

Key concepts

- The religious situation at the time of Guru Nanak - the influence and rivalry of Hinduism and Islam which influenced his decision to challenge aspects of both religions.
- The social disunity and religious segregation – influencing his teaching on equality and the role and status of women. The concept of ritual pollution – influencing his belief that God did not favour any group above another.
- The invasion of the Mughal army under Babur and Mughal persecution influenced his teaching on the importance of unity and community within Sikhism.
- There was the influence of Sufism on the mystical aspects of Nanak's teaching on the immanence of God. The north-Indian sant tradition – influenced Nanak's teaching about the possibility of unity with God; that all caste and sectarian distinctions should be condemned; idol worship being opposed.

- Sikh traditions teach that his birth and early years were marked with many events that demonstrated that God had chosen him out for something special. This had an influence on his teaching that God was personal, does not have human characteristics, is self-existent, God as One and God as Word.
- Rejection of religious divisions and caste system after his experience of God's court. Guru Nanak began teaching the importance of the equality of all people, regardless of their caste, religion or gender. Guru Nanak rejected the Sacred Thread ceremony when he was a young boy.
- His meeting with Sajjan and the teaching on what true religion is - that if a person is bad at heart, an outward show of good acts means nothing – leading to the jannam sakhi episodes.

- Guru Nanak travelled across North India teaching and established the community at Kartapur based on Sikh principles including the langar.

- Guru Nanak started congregational worship;
- Influence on structure of the Sikh community;
- Influence on worship.



Key quotes

- 'God is neither Hindu nor Muslim.'
(Guru Nanak)
- 'My Lord and Master has summoned me, His minstrel, to the True Mansion of His Presence.'
(Adi Granth – 150-17)
- 'He has dressed me in the robes of His True Praise and Glory.'
(Adi Granth 150-17)
- 'O Nanak, praising the True Lord, I have obtained His Perfection.'
(Adi Granth – 150-19)
- 'One Universal Creator God by the Grace of the True Guru.'
(Adi Granth 91)

Key words

Guru	Islam	<i>Guru Nanak</i>	Mughal	Babur
Hinduism	Sufism	Sant	God's Court	necessary
Kalam	Kartapur	Sajjan	God as Word	Caste
Sacred Thread	jannam sakhi			

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key arguments/debates

Some would argue that Guru Nanak was a product of his background and socio-religious ideas of his time. Others would argue that he was a religious innovator and that his teachings came from personal experience. Some would argue that although his background had an influence his vision and teaching owed cannot be limited to that one factor.

Key questions

To what extent is there anything new in the teaching of Guru Nanak?
 What could be argued to be the greatest influence on his teaching?
 To what extent was his teaching changed or adapted by Guru Gobind Singh?