

Unit 8D Beliefs and practice: how do the beliefs of Sikhs affect their actions?

About the unit

In this unit pupils learn about key beliefs in Sikhism. Using a variety of written and visual sources they learn about and understand some ways in which Sikh belief informs Sikh practice today. The unit offers opportunities for pupils to examine and reflect on issues of faith. Pupils encounter Sikh teachings at first hand, and develop their understanding of Sikh sacred texts. They evaluate the relationship between beliefs and practice in society today for a Sikh believer.

This unit is expected to take approximately 7 hours.

Where the unit fits in

This unit builds on unit 1D 'Beliefs and practice' in the key stage 2 scheme of work by looking in more depth at the nature of faith and how it informs what religious people believe and do.

This unit helps prepare pupils for GCSE RE/RS by developing their understanding of the relationship between scripture and modern practice, ethics and belief.

Expectations

At the end of this unit

most pupils will: explain what Sikhs mean by the term God and how God may be known and worshipped by Sikhs; explain how the use of religious symbols helps a Sikh believer in his/her faith; understand ways in which Sikhs express their belief in God through the way that they live their lives, *eg through prayer and meditation, taking part in festivals and community service*; compare and contrast thoughtfully some responses to ways of service within a local Sikh community; describe beliefs that they agree or disagree with, explaining their reasons; make informed responses to questions of other people's values and commitments in the light of their own learning; reflect on questions about the purpose of human existence, formulating their own response

some pupils will not have made so much progress and will: explain some key Sikh beliefs; understand what belonging to a Sikh community involves, *eg prayer and meditation and community action*; understand the meaning of some Sikh symbols and use some Sikh language (Panjabi) correctly; identify beliefs that they agree or disagree with, and give at least one reason for doing so; reflect on questions about the purpose of human existence

some pupils will have progressed further and will: explain and evaluate the principal beliefs and teachings in Sikhism and explain in detail what it means to belong to a Sikh community; illustrate their answers with modern examples of Sikh belief and practice; evaluate their deeper knowledge and understanding and make informed responses on questions of meaning and purpose encountered in their course of study, in the light of their own and others' lives

Prior learning

It is helpful if pupils have:

- been taught about religious beliefs and practices outside Sikhism
- learnt how belief in God affects a person's actions
- an understanding of the ways in which religious people try to serve others in their local community
- had opportunities to develop skills of empathy, interpretation and reflection
- learnt how to take part in a debate

Language for learning

Through the activities in this unit pupils will be able to understand, use and spell correctly words relating to the study of:

- religion, *eg festival, prayer, meditation, pilgrimage, creator, eternal, immanent*
- Sikhism, *eg Waheguru, Nam Simran, Japji Sahib, Kangha, Kara, Kesh, Khanda, Kachera, Kirpan, Baisakhi*

Speaking and listening – through the activities pupils could:

- describe and evaluate how the work was undertaken and what led to the conclusions

Reading – through the activities pupils could:

- undertake independent research using knowledge of how texts, databases, etc are organised and of appropriate reading strategies

Writing – through the activities pupils could:

- organise facts/ideas/information in an appropriate sequence

Resources

As well as a range of textbooks and published resources, this unit will be enhanced by the use of original ancient and modern materials from believers' sources, including:

- resources from a variety of media – visual, musical, video and poetic – which exemplify ideas within the units
- Sikh artefacts – Kangha, Kara, Kirpan, Khanda, Kachera
- websites, *eg www.re-xs.ucsm.ac.uk; www.thersite.org.uk; www.sikhs.org; www.sikhnet.com*
- a classroom visit from a member of the Sikh community

Out-of-school learning

Pupils could:

- visit a Sikh gurdwara, meet members of the community and ask them questions about their central beliefs and practices
- do wider reading around the religion
- visit some designated Sikh sites on the internet, *eg www.sikhs.org; www.sikhnet.com*
- look out for current newspaper articles concerning Sikhism

Future learning

Pupils could go on to:

- develop further their knowledge of Sikh sources as a means of understanding in depth concepts of God, prayer and meditation and religious duty
- consider the diversity of belief and practice within Sikhism globally
- compare and contrast Sikhism with other religions
- make reasoned judgements about the nature of faith
- consider possible contradictions within Sikh belief and practice, *eg the practice of arranged marriages between people from the same caste alongside the belief in equality*

Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

What symbols are used in Sikhism?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the meaning and significance of symbols in Sikhism • about how symbols help Sikhs in their faith | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify a number of symbols commonly used in society, and discuss why we use them. Show pupils a Sikh symbol and discuss what it means. Ask pupils to make a copy for themselves along with an explanation. • Look at pictures and talk about the five Ks. Discuss the festival of Baisakhi and the Amrit ceremony. Allow pupils to look carefully at some Sikh artefacts and discuss in groups what they might stand for. Then, as a class, pupils report back, informing other groups of their meaning. From a worksheet, ask pupils to identify each object and write an explanation of how it is used and why it is important to the people who use it. Get pupils in small groups to research in greater detail one artefact from a range of resources, <i>eg books, CD-ROMs, pictures, video</i>, and present findings to the rest of the class. • Encourage the class to think about how wearing outward symbols of a faith could help people in their faith, and how it could be difficult as well. <i>In what ways can wearing a religious symbol help a Sikh in his/her faith? In what ways could being a Sikh teenager in Britain today be hard? What variety of practice is there?</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the meaning of a number of Sikh symbols • explain how helpful religious symbols can be to a believer • explain the meanings of artefacts and symbols • understand the significance to Sikhs of artefacts in their faith | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious artefacts should always be handled appropriately in a classroom setting, so that no offence is given to members of that religion. • For homework pupils could investigate the wearing of turbans in society, <i>eg through an article on Sikh policemen or motorbike laws</i>, and whether a person's faith is a good reason for their being made an exception in the laws of the land; or pupils could interview members of their family/friends about symbols that they think are important and why. |
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What does God mean to Sikhs?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what Sikhs mean by the term 'God' or 'Waheguru' • how Sikhism is distinct from Hinduism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The topic could be introduced through looking at the meaning of names, starting with those of the pupils. Link to looking at what 'God' means to Sikhs. • Look at the Mool Mantar and ask pupils to make a list of the concepts contained in it about God, <i>eg creator, eternal reality and immanent</i>. • Having checked the lists, go on to look at each concept in more detail. Divide the class into groups and give each group a concept to research. As the groups report back, display the most important points from their research. • Give pupils a number of quotations from Sikhs and Sikh scripture to read. Ask pupils to write a small paragraph on each of the main concepts that Sikhs believe about God, backing up each paragraph with a quotation from the sheet or their research. • As appropriate, highlight spellings and meanings of key terms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • list concepts which are referred to when the word 'God' is used by a Sikh • explain the meaning of these concepts • learn and spell technical terms specific to Sikhism correctly | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In order to introduce this lesson successfully, use several baby-naming books, so that all pupils can easily access the information. • For homework, pupils could be asked to try to make contact with Sikhs either via their local community or through the internet and discover who they believe God is. • The Sikh understanding of God could be compared with that of other religions. • Language for learning: pupils should continue to put correctly spelt key terms and meanings in their RE workbooks. A classroom RE word bank or glossary can be useful. Teachers can use a quiz format to reinforce spellings and understanding. |
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Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

What do Sikh scriptures have to say to Sikhs?

- about the content and use of the Guru Granth Sahib
- about how Sikh scriptures affect the lives of Sikhs
- Explain why the Sikh scriptures are named as they are. Go on to show pupils a video extract or pictures of how the scriptures are enthroned in the gurdwara, the use of the chauri and Sikhs prostrating themselves before the scripture, then list what pupils say these things tell them about Sikh beliefs about the scriptures.
- Teach pupils about the overall content and teachings of the scriptures, drawing out that they contain Sikh and non-Sikh teaching. Ask pupils to answer a range of questions, eg *What is the full name of the most important Sikh holy scripture? How do Sikhs show respect for their scriptures? What does the fact that Sikh scriptures contain non-Sikh teachings tell you about this religion?*
- Organise pupils into groups to investigate and report back to the class on:
 - the place of Sikh scriptures in everyday life from a variety of written sources, eg *quotations from Sikh believers from textbooks and the internet showing how Sikh scriptures are regarded and used*
 - how scriptures are used in one ceremony from this list: naming, wedding, bereavement and Akhand Path
- Present pupils with a scenario to which they respond in writing, eg *a friend of yours who is a Sikh has just saved up enough money to buy a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib and tells you why he/she is so excited. Write up the conversation between you and your Sikh friend.*
- Ask pupils in groups to use a mind map to explain some of the ways Sikhs show how important the scriptures are in their lives.
- identify the name of the Sikh scriptures
- explain their importance to Sikh daily life
- describe some of the scriptures' content
- explain some of the ways Sikh scriptures are important to Sikhs
- Pupils should be reminded of key strategies and organisational features to be used in the information search. Some pupils will need more detailed guidance.
- Sikh scriptures can be investigated on CD-ROMs or on the internet. A useful exercise would involve the class receiving the daily Hukamnama from Amritsar (at www.sikhnet.com). The whole Guru Granth Sahib in English can be found at www.sikhs.org/english/frame.html
- Language for learning: in preparing for group research, remind pupils to use their knowledge of how texts and databases, etc are organised, and to use appropriate reading strategies.

Why do Sikhs pray and meditate?

- what it means to pray and meditate as a Sikh
- to understand the difference between prayer and meditation
- to evaluate the benefits of meditation
- Play pupils different types of music, ending with a quiet and peaceful piece. Ask them to make a note of how the music makes them feel. Discuss their responses.
- Link this activity into looking at why Sikhs meditate. Cover the following points on meditation or Nam Simran: the purpose, the form and advice from the gurus. Then ask the pupils to answer some questions, eg *Why do Sikhs meditate? In what different ways do Sikhs meditate?*
- Go on to teach about prayer and its purpose with examples of Japji Sahib, one of many set prayers known as Nit Nem. Ask pupils to answer the questions *Why would a Sikh pray before eating? Why would Sikhs say that intention is what matters most with prayer? If prayer cannot change God's mind, then why do Sikhs pray?*
- As a class, evaluate prayer and meditation, discussing the similarities and differences. *How do they help Sikhs in their daily life?*
- describe Sikh prayer and meditation practice
- explain some of the similarities and differences between prayer and meditation
- assess the ways in which prayer and meditation could help a Sikh in their daily life
- It is good practice to give pupils choice about the extent of their personal involvement in reflective activities. Good RE does not invade privacy.
- The music activity is not a Sikh activity but is designed to help pupils understand some aspects of meditation.
- One of the pieces of music needs to be peaceful and reflective in order for the link to the rest of the lesson to work successfully.
- Sikh music may also be used; various examples are available in record shops or on the internet, eg at www.sikhs.org or www.sikhnet.com

Pupils should learn:

Pupils:

How are Sikh beliefs shown in festivals?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the content of two Sikh festivals • about why Sikhs celebrate these festivals • how important festivals are in the lives of Sikhs and others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have a general discussion about why human beings celebrate festivals. <i>What are the names of any Sikh festivals that you know?</i> • Identify the dates of the major Sikh festivals on the calendar and name them. • As a class, investigate the two main types of Sikh festival – gurburbs and jore melal, making sure that pupils understand the difference between them. Read Sikh accounts of what happens during a festival, at least one example for each type of festival, eg <i>Guru Nanak's birthday (around 18 November)</i> and <i>Baisakhi (14 April)</i>. Discuss why Sikhs celebrate these festivals and ask pupils to identify the main Sikh teachings or beliefs inherent in each. Pupils should make a record of the key events and beliefs in each festival. Select one of these festivals and ask pupils to imagine they are reporters for a local newspaper writing a piece on the festival, covering what happens and why. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describe the events of two Sikh festivals • explain the key beliefs behind these festivals • understand the importance of festivals for Sikhs and others | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are opportunities here for further study or extension work on the temple at Amritsar, Khalsa and Sikh initiation rites. • Pupils could set up a festivals database with fields relating to the religion, the date (or time of year or other identifying time), the practices, the meaning to believers and so on. This database could be refined and developed over the years, and used by future pupils and teachers. |
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How Sikhs seek to serve God

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about the concept of service in Sikhism • to understand ways in which Sikhs seek to serve God in their lives • to assess the ways in which Sikh beliefs affect their actions • to think about ultimate questions leading from their study | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask pupils to give some examples of the ways in which a belief affects a person's actions, eg <i>I travel on an aeroplane because I believe it can fly</i>. Go on to link this idea to how religious beliefs affect actions. Emphasise that actions are very important to Sikhs. • Teach through a variety of media, eg <i>video, textbooks, a visitor to the classroom, pictures, poems</i>, different ideas of service within Sikhism, eg <i>Sewa at the gurdwara/Sewa as talking to people about God/Sewa as giving/equality and justice</i>. Pupils can make their own notes on these topics, perhaps within a given writing frame, for use at a later date. • Ask pupils to design a poster that shows the main beliefs of Sikhism and how they are shown in practice. Once they have planned their idea and a check has been made that they are correct in what they are seeking to show, they produce a poster for display or for themselves. • Discuss why pupils think it is important for Sikhs to serve God. <i>What ultimate beliefs about life and death does this reveal? What have you found interesting about the way in which Sikhs seek to live their lives?</i> Ask pupils to record the main points from the discussion as they answer these questions. • Ask pupils to link together significant features of the Sikh religion on a mind map, showing how they fit into a coherent pattern. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify ways in which Sikhs try to serve God in their lives • explain why it is important for a Sikh to serve God • explain the ways in which Sikh beliefs affect their actions • synthesise by linking significant features from the religion • consider how Sikhs and their communities serve others and why | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is enough material in this section for two or three lessons. If pupils are to evaluate what they have learnt about beliefs and actions, they will need time to think and to refine and finally write about their thoughts. • ICT: there is an opportunity here for pupils to word process their final piece of writing, which would make refining it an easier task. The writing could be used as part of a display on the meaning of life from a religious perspective. |
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