

Key concepts

- Guru Arjan embarked on missionary journeys to the Majha region and expanded the Jat influx into the Sikh panth. This is a primary influence in the evolution of the Sikhs from being a religious panth to becoming the militant Khalsa.
- He converted many Jats and led them in the fight against Mughal tyranny.
- He increased the panth and became an example of the temporal and spiritual teaching of Sikhism. A theocracy began emerging. His death changed the way Sikhs thought about themselves and led to the formation of the Sikh army.
- He was the author of the Sukhamni, or hymn of peace, which is sung at Sikh funerals. The hymn is a statement of the distinctiveness of Sikhism.
- Guru Arjan safeguarded and supported the principles taught by Guru Nanak. He declared that all Sikhs should give a tenth of their earnings to charity.
- His work in completing the Golden Temple (Harmandir) – continuing the work of his father Guru Ram Das. He designed a doorway in each side as an expression of Sikh belief that it was open to all four castes. The design also expressed submission and humility before God.
- His urban programme – he developed Amritsar as a centre of excellence.
- He compiled the Adi Granth and had an official collection of hymns put together. He included those of Guru Nanak and therefore safeguarded his teachings.
- His hymns praise God, teach what God is like and give advice about the right way to live. He installed the Adi Granth in the Harmandir.

- His vision of Sikhism was of a faith that could unite India spiritually under enlightened and tolerant Mughal rule. He saw Sikhism as a religion of reconciliation.



Key quotes

‘Three things are there in the vessel; Truth, contentment, and intellect. The ambrosial name of God is added to it, The Name that is everybody’s sustenance. He who absorbs and enjoys it shall be saved. One must not abandon this gift, It should ever remain dear to one’s heart. The dark ocean of the world can be crossed by clinging to His feet. Nanak, it is He who is everywhere.’ – (Guru Arjan AG 1429)

‘Whatever you do, do it for the Love of God. In the Love of God, eternal peace is obtained.’ – (Guru Arjan)

‘The four castes of Kshatriyas, Brahmins, Sudras and Vaisyas are equal partners in divine instruction.’ – (Guru Arjan AG 747)

‘I do not keep the Hindu fast or the Muslim Ramadan. I serve him alone who is my refuge. I serve the One Master who is also Allah. I will not worship with the Hindu, nor like the Muslim go to Mecca, I shall serve him and no other. I will not pray to idols nor say the Muslim prayer. I shall put my heart at the feet of the One Supreme Being, for we are neither Hindus nor Muslims.’ – (Guru Arjan’s Sukhmani AG 1136)

‘May the mouth burn which says that God becomes incarnate, God neither comes to nor departs from this earth. The God of Nanak is all-absorbing and ever present.’ – (Guru Arjan AG 1136)

Key words

Temporal	Sikh panth	Sukhamni	Amritsar	Spiritual
Mughal	Harmandir	Reconciliation	Caste	Theocracy
Jat	Adi Granth	Panth		

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key arguments/debates

Some would argue that Guru Arjan’s greatest contribution was the compilation of the Adi Granth. Others would argue that it was completing the Golden Temple. Some would argue that his achievements must be taken as a whole.

Key questions

How important in reality were the Gurus to the development of Sikhism?
How does Guru Arjan compare to others in terms of importance to Sikhism the development of Sikhism?