

### Key concepts

- Sewa is based on the teachings found within the Guru Granth Sahib that Sikhs should strive to be less self-centred and more God-centred. They should live their lives in the selfless service of others (sewa). Through sewa, a Sikh destroys any egoistic tendencies and develops humility and compassion for others.
- Sikh participation in life must be morally based, of which sewa is an expression. It is the inseparable link between belief and conduct. Sewa is an expression of the principle of no ill will against any person including adversaries. It includes the principle of working towards the common good for all. It is also an expression of devotion to God. Sewa recognises no barriers of religion, caste or race.
- Sewa expresses, in practical terms, the relationship between Sikh belief and practice. It expresses Sikh beliefs in the oneness of humanity which is basic to the Sikh world-view. This can only be created by selfless service to others, with honour and devotion. It represents Sikh belief that serving other people whoever they are is a way of serving God.

- Sewa reflects the principle of Sarbat da bhala – working for the prosperity of everyone. Sarbat da bhala is a Sikh religious and social goal of which sewa is an expression.
- There are three different parts of sewa, all of which have material or practical value: - physical service, e.g. working in the langar - mental service, e.g. studying the Guru Granth Sahib - material service to other people, e.g. giving money to charities.

- Sewa is the basis and expression of the Sikh belief in equality and, as such, has material value in its implications for the community.
- Sewa gives Sikhism its strength in faith and community life. It is the glue that binds the Sikh community together and makes it very valuable in a material sense.
- Sewa is a vital part of a Sikh's spiritual life and leads to spiritual liberation. It is a way of showing spiritual devotion to God. Sewa fulfils spiritual and material needs within the Sikh community.
- Sewa is the means of eliminating ego, selfish tendencies and overcoming pride, all of which are spiritual goals for Sikhs.



### Key quotes

- 'Worthy are the hands of the Sikh who in the holy congregation do the Guru's work. Who draw water, fan the sangat, grind the flour, wash the feet of Guru and drink the water therefrom; Who copy the Guru's hymns and play the cymbals, the mirdang, a small drum, and the rebeck in the company of holy.' (Bhai Gurdas, Varan 6:12.)
- 'Cursed are the hands and feet that do not engage in seva.' (Bhai Gurdas, Varan, 27.1).
- 'One who performs selfless service, without thought of reward, shall attain his Lord and Master.' (GGS p 286)
- 'You shall find peace, doing seva' (GGS p 25)
- 'In the midst of this world, do sewa, and you shall be given a place of honour in the Court of the Lord.' (GGS p 26)

### Key words

sewa	egoistic	Sarbat da bhala	langar	equality
community	spiritual	material	humanity	world-view
God-centred	self-centred	morally	selfless service	caste
Guru Granth Sahib				

### Issues for analysis and evaluation

#### Key arguments/debates

Some would argue that actions are more important in Sikhism than beliefs. Others would argue that Sikhism is a religion firmly based on strong beliefs. Some would argue that actions express the relationship between belief and practice in Sikhism.

#### Key questions

Can it be argued that sewa is the most important teaching in Sikhism?  
Is performing sewa practical for Sikhs today?