

# An Essay on Adherence to Sikh Philosophy

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May it be possible that upon resolution of all issues between countries and further development of technology the world in some parts of its social life will become more similar to one which existed in Middle Ages? It is hard to predict future. But if the humanity will go this way, how to keep the mind and body clean and free in this new environment? It is the question that commenced to bother me since the days when the habitual order of things began to change in the first years of 2020's. As it often happens, the question itself may contain the answer. If we go back in time then life philosophies absorbed and constructed by me in 1980's, 1990's and 2000's when I was a kid, teenager and young man should be abandoned, and something more archaic or more dogmatic must be taken as the basis of existence. But this archaic dogmatic basis should cover all previous life experience without conflicting with the core ideological postulates declared and practiced by me earlier. This is how I came to adherence to Sikh philosophy.

In my case, no psychological transition or official religious conversion was necessary to comprehend the idea of following Sikh life philosophy because all I practiced and followed since childhood almost completely fits it (certainly, with the exception of formal rituals). Family of my parents and grandparents was not religious: they practiced few rituals of different religions by habit mainly without explaining sense of their actions, and read some religious literature but primarily in the format of home self-education. In elementary school where I studied in late years of Soviet period active atheistic propaganda was still distributed by teachers. So, my religious education was close to zero. Philosophical self-education was built in the context of ideas of European epochs of Renaissance and Enlightenment, in the context of Soviet culture of 1980's, and in the context of Western propaganda of 1990's, with minor additions of ideas popular on the periphery of Islamic world. No religion was ever practiced by me earlier. Philosophical and religious syncretism was absolute norm in cities of Russia where I lived until the end of 2000's; so, almost nobody seriously cared about what I really do or think.

Sikhism was researched by me in details in 2023<sup>rd</sup>-2024<sup>th</sup> years by publicly available online materials (in English, not in Gurmukhi). In the result of this research I have extracted from Sikh philosophy the main principles fitting my vision of the world. The ritualistic part and rules of communal life have been skipped because I do not belong and do not expect to belong to any Sikh community. Considering number of sects and orders in Sikhism, and, generally, open approach to flexible interpretation of philosophies in Dharmic cultures, this attempt to construct own philosophy and code of conduct tightly connected to mainstream orthodox Sikhism is completely acceptable. The list of principles extracted by me is provided further; *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, *52 Hukams of Guru Gobind Singh*, and *Sikh Rehat Maryada* were used as sources. Some principles were violated few times in the past, but it happened either because I was broken and exhausted or because I just followed local customs and rules of life.

1. **Waheguru:** this Sikh concept of One Eternal God, formless, omnipresent beyond space and time, and dispelling ignorance completely fits my vision of life constructed upon diving deeper and deeper in interactions with humans and nature in my global travels although I never used such theological terminology in the past.
2. **Truth:** truth is the highest virtue, but higher still is truthful living; avoid empty religious rituals.
3. **Family:** live family-oriented life, avoid sex outside of marriage, respect women.
4. **Equality:** all humans are equal; be polite, respectful, honest, and merciful to all humans; strive for justice for the benefit and prosperity of all.
5. **Self-development:** keep continuous physical, intellectual, and spiritual self-development; appreciate all physical and intellectual abilities as a gift from Waheguru.
6. **Work hard.**
7. **Be politically conscious.**
8. **Avoid altering of mind:** no alcohol, no tobacco, no drugs, no gambling.
9. **Reincarnation and liberation:** inclusion of these concepts in the list is based on intuitive feeling of the world, but not on logical reasoning.
10. **Freedom of worship:** strive for freedom of worship; do not proselytize.

As you may see, these principles mean mainly just “being good reasonable guy”, so why affiliation with Sikh religious and philosophical sources is necessary? Here we return to the question raised in the beginning of essay. If the world will really turn into the parody of itself made in medieval style then saying something like “*I’m a good guy, I always did this*” won’t be understood by authorities; a religious basis even for routine daily life activities will be necessary, and this basis will need to be within the range of officially accepted world religions. Moreover, some allowed space to maneuver in interaction with the society may be needed for becoming more orthodox or, vice versa, moving to some publicly recognized side branch of the religion depending on circumstances.

Philosophy and reality differ, however. I’m completely aware on social situation in Punjab, daily life of ethnic Sikhs may contradict significantly their religious rules. But I’m not ethnic Sikh and I do not expect to live in Punjab, so such contrast does not matter anything to me. Also, I’m completely aware of presence of large rich Sikh diasporas in UK and its former colonies. I guess, it means that orthodox Sikh philosophical principles will be always aligned with Western mainstream politics, and some modifications may be introduced into them soon. But I do not care much about this too because of flexibility built into Dharmic cultures. Also, if I will ever marry and such marriage will require complete conversion to some other religion, let it be, there are many ways to truth.