

# Two elements of sikhism theology religion essay



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Sikhism is a monotheistic religion established by Guru Nanak in the Punjab region of north India during the 15th century. The fact that this religion has emerged in circumstances where both Hinduism and Islam have existed in India for centuries, made it drew many resources from both of these religion. Actually, by taking, from both of these religions, the best aspects and most tolerant behaviors for the human king, Sikhism could build its own characters and ideas (Noss & Grangaard, 2003). Today, Sikhism is considered as the 5th world largest religion with around 30 million followers worldwide, and it is only outnumbered by Hinduism, Islam, Christianity and Judaism. However, if we take in consideration the inclusive definition of religion, and include secularists, African and Chinese religions, then Sikhism would be the 9th largest religion in the globe (B. A, 03).

The work “ Sikh” derived from the Punjab language, means disciple. It refers to students of God who follow the teachings of the Ten Gurus (“ Introduction to sikhism,”). They exist in all parts of India with a majority in Punjab state which is nearly 89% Sikhs. Moreover, Sikhs are spread around the world especially in the north of America with a percentage of 2% and UK with 2%. According to the Canadian census “ The Sikh population in Canada increased from 150, 000 in1991 to 280, 000 in 2001.” (B. A, 03). This shows the increase of population of Sikhs and their existence around the world.

The first Guru, Nanak, was born in 1469 in a village of what is called nowadays Pakistan. As a young man, Nanak was fascinated by religion and God; he desired to explore the mysteries of the world and oddly meditated alone. The religious tolerance organization stated that: “ Guru Nanak received a vision to preach the way to enlightenment and God.” (Arora).

From that moment he tried to establish a new religion as a re-purification of Islam and Hinduism, but Distinct. So, in order to show the difference from these religions, Nanak adopted different clothing forms: the loincloth of the Hindu, the orange coat and cap of Muslims (“ Sikh: Religious history/beliefs,” 26). He is the responsible of one of the most important pillars of Sikhism which is “ there is no Hindu there is No Muslim” (B. A, 03). During his Doctrine, he banned the idol worship, the caste concept of Hindu and he encouraged the brotherhood of humanity. In other words, he criticized the rituals of Islam and Hinduism and addressed the concept of Love and understanding each other as human beings (Arora). After his death, the message of this new religion was passed through nine Gurus until the period of 1708 where this enlightened message continued through the holy text, which is considered as the 11th Guru. Actually, the 10th Guru established the holy text “ Guru Granth Sahib”, which is considered as the eternal Guru of the Sikhs. According to Sikhs Organization, Guru Gobind Singh announced that the Sikhism followers no longer needed a human Guru, and he appointed Khalsa as his physical successor, while Sri Guru Granth Sahib as the spiritual guidance (“ Introduction to sikhism,”). This later is an exception of the religious scriptures as not only it contains the doctrine of the gurus, but also, the writing of saints of Hindu and Muslim faiths. Thus, we see that Sikhism emerged from the correlation or re-purification of Islam and Hinduism, but what are some of the elements that are related between these religions and Sikhism?

## **Two elements of relation between Islam and Sikhism:**

The principle of belief in Sikhism is the belief in One God. Guru Nanak founded a monotheistic religion which believes in the existence of one god and eliminates idol worship. The scripture of Sri Guru Granth Sahib states: “There is one God, One God Lord and Master” (Guru Sahib). This shows the faith of this religion in one God and the acceptance of His greater power. In addition, the scripture states: “The One God is our father” (Guru Sahib). So, Sikhs believe that we are the creation of God, and that He formed everything. This is clearly similar to Islamic faith where Muslims believe in the uniqueness of one God, and it is stated in the holy Quran “Say God is One.” Actually, one of the basic principles of being a Muslim is stating “I testify that there is no god except Allah and I testify that Muhammad is the messenger of God.” So, the existence of one God is part of the first pillar of being a Muslim. Moreover, Islam is showing and believing in the great power of God, as in every call for prayer “Imam” states: “God is great.” Thus, we can notice that one of the major relations between Sikhism and Islam is the notion of the Uniqueness of God and His Greater power.

Moreover, Nanak called His God “True Name” in order to avoid any restricting name for Him (Noss & Grangaard, 2003). According to David S. Noss, Nanak stated that “if any name is to be used, let it be one like Hari (the kindly) which is a good description for His character; for His mercy is Inexhaustible, His love greater than His undeviating justice. At the same time” (Noss & Grangaard, 2003). Thus, Sikhism teaching calls and describes God in different names, labeling His characters and His relations with human king. Besides, the Sikh Scripture states: “Priceless is His Mercy” (Guru

Sahib), which shows that His Kindness and forgiveness is beyond limitation. This is true Also is Islam, as we have 99 names for God describing His characteristics, generosity, forgiveness and punishment. For example, Ar-Raheem is one of the God's names that demonstrate His Mercy, and Al-Jabbaar, means that nothing happens except what He willed. Thus, we can notice that both Sikhism and Islam have names for God that describe His mission, control and softness towards us.

Also, in their warship buildings (gurdwaras) which include Community Kitchens and often hostel facilities, Sikhs offer free meals, for everyone, after warship as a social service (Noss & Grangaard, 2003). This is quite similar to the concept of “ zakat” in Islam, which means Charity. In fact, Zakat is one of the 5 pillars of Islam which states that Muslims should give away part of their money or wealth for the poor or to its collectors. Hence, another common point between the two religions.

### **Two elements of relation between Hinduism and Sikhism:**

Both Hinduism and Sikhism share the concept of reincarnation. Unlike Abrahamic religions, they have the same ideas about life and death.

According to the Sikh organization, Hindus and Sikhs have the common belief of the transmigration of the soul. They see life as countless cycles of births and deaths until the achievement of mukhti, which means the merge with God (“ Introduction to sikhism,”). This concept seems to occur: “ when the soul or the spirit, after the death of the body, comes back to life in a newborn body” (“ Reincarnation,” 25). So, the soul departs from the body at death, and then it goes and re-lives in another new body. The belief in reincarnation assumes the soul is eternal until the achievement of an

enlightened state (“ On reincarnation,”). Hence, Hinduism and Sikhism believe in the idea of rebirth or reincarnation.

In addition, Hinduism and Sikhism believe in Maya, which is according to the Sikhs organization: “ the world is just an illusion and some get enchanted with this illusion and forget God” (“ Introduction to sikhism,”). So, the concept of Maya is centered on delusion and misconception. For example, me and mine is an illusion. It is the ignorance around the conscious that brings the state of this independent unit that can only be stopped through meditation (“ Maya,” 26). However, Nanak did not take Maya as pure illusion but as David S. Noss stated: “ he intended to say that material objects, even though they have reality as expressions of the creator’s eternal truth, may build a wall of falsehood that prevents them from seeing the truly Real” (Noss & Grangaard, 2003). So, Sikhism does not see Maya as an illusion, but the idea behind it is the same, since material things are brought to this world to make a cover between God and His worshipers.

Finally, Sikhism is a religion founded by Guru Nanak in the 15th century. It has emerged between Islam and Hinduism that influenced many of its teachings. In fact, Sikhism, is seen as a re-purification of both Islam and Hinduism, as it condemned the blind rituals (“ Introduction to sikhism,”), and took the best parts of these two religion that will serve best the human king and create a nation of love, tolerance and equality. Hence, as mentioned above, there are some relations or similarities between Sikhs faith and Islam, like the oneness of God and His power; in addition to correlations with Hinduism in concepts like Maya and Reincarnation.