

**Second Online Session of Society of Positive Philosophy and Interdisciplinary Studies (SPPIS)
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DEVELOPMENT OF SIKHISM

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Historical background of Sikhism:

Sikhism is the world's fifth largest religion. Sikhism is a monotheistic faith, founded in the Punjab region of India about 500 years ago. Sikhism means the religion of Sikhs; a strong belief in the supernatural powers, which controls the human, world. Sikh means the 'seeker of knowledge' or 'an adherent of Sikhism'. Sikhism was divinely revealed to its first guru prophet Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Sikh tradition was founded by him in the late 15th century C.E. Sikhism had amiable relations with other religions. Sikhism was further enhanced by the establishment of 'Khalsa Panth', by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. This process gives the Khalsa, as an organized grouping, a religious history of around 300 years.

Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhism, which is considered as one of the major world religions, which primarily developed in 16th and 17th century in the region of Punjab, India. The principle belief of Sikhism is the faith in Waheguru- represented using the sacred symbol of 'Ek Onkar'; universal god. Sikhism comes from the word Sikh, which comes from the Sanskrit root 'Sisya', means disciple or learner.

Sikhism believes the pursuit of salvation through personal and disciplined meditation in the message, name, and the principle of god. The Sikhs are ordained to follow the teachings and the principles of all Sikh gurus and should follow the Holy Scriptures.

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Main thinkers of the Sikhism:

The all ten gurus of the Sikhs are known as the main thinkers of the Sikhism as following:

- 1) *Guru Nanak Dev:* - He inspired people to create such type of brotherhood on which there was spiritual, social and economic equality, where there was rule of love, equality, affection, respect, brotherhood and peace. There should be respect for other religions and no fight on the name of god and religion. According to Guru Nanak Dev Ji, God is one and only he is the creator of the world. He is formless, omnipresent and endless.
- 2) *Guru Angad Dev Ji:* - In 1538, Guru Nanak Ji chose his disciple Bhai Lehna as his successor to the guruship rather than his son. He was renamed as Guru Angad. He continued the works started by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, he not only collected the hymns of Guru Nanak, even he also has collected the traditions of his Guru then Angad Dev's hymns are inspiring and encouraging. In one of his shalokas, he has emphasized the significance of the guru; "if a hundred moons arise and thousands sun appeared, even with such intense light these would be pitch darkness without the guru"¹
- 3) *Guru Amardas Ji:* - During his guruship, Goindwal became an important center for Sikhism. He was deeply influenced by guru bhakti under Guru Angad Dev Ji, devotion, service and feeling of love. He paid special attention towards the evils of society like caste system, sati system, pardah system, untouchability and supported widow remarriage, inter-caste marriage. According to him, a drunkard loses his wisdom and intoxication dominates his brain and does not recognize his dear ones and aliens. God is forgotten soul is punished in the court of god.
- 4) *Guru Ram Dass:* - Guru Amar Das appointed his son-in-law, Jetha as the fourth Sikh guru. Jetha became Guru Ram Dass; he established the city of Ramdaspur, later named as Amritsar. During his guruship, Sikhism more flourished than ever and it was propagated. He condemned many useless and false rituals. Masand system which means

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high place was started by him. Appointed by guru, these chief Sikhs had high status in Sangat of Sikhs, so they called 'masands'.

- 5) *Guru Arjun Dev Ji*: - In 1581, he became the fifth guru of Sikhs; he was the younger son of fourth guru (Ramdas). He supported the work of religious propagation, encouragement of horse trade, end of masands. Among his efforts made for the development of Sikhism, compilation of shri guru Granth sahib earlier known as the Adi Granth Sahib was his greatest achievement.
- 6) *Guru Hargobind Singh*:- He is the sixth guru of Sikhs. He adopted the symbols of royalty. He gave up adopting seli and cap, because these were the symbols of faqiri. He wore two swords, one for spiritual reasons and one for temporal reasons (worldly). These two swords were known as Miri and Piri, first was the symbol of worldly affairs and the second was the symbol of guidance and spiritual powers. From this point onward, the Sikhs became a military force and always had a trained fighting force to defend their independence.
- 7) *Guru Har Rai*:- He is the seventh guru of sikhs, who followed all the teachings of his gurus. Once he was summoned in Aurangzeb's court but due to some reasons he sent his elder son Ram Rai. There he gave wrong explanation of one of the shloka of his father. Where he used 'be-imaan' instead of 'Musalmaan'. This annoyed guru ji and he decided to appoint is younger son Har Krishan as his successor instead of his elder son, Ram Rai.
- 8) *Guru Harkrishan Ji*:- He sat on throne at a very early age and hence was called as Bal Guru. He was five years old when he sat on throne in 1661. And remained still 1664. In middle of 1663, he was attacked by chicken pox and soon in the beginning of 1664 he passed away due to the disease, but before dying he uttered two words 'Baba Bakala'. These words were the clue for people to find his successor at Bakala. At that time, Teg Bahadur Ji stayed at Bakala. Finally, a person succeeds to find Teg Bahadur Ji and declare him as ninth guru of Sikhs.

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9) *Guru Tegh Bahadur*: - In 1675, Aurangzeb's atrocities were crossing their limits, he wanted to convert every person into Muslim, but most of the people didn't want to become the Muslim. So, they came under the protection of Guruji. Guruji advised them to spread his message that they will convert their religion if their guru will convert his religion. So, Guruji was summoned by Aurangzeb and he was ordered to change his religion and show some miracle. Guruji denied both the conditions. So, Teg Bahadur Ji was martyred for sake of Hindu Brahmins. Before passing away, he ordered his followers to regard his son Gobind Rai as his successor.

10) *Guru Gobind Singh Ji*: - After the martyrdom of guru Teg Bahadur Ji, Gobind Singh became the tenth and the last guru of Sikhs. He brought great changes in Sikhism according to the necessity of the time. He established the Khalsa Panth in 1699 A.D. He fought against the oppressions of Mughals. He sacrifices his four sons for Sikhism. By the creation of Khalsa Panth by Guruji Sikhs had self-confidence, bravery, valour and fearlessness. When he assumed Guru Gaddi in 1675 A.D., he was adolescent yet he had devotion, courage, hatred against oppression. He knew that there is need to develop the self-power and courage among Sikhs. There was need of Khalsa because there was existence of castes, weakness of Sikhs, and tyrannical rule of Mughals. Because of these reasons, on the Vaisakhi day, 13 April 1699 A.D., a great revolution took place in Punjab. In Anandpur at Keshgarh, Guruji created a new nation in edge of the sword. It is called Khalsa.

Causes for the Development of Sikhism:

In medieval period, Hinduism lost its purity and many evils like caste-system, child marriage, pardah system etc. crept into it. Empty ritual practices, customs and ceremonies had taken place of true religion. Brahmins, the priestly class had become corrupt and in fear of losing their position, they started misguiding the common people. It needs a new religion which will lead the society towards the path of truth.

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- *Spread of Islam:* - The muslim rulers attempted to convert Hindus into Muslims. Islam preached the brotherhood of mankind opposed caste-system. It attracted the low caste Hindu people. Islam preached unity of god and worship of formless god. Many of the teachings of Islam world adopted by Sikhism but still it were different from Islam. This was partly influenced by Hinduism and partly by Islam.
- *Bhakti movement:* -It was not confined to any one quarter in India but it spreads its influence all over the country. It spread like a great ocean wave to three corners of this triangular peninsula. The bhakti movement started from the south, travelled towards Punjab changing its character into Sikhism. The bhakti movement played a very significant role in the development of Punjab. It saved the Punjab from influence of Islam and blind faiths. Guru Nanak was the founder of the bhakti movement.

Philosophy of Sikhism:

“Realization of truth is higher than all else. Higher still is truthful living.”

Entire Sikh philosophy is based on the doctrine of one god which is rebuilding with extra ordinary clarity in the Sikh scriptures.

Metaphysics of Sikhism:

Metaphysics is that branch of philosophy which deals with the nature of reality in metaphysical world. Literally, the word metaphysics had been derived from two words- Meta (beyond) and physics (the physical world), so metaphysics means beyond physical world. Here, the problems of ultimate reality world and man are discussed.

- a) *Concept of God:* - The gurus rejected the representation of god through idols as Sikh scriptures described god as self-existing, spirit and light, omnipotent, omnipresent,

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- formless, creator and destroyer, just full of love and mercy. Guru Nanak believes only in perennial philosophy of every great scripture. He oriented his philosophy on realization of the only and only one god by an individual. The 'one' is also called the 'Onkar' that creativity, and creation as whole.
- b) Man: - Man has a special place and status in philosophy of Sikhism. The ultimate reality is viewed in human form and god is called the eternal man (akal purash). God is the light. Man is spark, separated from the absolute light (param jyoti). God keeps on attracting man towards himself and at the end also man merges into the pure light by the will of god. God is real abode of man and on liberation he reaches god.
- c) Concept of ego: - Man is the central figure in the universe. No religion, no philosophy and no rational phenomena are possible without him. Every human being has the parasite of ego attached to him influencing his spirit. The ego further blocks the consciousness and makes it impossible for a human being to realize his own self. It works in perspective and unconsciously through our thought, action, reasoning and planning. This is how we become self-centered, selfish, proud and arrogant. When ego fills the mind and heart of a person, God has no place in his life.²
- d) Moksha: - Man in the world is called jiva, who takes birth and death after living one life and he goes about in chain of births and death. Man's ego, his ignorance and his sense of duality are the causes of man's bondage in this cycle. Emancipation is release from this bondage and from the cycle of birth and death. But it is through the grace of god that he is released from the cycle of life and death there are more every tendencies in human nature and they all can be overcome by recitation of divine name. When ego leaves, its places taken by divine name, then a man realizes the true nature of god, who is his real home and then the light merges into the light. This stage is called moksha.

Epistemology of Sikhism:

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Generally, according to Indian philosophy knowledge is considered as manifestation of objects but in Sikh tradition knowledge is that which is not only obtained through sense but also obtains through meditation or recitation which is called self-knowledge.

Epistemology is that branch of philosophy which deals with the theory of knowledge in search for truth. According to Sikhism, the man who is attracted towards divine name is able to make progress towards spiritual awakening and this awakening have five stages:

- a) The stage of dharma (dharam-khand):- It is the beginning of spiritual progress where a person thinks the world is his temporary home and all his deeds will be judged before god. He will enjoy or punished according to his good or bad deeds. Then he comes to distinguish between good and bad, and tries to do which is good and avoid what is bad. These efforts make a man fit to sever his relation with a life of this world thinking i.e. transitory. Then he comes to rights above attachment.
- b) The stage of knowledge (gyan-khand):- Here, man tries to understand the actual working of universe man comes to appreciate oneness among the multiplicity of the world. Thus, attains real knowledge including the knowledge stars and galaxies. All this knowledge is the ideal for the disciple, finally man comes to realize 'naam' (anhad) in his own heart and enjoys a peculiar place.
- c) The stage of effort (seram khand):- Along with earning one's own livelihood, one is to continue making efforts to rise spiritually. Due to this, he comes to transform his evil nature and overcome dark tendencies where he succeed in overcoming evil nature and empties himself of his ego he reaches the position which is fit for liberation.
- d) The stage of grace (karam-khand):- At this stage when god sees that a particular has done intense labor and now he is fir for liberation he bestows his grace on this man which is liberated from bondage and attains freedom.
- e) Stage of truth (sach-khand):- This is the final stage of man's spiritual realization.

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According to Guru Nanak Dev “there is what one god and he is obtains by true guru’s grace. He is not only obtained by going on pilgrimages. God’s name is the real place of pilgrimages the guru given gnosis is the true sacred place. He, who by meditation slays himself, is saved and saves others and he enters not existences again and this is truth.”³

- f) Sources of knowledge: - The Holy Scripture was called Adi Granth in the beginning when it was compiled by Guru Arjun Dev ji. But it was revised by tenth master Guru Gobind Singh ji and named as Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Granth Sahib is the only source of true knowledge in Sikh religion. It is the spiritual scripture in the world in which every word is original and uttered by Sikh gurus and great saints of different religions also like Kabir, Baba Farid, etc. In this scripture all instructions related to the life of an individual are given to his life properly. This scripture is regarded as eleventh guru as per tenth master’s orders in his writings *i.e.* ‘Agya Bhai Akal Ki Tabhi Chalayo Panth, Sab Sikhian Ko Hukam Hai Guru Maniyo Granth.’ In this scripture it has been emphasized that path of virtuous deeds is the only discipline acceptable to god. The theological fundamentals and the doctrines of the Sikh religion are clearly and completely embodied in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Ethics of Sikhism:

Sikhism unlike any other religion does not have any formal list of commandments and prohibitions in the Sikh scriptures. But they have been tabularized in the ‘Rehat Maryada’. The gurus by their followers to a holy and purposeful life. Guru Nanak declares without virtuous living there can be no devotional worship. Hence, morality is the basis of spiritual life holiness and altruistic action goes together. The perfect ethical man will always try to help others. Ethics has two kinds:-

Individual ethics:

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- a) **Dutifulness:** - Duty implies obligations- to one self, family, to society, to one's country and humanity at large. A man must look after his own body and his health, he must develop his mind through educational training and one must serve others as far as possible. The basic principle is that one must so conduct one's self that he sets an example which others can follow.
- b) **Prudence:** - Prudence lies in considering what is right or wrong. Man has the faculty of distinguishing between good and bad. It is his duty to monitor his environment and raise voice against social evils. He must use his power of reason for the betterment of society and the improvement of his surroundings.
- c) **Justice:** - Justice as a virtue implies respect for the rights of the others i.e. it may be called equal opportunity to the every individual. It stands for equality and impartiality. Justice must be done with good heart and not by greed and selfish mind.
- d) **Tolerance:** - The golden principle of tolerance is to live and let live. This means to control any feeling of prejudice or violence. When a person sees people whose manners are not to his liking. He shouldn't be upset by them. One must be tolerant to stay happy.
- e) **Temperance:**-Self-control is necessary in desires words and actions. The guru says, "The mind seeks evil things. But through the guru's words it can be controlled".

Universal ethics:

- a) **Sahij:** - The concept of Sahij is that of a sort of moral path or a moral discipline on Sikhism which occupies the highest place in the moral and spiritual development of man. Sahij literally means the state which naturally comes to us spontaneous way of life.
- b) **Sewa:** - According to Sikhism, the service of others is not only a moral need for us, but it is spiritually as well as religiously significant. Therefore, spiritual and religious motives operate service. From moral viewpoint, it is our duty to render service to others who are members of our society. Service of people is worship of god.

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- c) Love: - Here, love does not mean emotional attachment of one person with another. Guru Sahib says that human love is divine and it depends upon the relation between soul and god. If god is light, the man is also a ray radiated out of the divine light. God is the essence of love itself.
- d) Paropkar: - It is considered as a pillar of ethics. Paropkar means doing welfare of others. This world is made of the combination of two words “par” which means ‘other’ and “upkar” which means ‘welfare’ or ‘good’.
- e) Divine order: - Hukam ordinarily means an order or a command, but in Sikhism it means the divine or command. The divine order produces the creatures and regulates their life in a systematic life. The entire world process is under his order; there is nothing beyond the divine command.

Thus ethics is concerned with human conduct in the terms of right and wrong. Ethics provides a systematic study of the nature and the standard of moral judgment based on our ideas of good or bad.

Development of Sikhism since medieval period:

Sikhism had good relations with other religion. However, in Mughal rule (1566-1707), the relations became problematic. The fifth guru of Sikhs, Guru Arjun Devji, martyrdom by Mughals. A huge turning point came in the history of Sikh religion that was the formation of soldiers with two swords ‘Miri’ and ‘Piri’, one for the protection of religion and one for the protection of society. This change in Sikh religion brought a tremendous change in the political history of medieval India. The guru compiled all the hymns of earlier gurus and added his own hymns also in Adi Granth Sahib. Later, the tenth Guru Gobind Singh ji revised the scripture. This time the teachings of saints of other religions were also included along with the teachings of Sikh gurus. In 1699, he established Khalsa Panth to provide every individual equal status in the

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society.

In every age of Sikhism 'naam' remained the ultimate and the most sublime. One who meditates on the lord's name is the humble devotee. One who holds the 'naam' is liberated but without the guru, no one obtains the naam. But in present age naam is replaced by love and emotional attachment to Maya, which brings total darkness. If someone meets the true guru, he is saved through the naam. Throughout the ages, there is only one true lord, as Guru Amar Dass writes 'o Nanak, in each and every age the naam is glory and great.' In the beginning, Sikhism was pure and single, but with passage of time many bhakti sects developed in this religion.

Bhakti Sects:

Sikh sects not respecting the rules set by the tenth master. The formation of bhakti sects must be because of the arrival of conflicts between the thoughts and values among people. Every bhakti sect has its own set of rules and values, but still remains in Sikh religion.

- Mihan sahib: - This Sikh sect was founded by a person who uses to draw water for Guru Teg Bahadur Ji's followers and horses. Guruji, seeing his zeal awarded him with a seli (hair necklace), a cap (topi), a drum (nagara) and the gift of apostleship and said, "Brother, you pour water like the rain (minh)." Then he was styled Mihand. Thus, he became a sadhu and made converts. The Mahants of the sects still wear half turban; his followers are also called Bakshish sadhus from Bakhsh (the gift of apostleship).
- The Minas: - This sect was founded by Prithi Chand, the eldest son of Guru Ramdass ji. He claimed that being eldest son of guru, he deserves to be his father's successor. But, the orthodox Sikhs didn't regarded him as their next guru as guru Ramdass ji stigmatized him as Mina, the name given to those who were not fit for Gurgaddi but they pretend to become gurus. Miharban, Prithi Chand's son, wrote a janam sakhi of Guru Nanak Dev ji,

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wherein he neologized his father.

- **Namdeo Panthi:** - A disciple of Ramanand was Baba Namdeo, the Chhimba or cotton-carder. His followers are almost entirely Chhimbas and Dhobis by caste. He taught the unity god and uselessness of ceremonial and his doctrines would appear to have approached closely to those of Guru Nanak and the earlier Sikhs. Saint's name is pronoun and often spells as Namdev and his followers call themselves Sikh Namdev Namabansi.
- **Nanak-panthi:** - This sect was followed by Guru Nanak. He taught the highest form of the Hinduism in northern India. The unity of god, the absence of any real distinction between Hindus and Muslims, the uselessness of ceremonial and equality castes. Guru Nanak alone had his origin in the Punjab at the time of bhakti movement. The Nanak-Panthis of today are known as Sikhs who are not Singhs. Followers of earlier guru who do not follow the ceremonial and social rules and regulations of inculcated by Guru Gobind Singh. The chief external difference between Nanak-Panthis Sikhs and the followers of Guru Gobind Singh are the disposal of hair, the former like the Hindus, shaves all but the scalp lock (bodi or chotti) and hence is often known as mona or bodiwala Sikh. While Sikh proper wears long hairs.
- **Sewapanthi:** - A follower of Guru Teg Bahadur, Kanhaya Lala Dhamman (Dhiman) Khatri, originally an officer in the service of Mughals became a water drawer to guru's horses and to all people with him. After guruji's death Kanhaya Lal remained in Guru Gobind Singh's service and was with him at the siege of Anandpur. From his personal service (sewa), many people became his followers and were called Sewa-Panthis but in Amritsar they are known as Adnan-Shahis. His followers are mainly Khatri and

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Aroras of that tract of the disciple are styled as Nanak-Shahis, make ropes for a livelihood. Sewa-panthi is celibate and eats and share property together flesh, liquor, and hemp are avoided. This is an orthodox and honorable sect who lives by honest labor.

Present Scenario of Sikhism:

In present time Sikhism's grace is fading day by day it has been become so rigid that it is so difficult for the religion to be recognized which was started by Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Guruji have established one religion but people by misunderstanding the guru's teachings have divided it in many sects. Guruji has started this religion to unite the people. But people have made this totally different from the original religion. The religion stands upon the values like tolerance and equality. But today people have become so rigid that they have forgotten the real teachings of Sikhism. Now, the question arises "how the religion should be?" The religion should be so flexible that it may attract others by its positive values. There should no rigidness and the religion should not bind people in its limitation but it should keep people on the right path with its values and teachings. There should be only one group or sect of all Sikh instead of any discrimination between people on the basis of caste, creed, religion and complex. This religion does not need any sect but two followers.

Conclusion:

Sikhism is the latest religion which had least shortcomings at the time of its establishment. It is not the same religion which was started by Guru Nanak. A lot of changes have occurred since its establishment. The Sikhism was developed due to shortcomings of other religions. It developed as a new and unique religion, because it produced saint soldiers to protect society and religion. Later on it became the most famous religion due to its principle and its brave followers. Though the religion was establish to bring reforms in the society but it still needs many reforms itself.

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