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Summer 1&2 March - July  Page 7 - 10	<b>Whose responsibility are people in poverty?</b>  Students study the topical issue of what poverty is, the different types of poverty and the causes of poverty. Students consider from a Sikh and Christian perspective what should be done about poverty. Does society need a complete restructure? Should everyone give to the poor? Should charities be responsible?

## Jihad

**Greater Jihad:** Your personal struggle to create a peaceful Muslim community. What do you personally struggle with?

Would dealing with this struggle help create peace?

**Lesser Jihad:** Holy war. Allowing the use of violence in order to create a peaceful Muslim community. Always a last resort.

**“To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged.” (Qur’an 22:39)**

## Ummah

The Ummah is the worldwide community of Muslims who share common religious identity. Muslims have a responsibility to support their ummah, both locally and worldwide.

## The Nature of Allah

**Tawhid** – the single most important belief in Islam. The ‘oneness’ of Allah.

Allah is described using 99 different names.

Muslims believe that God is:

- Immanent
- Transcendent
- Omniscient
- Beneficent
- Merciful
- Judge
- Creator

‘He is God the One and Only, God the Eternal, Absolute. He begetteth not nor is He begotten; and there is none like until Him’  
Surrah 112 (Qur’an)

## The Five Pillars of Islam

**Zakah:** All Muslims are required to donate 2.5% of their yearly income to charity. This helps strengthen the Ummah.

**Sawm:** All Muslims (if they are physically able) must fast during the month of Ramadan. This helps strengthen one’s self-control and encouraged them to focus on Allah.

**Hajj:** All Muslims (if they are physically and financially able) must go on a pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah. This connects them to the wider Muslim community and helps them feel closer to Allah and The Prophet Muhammad.

**Salat:** All Muslims are expected to pray five times a day. This helps them to focus on Allah throughout the day.

**Shahadah:** A statement of faith that all Muslims must make, stating that ‘there is no god but God, and Muhammad is the prophet of God’. These are the most important words any Muslim will every say.

### Key words

**Good** → That which is considered morally right, beneficial and to our advantage.

**Evil** → That which is considered extremely immoral, wicked or wrong.

**Forgiveness** → To grant pardon for a wrongdoing; to give up resentment and the desire to seek revenge against a wrongdoer.

**Reconciliation** → Accepting an apology, forgiving and moving forward together in harmony.

**Free will** → The ability to make choices voluntarily and independently. The belief that nothing is predetermined.

**Justice** → Fairness; where everyone has equal provisions and opportunity.

**Morality** → Principles and standards determining which actions are right or wrong.

**Moral Decision** → Making a choice on how to behave based on your principles and standards.

**Punishment** → A penalty given to someone for a crime or wrong they have done.

**Sin** → Deliberate immoral action, breaking a religious or moral law. E.g. greed, lust and envy.

**Conscience** → The inner voice which keeps a person on the right track; a sense of right and wrong that helps us to make the right choices.

**Shari'ah law** → Muslim law based upon the Qur'an.

**Sadaqah** → The Muslim belief of donating to charity in emergency situations.

### Key words

**Fitrah** → The Muslim belief that we are born with an understanding of what is right and what is wrong.

**Original Sin** → The Catholic Christian belief that Adam and Eve brought sin through disobeying God in the Garden of Eden. It is believed humans have a physical part of themselves that has original sin attached to them which must be washed away soon after birth through baptism (christening).

**Soul Making** → The Quaker Christian belief that we are not born with souls but have souls created through suffering and experience during life.

**Shaytan** → The Muslim belief of the devil

### Attitudes towards the death penalty

#### **Christian**

Some conservative Christians may agree with the death penalty due to the Bible stating "**an eye for an eye.**" This quotation is interpreted that if you have killed someone - you should be killed as well. However, in the main, Christians reject this view of the death penalty and would encourage forgiveness of actions. They believe in reformation. This is because when Jesus died he stated "**forgive them father, for they know not what they do.**" Jesus is also said to have stated that you should **not "forgive seven times but seventy-seven times."** Christians have interpreted this to mean that forgiveness and reformation of a criminal is far better than the death penalty.

#### **Muslim**

Shari'ah law practices that if something has gone against the **Ummah** (Muslim community) and the criminal is a danger to the community, they should be executed to protect the Ummah. It states in the Qur'an "**Do not take a life unless for a just cause.**" A murder would be seen as a just cause for execution. However, a small but growing community of Muslims argue that forgiveness is preferable as Shari'ah law is outdated and is used to attack the poor and women.

## Christian attitudes to good and evil

- Genesis states that God made the Earth 'and it was good'. The world that God has created is basically good. God has given people **free will** which is the ability to choose right and wrong for themselves, e.g. Adam and Eve. The story of Adam and Eve is known to some Christians (Catholics) as **original sin** and explains how evil was brought into the world.
- God has shown people the rules of behaviour in the bible for a good life, e.g. the Ten Commandments.
- Jesus' life and example teach Christians the way to lead a moral, good and righteous life. Jesus demonstrated tolerance, compassion and love which Christians try to emulate, e.g. healing the poor, treating women as equals.
- Some Christians believe that God allows evil to exist to help develop their moral souls known as **soul making**.
- Some Christians believe **life is a test**. It is to see whether people tolerate suffering and keep faith.
- But sometimes, evil and suffering is **beyond our understanding**. God works in mysterious ways and we can never know the mind of God.

## Muslim attitudes to good and evil

- Everyone is born with a natural instinct to understand the difference between right and wrong (**Fitrah**). All humans have free will so they must choose between right and wrong; choosing the path of God and ignoring the temptations of **Shaytan**.
- Muslims believe that evil began when the devil was cast from heaven and vowed in revenge to tempt humans.
- Muslims also believe we have free will and are guided by the teachings of the Qur'an.
- The Qur'an and the Prophet Muhammad require people to be truthful, patient, show humility and kindness. They should do this by following the five pillars of Islam or by providing for charity e.g. **sadaqah**.
- Allah will judge people individually according to their faith and good actions.

## Why do we suffer?

### Christian

Many argue that God created people with free will and we choose whether we do good or evil. When we choose evil, this is where suffering occurs.

Catholic Christians would argue that suffering comes as a result of Original Sin. We are still paying for the actions of Adam and Eve and suffer as a result.

Some Christians believe that God allows evil to exist because suffering is a necessary evil to develop or complete their souls. This is known as soul making. Suffering can also help us to understand the experience of Jesus when he was crucified and allow Christians to feel closer to God as a result.

Suffering is also seen to help us appreciate what is good and evil in the world and to appreciate the good times.

Life can also be viewed as a test to see how we will behave and whether we will still follow God. This is evidenced in the story of Job who continued to follow God despite losing his home, his wife, children and career.

### Muslim

Muslims believe that everything happens because it is part of God's plan for humans. This is known as **Al-Qadr**. Suffering and hardship are part of a wider plan for God's people.

Muslims also believe life is a test that has been given to us by God and their acts throughout life are noted down by two angels and a decision will be made at the end of their life about whether they should go to paradise or to hell.

There is also a belief that that good can come from suffering and be for the benefit of all people.

**Moral Evil:** An evil that is manmade – something that we have chosen to do that is hurtful or contrary to our norms and values. For example, murder or theft.

**Natural Evil:** An evil that nobody can help, that just happens through no fault of your own. For example, a tsunami or an earthquake.

**Shekinah:** The Jewish belief that God is always with us and experiences everything that we also experience.

**Persecution:** Ill treatment towards someone because of their race, sex or political affiliation.

**Exploitation:** Treating someone unfairly to benefit you in some way. For example, paying someone very little so you make a bigger profit.

**Prejudice:** Judging someone before you know anything about them.

**Discrimination:** Acting on a prejudice and treating someone differently as a result.



## HOW HAS IDENTITY BEEN EXPLOITED?

In 1933, Hitler came to power and soon made a series of laws that discriminated against Jewish people. These included not being allowed to own businesses or marry “pure blood Jews”.

As the war started, Hitler introduced the Final Solution; this involved taking Jews from areas of the cities and transferring them to concentration or death camps.

In these camps, Jews had their hair shaven, they were tattooed and given a number rather than a name. Shaven hair and tattoos are strictly forbidden under the Jewish faith and this was, not only a way, of exploiting identity, but making Jewish people feel as terrible as possible about their identity.



## NATURE VS. NURTURE?

Some psychologists such as Zimbardo (1973) argue that we become evil over time based on the roles we are required to play. Additionally, Bandura (1963) also suggested that we learn by example and this is what can lead us to becoming good or evil over time.

Biologists have pointed that brain size (Lombroso (1922)) and hormones all contribute to people being predisposed to doing and becoming evil.

## Where was God in the Holocaust?

### God was guilty for the holocaust:

If God is omnipotent, why didn't he use his power to defeat the Nazis?

If God is omniscient, surely he would know how to end the holocaust?

If God is all loving, why would he allow his chosen people to suffer?

God made a covenant with the Jews, saying they were his chosen people and they would live safely in the Promised Land. The holocaust clearly shows this covenant has been broken.

God cannot be both omnipotent and omnibenevolent. If he is omnipotent, and did not use his power to end the holocaust, then he is evil.

### KEY WORDS

Omnipotent: all powerful

Omnipresent: everywhere

Omnibenevolent: all loving

Omniscient: all knowing

Skekinah: God suffers along

### God was not guilty for the holocaust:

God gave humans free will. He allows us to make our own decisions and mistakes, without interfering.

Adam and Eve brought evil into the world, therefore we can expect evil things to happen.

Hitler was the one who started the holocaust, with his own free will. It was nothing to do with God.

God suffers along with the Jews, showing he still loves and cares for them.

God's plan is beyond our understanding. We should not question what goes on in life, but instead we should have faith in Him.

The Holocaust was a punishment to the Jews who had broken the covenant.

**WHOSE PROBLEM IS POVERTY?:** Traditionally we think of poverty as children starving in Africa, but what about the poverty all around us in the UK today? Why do we not do more to discuss and change the issue of poverty? Christians and Sikhs are keen to discuss the issue of poverty and try to resolve and make people's lives better. There are a wide range of beliefs and actions that influence the behaviour of Christians and Sikhs.

**MORALITY:** People behaviour as a result of what they consider right or wrong.

**THE CYCLE OF POVERTY:** A cycle that explains why once people are in poverty they struggle to move away from it. For example, poor grades may lead to a low paying job, you struggle to feed family and, as a result, children are brought up in poverty and may achieve poor grades.

**ABSOLUTE POVERTY:** When people do not have the basic necessities in order to survive. E.g. food and water.

**RELATIVE POVERTY:** When people have the necessities in order to survive but are unable to have the same standard of living as others in society. E.g. Internet

**ALTRUISM:** Helping others with no thought for how it affects you. A truly selfless act.

**SEWA:** The Sikh obligation to support others.

#### **ACTIONS TAKEN TO SUPPORT THOSE IN POVERTY:**

##### **CHRISTIANITY:**

There are many organisations that work to support those who are less fortunate than ourselves. These include CAFOD and Christian Aid. In both of these cases, they use donations and funds to raise awareness about poverty and the problems of debt. They also use money for places in absolute poverty to build wells and other resources that will help them to become much more sustainable in future.

##### **SIKHISM:**

Similar to Christianity, there is Khalsa Aid which works within the Sikh community to support those who are in poverty. They may take resources to areas that are disaster struck or support Sikhs living in poverty in the local community.

However, what is very different to Christians is that there is obligatory service for all Sikhs and they must perform service to the community to ensure that the community flourishes but also to receive rewards in the afterlife.

**INJUSTICE:** When people are not treated fairly or unequally to others.

#### CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT POVERTY:

**THE GOLDEN RULE:** The Golden Rule is the principle that of treating others as you would wish to be treated. This is found in many religion and cultures but within Christianity Jesus said **"Do unto others as you would have them do unto you"** (Luke 6:31) specifically stating that Christians are required to treat others well.

There are other references in the Bible too - **"You shall not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of my people but you shall love your neighbour as you love me [God]."**

With regards to poverty, many Christians accept that poverty is a horrible situation to be in and they themselves would not like to be in this situation and therefore, given the Bible quotes they are required to support and help those who are in need.

#### CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT POVERTY:

**THE GOOD SAMARITAN PARABLE:** The story teaches that a man lay injured at the side of the road whilst others who were supposedly holy ignored them. A Samaritan, who was hated by the community, saved the man and supported him. Christians argue this story shows that all people should support others regardless of the situation and regardless of who they are.

#### CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT POVERTY:

**EXAMPLE OF JESUS:** Jesus spent the majority of his life with the poor and helping the poor which was unlike many other people around him at the time. Jesus stated; **"blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are the hungry, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh."** (Luke 6:20-21) This has been interpreted to mean that those who have been in poverty in their lives will eventually seek solace in heaven.

Jesus also seemed to suggest that giving to the poor was a righteous (or godly) act and that there would be rewards for those who offered to the poor and treated the poor well. **"Go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."** (Matthew 19:21)

As Jesus is the incarnation of God on Earth, Christians have interpreted the stories of Jesus to mean that they are responsible also for looking after the poor and offering support.

#### CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT POVERTY:

**LIBERATION THEOLOGY:** The notion that poverty is structural and in order to rid the world of poverty you must build society up again more fairly. Liberation theology argues that the problem is within every layer of society - education, family, government, law and this is why you have to begin again. This was believed by Oscar Romero.

#### CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT POVERTY:

**SHEEP AND GOATS PARABLE:** The Sheep and Goats parable was taught by Jesus and suggested that God would judge those when they died, separating them into sheep and goats. The sheep entered heaven whilst the goats did not. This was because the goats had not supported their fellow man - feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, visiting those in need.

### SIKH BELIEFS ABOUT POVERTY:

**SEWA** - It is an important aspect of Sikhism to provide a service to the community including the Sikh community (Khalsa) and others. All Sikhs should be prepared to give up some of their time to help others. Sikhism requires service to God, to the Khalsa and to all of humanity.

Sikhism teaches that people should try to become less self-centred (**manmukh**) and more God-centred (**gurmukh**) and should live their lives in selfless service of others.

**"True worship consists in the meditation of God's name...there can be no worship without performing good deeds.**

There are three different parts of sewa:

**Tan** - physical service e.g. working in the **langar** and helping to look after the **gudwara**.

**Man** - Mental service e.g. Teaching the *Guru Granth Sahib* to others.

**Dhan** - Material service e.g. giving money to charities.

**"A place in God's court can only be attained if we do service to others in this world...wandering ascetics, warriors, none of them can obtain moksha without performing sewa."**

**SIKH TEACHINGS:** Fundamentally it is believed that wealth is acceptable to be used for other people and it is the responsibility of the rich to look after the poor.

**"Blessed is the godly person and the riches they possess because they can be used for charitable purposes and to give happiness."**

**"A place in God's court can only be attained if we do service unto others in this world."**

**PRINCIPLES FOR LIFE:** Sikhs should live their lives according to three principles:

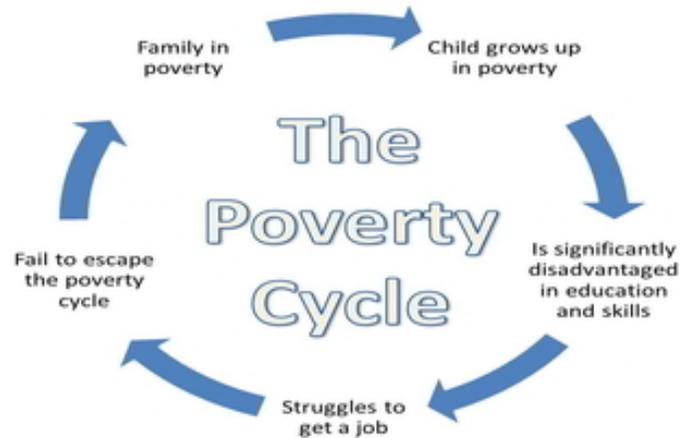
**Nam Japna** - Remember the name of God through prayer, hard work and generosity. These are equally important and Sikhs should not spend all time on prayer.

**Kirat Karna** - Earn a living by honest means. Work is essential for the individual, community and the Sikh has a duty to be honest and not go against the teachings of the Gurus. Sikhism says it is not wrong to be rich provided the money is gained honestly.

**Vand Chhakna:** Share everything in charity with people who are less fortunate. Sikhs should live their lives on the principles of generosity and self-sacrifice.

### WHAT CAUSES POVERTY?:

Many factors can cause poverty. Being underpaid or having a lack of continual employment, personal well-being both physically and mentally, a difficult or violent upbringing - this would usually come under **relative poverty**. Sometimes it can be because of the country being in a financial crisis or experiencing famine, disease or drought - this would cause **absolute poverty**.



### WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS POVERTY?:

**The Government:** The government controls what money goes to people who are in need and who are in poverty. Recently there have been restrictions on who can access benefits and reductions in the amount of money people receive as there is not a lot of money in the budget. Some people in the Labour party have argued that this encourages the poverty cycle as they are unable to pay for basic necessities e.g. electric, gas and this further impacts on people trying to escape poverty.

**The Individual:** Some people argue that it is the individual's fault if they are in poverty. They argue that if people spent their money more wisely or if they didn't spend it on frivolous things e.g. alcohol, cigarettes, iphones, then there would be enough money to help pay for all the things that people need. Others would argue that it isn't fair that there are some people who can afford frivolous things while others cannot and it is our decision as to what we spend our money on.

**Capitalism:** Some argue that the way our society is set up is rigged to ensure that there are some people who will be very wealthy whilst others are very poor. We value some jobs over others (e.g. sports stars) and these are more highly paid than other professions.

### THE POVERTY CYCLE:

This is a model that can help to explain relative poverty. The model suggests that it can be very difficult to get out of poverty once you are in it.

**Child grows up in poverty:** Maybe there isn't money to buy books, pay for adequate housing and the child has to go without things that would help them to flourish at school. Or maybe a lack of adequate housing means they get sick more easily and stay off school.

**Disadvantaged in school:** As a result of the above, they don't do so well in school. Statistically, there is a 28% gap between a GCSE student who is advantaged compared to disadvantaged.

**Struggle to get job:** They don't have qualifications or very few qualifications - so the types of work available are low skilled e.g. working in a shop. These jobs don't pay well.

**Fail to escape:** Because the jobs don't pay well, they aren't making enough money to save for a better home, or to pay for further education.

**Family in poverty:** So when they have a family, the cycle begins again,