Sikhism Essay, Research Paper

SIKHISM

Sikhism is a Religion of uniqueness. It has beliefs from two other religions; Hinduism and Islam (Borak 53). This religion is very scarce in the United States. The main area for Sikhs is in the Northwest India (Borak 53). I had never heard of this religion before, so that is the main reason why I chose to study this religion. I have found it very interesting and different. The Sikhs have many unique qualities.

Sikhism dates back to a long time ago. Making it more modern, it was introduced near the closing of the 15th Century (Borak 53). Guru Nanak Dev originated it, now making it a minority group. The Sikhs are found generally around northwest India, or Punjab, but can also be found anywhere in the world (Borak 53).

Sikhism has a very rare formation. This religion is a mixture of two other religions, known as Hinduism and Islam. This joining together is known as syncretism (Hopfe 188). The Hindus and Islams began to mix and some thought of joining the two together. Not everyone agreed so they decided to make a new religion with practices from both religions while still keeping Hinduism and Islam separate religions (Borak 54). From the Hindus, the reincarnation of Jesus was put into practice for this newly accepted religion and also they kept ?The True Name? sacred because He can do anything. One true God is used also as a practice, coming from the Islam beliefs (Hopfe 188). Its originality helps make this religion special in its own unique way.

The Sikhs have many of their own beliefs but also the ones coming from Hinduism and Islam. The opening lines in their Holy Book, or Guru Granith Sahib, state ?There is one supreme eternal reality; the truth; immanent in all things; creator of all things; immanent in creation. With out fear and without hatred; not subject to time; beyond birth and death; self revealing?(Philosophy). This statement summarizes their basic teachings, also adding equality to their beliefs (Hopfe 198). They believe every human is of the same sex even though chastity is not allowed. Women are equal to all men. Sikhs do not believe in burning women, women wearing veils, or marriages to widows. There is no separation by creed, color, race, or sex (Philosophy). All people are equal.

Sikhs believe to worship in temples known as Gurdwaras, also meaning Gateway to the Guru. Daily attachment to God helps you become closer to Him, believes Narm Marg (Philosophy). Also, faith grows within the community while worshipping at the Gurdwaras.(Richards, 198) Serving others is their center of worship (Richards 198).

Among the Sikhs are three other religions, The Udasis, Sahajdharis, and the Singhs. The Udasis is an order of Holy Men who follow the same practices as Buddhist, Hindus, and Jainism. They are celibate and wear a yellow coarse garment like Buddhist monks or go naked like Jain monks. They have one possession, a begging bowl and they are also poorly shaven (Hopfe 180). On the other hand, Sahajdaris are very reasonable and very clean- people. They reject the militancy of the Sikhs (Hopfe 192). The Singhs are just a break off of the Sikhs.

Sikhs believe in God but they worship by Gurus (Richards 198). Guru means leader (Hopfe 189). They also believe in Guru Granith Sahib and other writing by the ten Gurus. They do not believe in any other religion, though (Richards 198). God is the creator, maintainer, and distructer who can not take human form (Philosophy). He appears only in spirit by believing and can not appear in human (Richards 198). Their five cardinal vices are Kam, or lust, Krodah, or anger, Lobh, or greed, Moh, or wordly attachment, and Ahankar, or pride (Philosophy). Some of their beliefs and vices are the same as Catholics.

Sikhism doesn?t really have any hierarchy that I could find but they do have certain positions. There are ten Gurus who would serve as our priest do, but now they worship what the Gurus taught and by the Scripture (Hopfe 189). Gurus were the leaders. (See pages seven for a listing of the ten Gurus.) Their first Guru who was chosen April 5, 1469, the day Sikhism formed was Guru Nanak, and the last Guru was Gobind Singh Dev from 1666 to 1708 when he died(Guru Nanak Dev). I did not find out why there are not any more Gurus. Gurus are the down face of the heavenly who provide leadership for humans (Philosophy). They still do have anniversaries for the Gurus which are known as Gurpurbs (Philosophy). Gurus used to be very important men.

They take lots of pride in their ceremonies and they believe greatly in following the rules. Taking time out of their schedule to study God helps them realize teaching of the Gurus and helps them act like God would. One type of meditation is Akhand Path. This is a non-stop front to back reading of the Holy Book, or Guru Granith Sahib. This celebrates troubled times like birth, marriage, death, new houses, or Gurpurbs. This reading usually takes 48 hours (Akhand Path). The naming of a child is very important to them. This ceremony is known as Nam Karan. To do this you open a hymnbook to any page and on the page you open to, you use the first letter of the hymn on that page. The first letter of the hymn is the first letter of the child?s name. Baptism is known as Amrit Sanskar. The person being baptized must see and accept God. They must also be obligated and know the meaning of God to become baptized. They must look and act like a Sikh before welcomed into the Sikh Community (Amrit Sanskar). They believe funerals are an artless process of God?s will. Crying and showing sorrow are a sign of not liking God. Sikhs will usually cremate a person and spread their ashes in a nearby river but sometimes they will bury a person at sea. What?s left of a dead person is only their skeleton and their soul is with God, so they do not worship the dead (Funerals). They believe their ceremonies to be very proper.

Sikhism is a religion of many symbols. A Khanda would be equal to our cross by meaning (Religious symbols). A community kitchen or Langer is a symbol of non-sexist and non-racist worshipers (Religious Symbols). To go to a Sarovar, or gathering pool, Sikhs must be pure in soul. They go to wash away sins and become free to do God?s will (Religious Symbols). The Sikhs have a flag soaring from every Gurdwaras, which is called Nishan Sahib. I did not find out what that was a symbol of (Religious Symbols). They really like their symbols.

The Sikhs do not believe in rituals (Hopfe 188). They doubt and decline from using them. They also do not fast, believe in religious vegetarianism, pilgrimages, superstitions, yoga, and idol worship. Their form of fasting is good conduct (Philosophy). Sikhs do have three duties, ?devotion to and adoration of the Divine Name, union of God through hard work and sharing rewards of one?s own work?(Richards 198). Rituals are not allowed.

Sikhism has many of the same characteristics as Christians. The ?Name? is very important and we both believe in friendship and sacrament, brotherhood of man who was rescued by grace, and fatherhood of God are also similar characteristics. Another common belief is surrender to the will of God. Similar characteristics reflect in a lot of other religions also (Similarities).

Not only are there some similar practices, there are also some differences. We believe Sunday is a Holy day or Sabbath, but they believe everyday is equal. They do not have priests but they used to have Gurus. Hell is the same as birth and death, and heaven is your soul reaching for God. Only God?s ?chosen people? are ones aloud for salvation, but you can reach that by believing and trusting in God. They believe God has no children and you can only be baptized when you realize God?s significance(Differences). We are different in many ways.

I did not know anything about this religion before I began to research it. Everything I read was new information and I found it interesting. I especially found their ceremonies and some of their beliefs interesting. I really found naming of the child and the funeral processes very unusual. I believe it is those types of qualities that make it so unique. I didn?t really find anything on why people wanted to join the Religion but I did find that outsiders found it interesting because it is so unique (Borak 53).

Sikhism is very unique in my opinion because I thought a lot of the practices and ceremonies were different from what I am used it. Sikhism is very uncommon in the United States because it is generally located in India. I guess that is another reason why I find it so interesting. I also find it interesting that it is a combination of two other religions. I am glad I chose this religion because it was fun to research.