

Section 2 Religion: environmental and medical issues

Topic 8.2.5 Sikhs and stewardship

Revised

Although Sikhs do not always talk about being stewards of the Earth, they believe they have a duty to look after the Earth because the Guru Granth Sahib says that Sikhs should:

- respect the light of God in the universe
- respect the light of God in people
- respect the light of God in life and nature.

Sikhs must follow the examples of the Gurus who looked after the environment, for example:

- Baba Budha made a place where tigers, goats, peacocks and snakes all existed in harmony amidst lakes and greenery
- Guru Amar Das constructed baolis, which provided safe drinking water for the people in an eco-friendly environment
- Guru Har Rai developed Kiratpur Sahib as a town of parks and gardens.

How Sikh teachings about stewardship affect attitudes to the environment

- Respecting the light of God in the universe means reducing pollution and preserving resources.
- Following the examples of the Gurus means Sikhs should protect animals and preserve eco-systems.
- Respecting God's light in people means Sikhs should try to share resources more fairly and improve the standard of living in LEDCs without causing more pollution.
- Respecting God's light in life and nature means Sikhs should share in and support the work of groups working to reduce pollution and conserve resources.

Although Sikhs should have a great respect for the environment, some Sikhs feel that, in arguments between environmental protection and human jobs and living standards, the rights of humans should come first.

Evaluation of the teachings of Sikhism on stewardship

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 does the Guru Granth Sahib say that makes Sikhs believe they have a duty to look after the Earth?
- 2 What example did the Gurus set about stewardship?
- 3 What does respecting God's light in people mean for Sikhs?
- 4 What does respecting God's light in life and nature mean for Sikhs?

Answers at end

Topic 8.2.8 Attitudes to infertility treatments in Sikhism

Revised

Some Sikhs reject all infertility treatments involving technology because:

- they believe that once an embryo has been created, it is alive and should not be killed
- they see AID and egg donation as a form of adultery, which is banned by Sikhism.

Many Sikhs accept AIH and IVF, but have worries about AID, egg donation and surrogacy because:

- all Sikhs are expected to have a family, and technology can be used to bring this about
- the egg and sperm are from the husband and wife

- the discarded embryos are not life
- in AID, egg donation and surrogacy, there are concerns about the identity of the child.

Evaluation of Sikhism and infertility treatments

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 do some Sikhs reject AID and egg donation?
- 2 Why do many Sikhs accept the use of technology to bring about fertility?
- 3 Why do AID, egg donation and surrogacy cause problems for Sikhs?
- 4 What different attitudes to the use of embryos do Sikhs have?

Answers at end

Topic 8.2.11 Attitudes to transplant surgery in Sikhism

Revised

Most Sikhs agree with transplants using dead or living donors, but do not agree with organs being paid for because:

- organ donation is a form of sewa (service), which is very important for Sikhs
- Guru Nanak said people should leave something to make their good deeds carry on after death
- they believe the physical body is not needed after death
- donating your organs is the best act of charity you can do.

A few Sikhs do not agree with transplant surgery in any form. They have this attitude because:

- it raises the problem of when is someone dead (in heart transplants the heart is removed before it has stopped beating)
- it raises the problem of whether surgeons who have a patient desperate for a transplant will do their best to save the life of a potential donor
- it tempts poor people to sell their organs to rich people.

Evaluation of Sikhism and transplant surgery

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 Guru Nanak say that makes most Sikhs agree with transplants?
- 2 Most Sikhs believe that organ donation is a form of what?
- 3 What do most Sikhs believe about the physical body?
- 4 Why do a few Sikhs think transplants are a problem for poor people?

Answers at end

Summary of Sikhism and environmental and medical issues

- Sikhs believe they have a duty to show stewardship towards the Earth. The examples of the Gurus mean that Sikhs should respect and look after animals. Respect for God's light in life and nature means that Sikhs should reduce pollution and try for a fair sharing of resources. However, most Sikhs believe the interests of humans should come first.
- Some Sikhs do not allow any of the infertility treatments because they involve taking the life of unwanted embryos. Other Sikhs allow IVF and AIH, but are suspicious of all other methods even though they do not ban them.
- Most Sikhs agree with both forms of transplant surgery because the body is not needed after death and donation is a form of sewa. A few Sikhs do not agree with any transplant surgery because of concerns about when someone is dead and pressures on the living to donate their organs.

Section 3 Religion: peace and conflict

Topic 8.3.6 Attitudes to war in Sikhism

Revised

Sikhs are strongly in favour of action to promote human rights and harmony between religions and states, but most Sikhs agree with fighting in just wars because:

- from the time of the fifth Guru, the Gurus used armies to stop oppression and attempts to destroy the Sikh faith
- the sixth guru, Guru Har Gobind, said that armies could be used to promote the cause of justice and protect the innocent
- the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, formed the khalsa, whose members carry a Kirpan (sword) to 'righteously defend the fine line of the Truth'
- Guru Gobind Singh said military action should be a last resort, but should not be avoided if necessary
- the Rahit Maryada teaches that Sikhs should fight in wars which fulfil the requirements of the 'dharam yudh' (war in the defence of righteousness).

However, some Sikhs (such as the Khudai Khidmatgar) believe that Guru Nanak was against war and that no war can be a just war using modern weapons, and so they oppose wars.

Evaluation of Sikhism and attitudes to war

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 Guru Har Gobind say about wars?
- 2 Why do members of the khalsa carry a kirpan?
- 3 What did Guru Gobind Singh say about military action?
- 4 What is a dharm yudh?

Answers at end

Topic 8.3.8 Attitudes to bullying in Sikhism

Revised

Sikhs are against all forms of bullying because:

- Sikh society is based on respect between the members of society; bullies have no respect for the people they bully and so do not understand Sikh society
- bullying is manmukh (human-centred) rather than gurmukh (living by the Gurus' teachings)
- bullying uses unjustified violence, which is sinful
- bullying is mistreating the divine essence inside everyone; it will bring bad karma, which will prevent the bully from gaining mukti (release from rebirth)

- it is the duty of Sikhs to protect the weak as this brings good karma, making it easier to gain mukti; bullying is the exact opposite of this and so must be wrong
- all Sikhs believe they should defend human rights but bullying denies the victim's human rights.

Evaluation of Sikhism and attitudes to bullying

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 is Sikh society based on?
- 2 Why will bullying bring bad karma?
- 3 Is bullying manmukh or gurmukh?
- 4 What does bullying do to people's human rights?

Answers at end

Topic 8.3.11 Forgiveness and reconciliation in Sikhism

Revised

Sikhs believe in forgiveness and reconciliation because:

- Sikhism began because Guru Nanak wanted to reconcile the religions of Islam and Hinduism that divided India
- there are many examples of the Gurus showing forgiveness and seeking reconciliation
- the Adi Granth teaches the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation
- the festival of Paryushana Parva celebrates friendship and forgiveness

- the holy books teach that forgiveness and reconciliation cannot be separated.

However, Sikhs believe that a conflict over moral or religious issues might not be able to be resolved – for example, if Sikhs were criticising the khalsa.

Evaluation of Sikh teachings on forgiveness and reconciliation

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 did Sikhism begin?
- 2 What teaches the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation?
- 3 What does the festival of Paryushana Parva celebrate?
- 4 What do the holy books teach about forgiveness and reconciliation?

Answers at end

Summary of Sikhism, peace and conflict

- Sikhs are not pacifists and are expected to fight to protect the oppressed and human rights. However, the war must be fought justly. Just wars must be fought by Sikhs even if there is no chance of success.
- Sikhs are against bullying because it involves unlawful violence, which is manmukh rather than gurmukh. It also brings bad karma, which will delay mukti. It is also denying the victim's human rights, which Sikhs should protect.
- Sikhism believes in forgiveness and reconciliation wherever possible because this was the teaching and example of the Gurus. The Adi Granth encourages Sikhs to be merciful and forgiving; and the Paryushana Parva festival is all about forgiving those who have wronged you.

Section 4 Religion: crime and punishment

Topic 8.4.4 Why justice is important in Sikhism

Revised

Justice is important for Sikhs because:

- the Guru Granth Sahib teaches that justice is an attribute of God; God is just and is the source of all justice
- Sikhs believe that human justice is imperfect, often favouring the rich and powerful; Sikhs believe this is wrong and that Sikhs should work to change human justice to God's justice
- the Rahit Maryada teaches that Sikhs should work for justice

- Sikhism teaches that, while unjust people can escape the human judge, they cannot escape from the Court of God; at the end of people's lives, God will give full justice to everyone
- all the Gurus worked for justice and Sikhs should follow their example.

Evaluation of why justice is important for Sikhs

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 does the Guru Granth Sahib teach about justice?
- 2 What do Sikhs believe about human justice?
- 3 What does the Rahit Maryada teach about justice?
- 4 Why do Sikhs believe that, while people can escape human justice, they can never escape God's justice?

Answers at end

Topic 8.4.7 Attitudes to capital punishment in Sikhism

Revised

Most Sikhs are opposed to capital punishment because:

- the Sikh religion says all human beings have divine dignity, therefore none should be executed
- there are no clear instructions on capital punishment in the Guru Granth Sahib
- the Ten Gurus appear to have been against capital punishment
- killing in cold blood is banned by Sikhism.

Some Sikhs agree with capital punishment because:

- if there is no specific Sikh teaching, capital punishment must be allowed
- they agree with the non-religious arguments for capital punishment.

Evaluation of different attitudes to capital punishment in Sikhism

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 does the Sikh religion say no one should be executed?
- 2 What does the Guru Granth Sahib say about capital punishment?
- 3 What does Sikhism say about killing in cold blood?
- 4 Why do some Sikhs agree with capital punishment?

Answers at end

Topic 8.4.11 Attitudes to drugs and alcohol in Sikhism

Revised

Sikhism does not allow the use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco because:

- one of the rules of the khalsa is never to use tobacco or other drugs
- the Guru Granth Sahib says that Sikhs should avoid wine and marijuana
- Guru Nanak said that his followers should avoid all intoxicants
- Sikhs are taught to avoid everything that harms the body or the mind; this means that all drugs are forbidden
- the aim of Sikhism is to move from being manmukh to becoming gurmukh, but the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco drives a person away from the spiritual realities of life (gurmukh).

Evaluation of attitudes to drugs and alcohol in Sikhism

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 has a rule saying never to use tobacco or other drugs?
- 2 Who said that his followers should avoid all intoxicants?
- 3 What does being taught to avoid everything that harms the body or the mind mean for Sikhs?
- 4 Why do alcohol, drugs and tobacco make people manmukh?

Answers at end

Summary of Sikhism, crime and punishment

- Justice is important for Sikhs because it is taught in the Guru Granth Sahib and all the Gurus worked for justice. Sikhism teaches that God is just and justice comes from God. The Rahit Maryada teaches that it is the duty of Sikhs to work for justice and remove injustice.
- Most Sikhs are opposed to capital punishment because there are Sikh teachings against killing in cold blood. Some Sikhs agree with capital punishment because there are no clear instructions in the scriptures.
- Sikhs are taught not to use alcohol, drugs or tobacco because it is the teaching of Guru Nanak and the Guru Granth Sahib and one of the rules of the khalsa.

Answers to Now test yourself

Unit 8

Topic 8.2.5 Stewardship

- 1 That Sikhs should respect the light of God in the universe, in people and in life and nature
- 2 They looked after the environment
- 3 Sikhs should try to share resources more fairly and improve the standard of living in LEDCs without causing more pollution
- 4 Sikhs should share in and support the work of groups working to reduce pollution and conserve resources

Topic 8.2.8 Infertility treatments

- 1 They think they are a form of adultery
- 2 Because all Sikhs are expected to have a family
- 3 Because they raise concerns about the identity of the child
- 4 Some Sikhs think an embryo is a life; others think that discarded embryos are not life

Topic 8.2.11 Transplant surgery

- 1 People should leave something to make their good deeds carry on after death
- 2 Sewa
- 3 It is not needed after death
- 4 They tempt poor people to sell their organs to rich people

Topic 8.3.6 Attitudes to war

- 1 He said that armies could be used to promote the cause of justice and protect the innocent
- 2 To righteously defend the fine line of the Truth
- 3 It should be a last resort, but should not be avoided if necessary
- 4 A war in defence of righteousness

Topic 8.3.8 Attitudes to bullying

- 1 Respect between the members of society
- 2 Because it mistreats the divine essence which is inside everyone

- 3 Manmukh
- 4 Denies the victim's human rights

Topic 8.3.11 Forgiveness and reconciliation

- 1 Because Guru Nanak wanted to reconcile the religions of Islam and Hinduism that divided India
- 2 The Adi Granth
- 3 Friendship and forgiveness
- 4 That they cannot be separated

Topic 8.4.4 Why justice is important

- 1 Justice is an attribute of God, and God is just and is the source of all justice
- 2 It is imperfect, often favouring the rich and powerful
- 3 That Sikhs should work for justice
- 4 Because at the end of people's lives, God will give full justice to everyone

Topic 8.4.7 Different attitudes to capital punishment

- 1 All human beings have divine dignity, therefore none should be executed
- 2 It gives no clear instructions
- 3 It bans it
- 4 Because there are no clear instructions in the scriptures and they agree with the non-religious arguments in favour of it

Topic 8.4.11 Attitudes to drugs and alcohol

- 1 The khalsa
- 2 Guru Nanak
- 3 All drugs are forbidden
- 4 Because they drive a person away from the spiritual realities of life (gurmukh)