some Sikhs agree with contraception because it stops suffering?
- 3 Why do most Sikhs believe contraceptives can be used to limit family size after two children?
- 4 What do the Guru Granth Sahib and the Rahit Maryada say about contraception?

Answers at end

Summary of Sikhism and marriage and family

- Sikhs believe that sex outside marriage is wrong. Sex before marriage is banned by the Rahit Maryada. Adultery breaks the sacred marriage union.
- Some Sikhs believe there should be no divorce because marriage is for life and the Gurus did not divorce. Other Sikhs allow divorce because living in hatred will bring bad karma and prevent mukti.
- The family is important in Sikhism because it was created by God to keep society together, and the family is the main way of keeping Sikhism alive.
- Most Sikhs believe that homosexuality is wrong because it stops people from marrying and raising a family. Some Sikhs accept homosexuality because it is natural and is not mentioned in the Sikh scriptures.
- Some Sikhs believe contraception is wrong because all sex should allow for the procreation of life. Most Sikhs believe that contraceptives can be used to limit family size after two children. Some Sikhs believe a married couple can use contraception because it is not mentioned in the Sikh holy book.

Section 4 Religion and community cohesion

Topic 1.4.3 Sikhs and equal rights for women in religion

Revised

The religious attitude

Sikhism teaches the complete equality of men and women, and so most Sikhs believe that women should have equal rights in religion because:

- Guru Nanak taught that man and woman are to be seen as two halves of a whole, who therefore have equal rights
- equal rights for women was the teaching of all the other Gurus; for example, Guru Amar Das appointed women as Sikh preachers and Mati Sahib Kaur mixed the amrit for the first initiation ceremony
- the Guru Granth Sahib teaches that God is neither male nor female
- the Guru Granth Sahib teaches that men and women have so much in common that they must be treated the same.

The cultural attitude

Some Sikhs believe that men and women should have different roles and so cannot have equal rights in religion. They believe that women should look after the home and children, and not be religious leaders, because:

- most Sikhs come from the Punjab where women are not given equal rights to men
- in Punjabi society, girls are regarded as the property of their father and then their husband
- it is difficult to change cultural attitudes and some Sikhs believe that culture is part of religion
- most Sikhs with this attitude do not read the scriptures, nor know about the lives and teachings of the Gurus.

Evaluation of Sikhism and equal rights for women in religion

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 Who taught that man and woman are two halves of a whole, who therefore have equal rights?
- 2 What teaches that God is neither male nor female?
- 3 What does the Guru Granth Sahib teach about how men and women should be treated?
- 4 How are women regarded in Punjabi society?

Answers at end

Topic 1.4.7 Why Sikhs should promote racial harmony

Revised

Although most followers of Sikhism are also ethnic Punjabis, Sikhism is opposed to racism and racial discrimination in any form. Sikhs work to promote racial harmony because:

- the Gurus all opposed the caste system and treated all groups as equals
- Guru Nanak emphasised that anyone from any race can come to salvation
- in every Sikh act of worship everyone, whatever their race, eats from the same bowl, and sits together in the langar
- the Guru Granth Sahib teaches that different religions and races should live in harmony
- Sikhism teaches that because there is only one God who created the whole of humanity, humanity must also be one.

Evaluation of Sikhism and racial harmony

Evaluation questions will only ask you to refer to one religion, so it would be best just to use Christianity in answering evaluation questions, although you could use extra reasons from Sikhism.

Now test yourself

Tested

- 1 What did the Gurus think about caste?
- 2 What did Guru Nanak teach about race?
- 3 What does the Guru Granth Sahib teach about race?
- 4 What does the Sikh belief in there only being one God mean for racism?

Answers at end

Summary of Sikhism and racial harmony

- Some Sikhs believe that men and women are totally equal and should have the same rights in life and religion because this is the teaching of the Gurus. Some Sikhs are affected by cultural attitudes and think women should be subordinate to men and not have rights in religion.
- Sikhs should promote racial harmony because Sikhism teaches that racism is wrong because of the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib and the teachings and examples of the ten human Gurus.

Answers to Now test yourself

Unit 1

Topic 1.2.2 Life after death

- 1 Their living Guru and the words of God
- 2 Reincarnation
- 3 Release from rebirth
- 4 To move from being human-centred (manmukh) to being God-centred (gurmukh)

Topic 1.2.7 Abortion

- 1 God
- 2 They claim the death of the foetus is less evil than the death of the mother
- 3 The removal of suffering
- 4 God's essence

Topic 1.2.10 Euthanasia

- 1 Because it would bring bad karma
- 2 Making oneself equal with God
- 3 Rahit Maryada
- 4 Because it is preventing the soul from moving on

Topic 1.3.3 Sex outside marriage

- 1 The Gurus
- 2 The Rahit Maryada
- 3 Manmukh behaviour
- 4 The human Gurus

Topic 1.3.5 Divorce

- 1 Two souls
- 2 The Rahit Maryada
- 3 Divorce
- 4 Bad karma

Topic 1.3.7 Family life

- 1 The basic unit of society and the only place in which children should be brought up
- 2 'Our mother and father'
- 3 They married and had children
- 4 That it is the highest form of life

Topic 1.3.9 Homosexuality

- 1 They all married and had children
- 2 Nothing, but they restrict sex to marriage
- 3 They would ban it
- 4 Because science has shown that homosexual orientation is natural

Topic 1.3.11 Contraception

- 1 They all had large families
- 2 Because the Guru Granth Sahib says that God does not intend humans to suffer
- 3 Because having a small family is still following the example of the Gurus
- 4 Nothing

Topic 1.4.3 Equal rights for women in religion

- 1 Guru Nanak
- 2 The Guru Granth Sahib
- 3 Men and women have so much in common that they must be treated the same
- 4 They are regarded as the property of their father and then their husband

Topic 1.4.7 Racial harmony

- 1 They all opposed it
- 2 That anyone from any race can come to salvation
- 3 That different religions and races should live in harmony
- 4 If only one God created the whole of humanity, humanity must also be one