

products. However it should be noted that the majority of mainstream Sikhs are also keen meat eaters and Sikh philosophy does support both lifestyles.

Oneness of Humanity

Islam divides the world into Dar al-Harb (territory of war or chaos) and Dar al-Islam (territory of peace), with Muslims required to change Dar al-Harb into Dar al-Islam either through warfare or da'wa (mission).

In contrast, the 10th Sikh Master said, *"Recognise humankind as one."* and Sikhs are encouraged to respect and cherish the diversity that constitutes humanity.

Concept of Heaven

The Quran and Hadiths state that a Muslim man will get 72 virgins (Houris) when they go to heaven. In Sahih Bukhari Volume 6, Book 60, Number 402 Narrated Abdullah bin Qais, Allah's Apostle said, *"In Paradise there is a pavilion made of a single hollow pearl sixty miles wide, in each corner of which there are wives who will not see those in the other corners; and the believers will visit and enjoy them..."*

In Sikh dharma, Heaven is considered a part of the samsara cycle and not the same as liberation. The aim of a Sikh is to attain Mukti or liberation from the cycle of birth and death and this includes the 7 hells and 7 heavens.

Pilgrimage

Every able-bodied Muslim who can afford to do so is obliged to make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in his or her lifetime. It is the fifth of the Five Pillars of Sunni Islam and so it is a cornerstone of the faith.

In Sikh dharma the true pilgrimage is the one of the heart and cleansing of the mind. The SGGSJ says, *"Let the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy, be your cleansing baths at the sixty-eight sacred shrines of pilgrimage. Your soul, breath of life, mind and body shall blossom forth in lush profusion; this is the true purpose of life."*

Law in Society

Islam has very specific rules called Shariah Law, to deal with a range of crimes and sins. The penalty for a thief is the cutting of his/her hands. Quran 5:38, *"Cut off the hands of thieves, whether they are male or female, as punishment for what they have done - a deterrent from God: God is almighty and wise."*

Sikh dharma does not have an equivalent Shariah Law system because Sikh dharma is primarily a philosophical system.

Equality between Men and Women

Islam does not support the idea of complete gender equality between men and women. Quran 4:34, *"Men are in charge of women, because Allah hath made the one of them to excel the other, and because they spend of their property (for the support of women). So good women are the obedient, guarding in secret that which Allah hath guarded. As for those from whom ye fear rebellion, admonish them and banish them to beds apart, and scourge them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Lo! Allah is ever High, Exalted."*

Sikh dharma promotes complete gender equality between the sexes. There is no position reserved solely for a male and no 'extra' rules for women.

Conversion to Another Faith

If a Muslim wants to convert to another religion then the penalty is death. Hadith, Sahih Bukhari 4.260 Narrated Ikrima, *"Ali burnt some people [hypocrites] and this news reached Ibn Abbas, who said, 'Had I been in his place I would not have burnt them, as the Prophet said, 'Don't punish (anybody) with Allah's Punishment.' No doubt, I would have killed them, for the Prophet said, 'If somebody (a Muslim) discards his religion, kill him.'"*

In Sikh dharma, there is no punishment for choosing another faith. People are free to select whatever faith they want, because what matters is the actions that a person commits, not their religious title.

Sikh Dharma and Islam A Comparative Study



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Introduction

There are common principles and ideas in the hearts of all spiritual traditions of the world and this is also true for Sikh dharma and Islam, especially Sufism (mystical Islam).

Islam means submission to the Will of God and obedience to His Law, and is someone who accepts Prophet Mohammad as the Messenger of God. The word 'Sikh' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Shishya' meaning disciple or student of truth and is someone who follows the teachings of the 10 Sikh Masters, which are all embodied in the 11th and final master, which is the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (SGGSJ), the Word.

Similarities

Oneness of God

Both Sikhs and Muslims accept that God is one. Islam has 99 names of God which denote the attributes of the Almighty. Sikh dharma expands on this concept further by stating that there is no difference between Jehovah, Ram and Allah. The SGGJS says, "*The beauty of the Lord of the Universe is profound and unfathomable; the Names of the Infinite Lord are innumerable.*"

Status of Human Being

A Muslim believes that a human being enjoys an especially high ranking status in the hierarchy of all known creatures. Man occupies this distinguished position because he alone is gifted with rational faculties and spiritual aspirations as well as powers of action. Man is not a condemned race from birth to death, but a dignified being potentially capable of good and noble achievements.

Sikh dharma also has the same belief. The SGGJS says, "*Through 8.4 million incarnations you have wandered, to obtain this rare and precious human life. O Nanak, remember the Naam, the Name of the Lord; the day of departure is drawing near!*"

Purpose of Life

The purpose of human life in Islam is to worship Allah (God). This is very similar to Sikh dharma where the goal is to experience and become one with God. One of the methods of achieving oneness is through devotional worship (Bhakti) of God.

Prayer

Salah or Namaz (5 prayers a day) is one of the 5 pillars of Islam and is mandatory for every mature Muslim. The prayers are performed in the morning (Fajr), afternoon (Dhuhr), evening (Asr), night (Maghrib) and just before bedtime (Isha'a). A Khalsa-Sikh will similarly perform 5 meditations in the morning (Jap Jee Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Swayia, Chopai and Anand Sahib), 1 meditation in the evening (Rehras) and 1 before bedtime (Kirtan Sohila). However, in Sikh philosophy, it is not regarded as sinful to miss a prayer or meditation, as this is simply something that leads to the experience of oneness.

Charity

There are two forms of charity in Islam, obligatory and voluntary, called Zakah and Sadaqah respectively. Sikh dharma also emphasises the importance of Dasvandh, which is giving a 10th of ones income, time and skills to charity, and those in need.

Community

Islam emphasises Jama'ah or Ummah, which means togetherness or community. Jama'ah does not mean just praying together but working together in unity in all aspects of life. The Prophet is reported to have said, "*Anyone who gets even one foot away from the Jama'ah has taken out the Islamic yoke from his neck, even if he prays and fasts.*"

In Sikh dharma the concept of Saadh Sangat, meaning company of the holy, is given the same importance. The SGGJS says, "*Whoever has found the Treasure of Naam (the essence of reality), has done so in the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy. Through perfect good fortune, such balanced detachment is attained.*"

Differences

Prophets of the World

The 5 main prophets in Islam are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad who is considered the last Prophet for humankind.

Sikh dharma respects the divinity and contribution of all the sages, prophets and spiritual teachers which have come to Earth including, Ram, Krishna, Jesus, Buddha etc. However, Sikhs do not consider Mohammad as the last Prophet and instead believe that God will continue to send his messengers and

saints in the future. Sikhs also focus on the teachings given by the ten Sikh Masters which are considered to be the essence of all religious teachings.

Freedom of Religion

The Quran mentions that God has commanded Muslims to respect other faiths (6:108), other prophets (3:84, 4:164, 16:36), and other places of worship (22:40).

However at the same time the Quran also states in numerous places that non-believers should be killed and punished. 2:191, "*...And slay them (non-believers) wherever ye catch them*". Some Muslims use this to justify taking a slightly intolerant stance towards non-Muslim communities in Islamic republics run by sharia law.

Sikh dharma encourages humanity to respect everyone as sons and daughters of God. The 9th Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, gave his life for the 'Freedom of Religion' for humanity, and to save Hindu dharma, from extermination by hostile Mogul Islamic forces. Sikhs believe that God permeates through the whole of creation, and therefore every human being is precious and their beliefs should be respected.

Concept of Hell

In Islam people are considered to get one life and at the end of that life you are given either eternal life with God or you are given eternally consigned to a life of misery and punishment in hell.

Sikh dharma does not support the idea of eternal damnation as this is incompatible with the idea of an all compassionate creator. Sikh dharma believes in the samsara cycle and reincarnation and that we are given many opportunities to progress our soul and that ultimately all souls find their way back to their true home. The samsara cycle perfectly explains why some babies are still born, why bad things happen to seemingly good people etc.

Diet

Muslims are generally keen meat eaters with their own special form of animal slaughter called Halal, which means acceptable. Many schools of thought within Sikh dharma encourage a lacto-vegetarian diet, without meat, fish or eggs, but with dairy