

Key Concepts

Mool Mantra	The key text for understanding Sikh beliefs about God is the Mool Mantra, which Sikhs consider to be a complete summary of all the teachings about God. This is repeated more than 100 times in the Guru Granth Sahib. Sikhs often use the Mool Mantra as a prayer. The first line of the Mool Mantra is 'Ik Onkar' which means 'there is only one God'.
Sewa	Sewa means 'selfless service' or in other words, doing something for others without any reward. This could be volunteering, cooking, cleaning etc. There are three different types of Sewa: Physical, Mental and Material.

“One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord” (Guru Granth Sahib)

This quote from the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, shows the importance of selfless service, for the person who performs it will reach God.

Stories of the Gurus

Guru Nanak	One morning Nanak went to the river to wash and pray. Nanak disappeared. Three days later, Nanak reappeared but was in a trance. When he finally spoke, he explained that he had been with God and had been given a special revelation . He was told that there is no religion, only one God. Nanak went on to teach people that God loves all people equally, emphasising the importance of religious freedom. From this moment on, Nanak was given the title of ' Guru '. He was the first of ten Gurus.
Guru Gobind Singh	Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth Guru. He asked for a volunteer to sacrifice themselves for God. One man did this and when the Guru returned, his sword was covered in blood. Five men followed. The Guru then revealed that all five men were still alive, showing their willingness to make a sacrifice for God. This was the start of the Khalsa - Sikh community. The commitment shown is loving God with all of your heart and sacrificing whatever you have.

Key Terms

Sikhism	A monotheistic religion founded in Punjab in the 15th century by Guru Nanak.
Sikh	A follower of Sikhism.
Punjab	A state of north-western India.
Khalsa	The Sikh Community founded by Guru Gobind Singh. Members wear the 5 Ks.
Kaur	A Sikh name for females meaning 'princess'.
Singh	A Sikh name for males meaning 'lion'.
Guru	Teacher/Guide.
Waheguru	'Wonderful Teacher' – the name for God in Sikhism.
Special Revelation	Revealing of information from God. This could be through visions, dreams or miracles.
Gurdwara	The Sikh place of worship where the holy book (the Guru Granth Sahib) is kept.
Gurmukh	A God centred lifestyle.
Manmukh	A self (man) centred lifestyle.
Mukti	Eternity with Waheguru after escaping the cycle of rebirth.

The 5 K's

Kesh - Uncut Hair	Sikhs do not cut their hair and so in order to keep it neat and tidy, members of the Khalsa (usually male but can be both male and female) wear a turban.	
Kangha - Wooden Comb	The Kangha has both practical and spiritual purposes. It is practically used to keep the hair clean and tidy. When it is not used, it is tucked into the back of the turban.	
Kara - Simple Steel Bracelet	The Kara is a plain steel bracelet worn around the right wrist. It cannot be made of gold or silver as these metals are too precious and are not in keeping with the Gurus teachings about equality.	
Kachera - Cotton Underwear	Kachera are loose fitting shorts that both male and female members of the Khalsa wear underneath their clothes. Guru Gobind Singh is said to have told his followers to wear them as they make movement in battle easier.	
Kirpan - Small Sword	The Kirpan is a short sword worn around the body of the Khalsa Sikhs held in a sheath. The earliest members would have worn a full size sword, but this is impractical today.	

Understanding Sikhism – The Big Picture

You will firstly explore the basics of Sikhism, including key terminology and language that you should be comfortable using. This includes Sikh, Sikhism, Guru, Waheguru and Gurdwara. You will also look at the origins of Sikhism both geographically, spiritually and culturally. Sikhism has inherent links to the religions you have studied previously (Buddhism and Hinduism) as it is one of the youngest religions, therefore, you will begin to identify similarities.



You will then begin to look at what it means to be part of the Sikh community the Khalsa. You will explore where the Khalsa originated by looking at the story of Guru Gobind Singh and the sacrifices made by dedicated Sikhs. You will understand that whilst it is something that many Sikhs choose to do to prove their dedication to God and Sikhism, this is not something which Sikhs are obliged to do.



Developing on from your historical understanding of the Khalsa and how it was founded, you will explore how Sikhs are acknowledged as part of the Khalsa today. This includes initiation into the Khalsa through the Amrit ceremony and the obligation to wear the 5 K's as part of a 'uniform' to help reinforce the key beliefs of Sikhism. You will be able to identify each of the 5 K's individually as well as explaining their importance to Sikhs today and any challenges that they may cause.



The Khalsa and 5 K's show the need for Sikhs to defend justice at all costs and stand up for those who are oppressed and vulnerable. Because of this duty of Sikhs, you will explore whether Sikhs are known can be considered to be warriors. Furthermore, you will look at the development of the term 'warrior', analysing what was needed to be a warrior five hundred years ago compared to being a warrior in the 21st century.



After exploring the origins and basic beliefs of Sikhism, you will begin to explore what Sikhs believe about God or Waheguru. This section of the unit will be grounded in scripture from the Guru Granth Sahib which will allow you to evidence why Sikhs believe Waheguru has certain characteristics. This will primarily focus on the importance of 'equality' and how Sikhs will reflect this in their everyday life. Additionally, you will then evaluate how reflection of this belief can allow Sikhs to reach Waheguru in the afterlife.



By utilising everything that has been studied so far in the unit, you will finally explore the duty of sewa or 'selfless service'. This will be linked to the Khalsa, 5K's and beliefs about Waheguru and how Waheguru can be reached. This will also allow a bridge into the next unit which focuses on how sewa can be performed in a specific way. You will explore what it means to be selfless and how you demonstrate attributes of selflessness in your own life.

