



Euthanasia and Suicide in Sikhism

Sikh moral thinking

Sikhs derive their ethics largely from the teachings of their scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, and the Sikh Code of Conduct (the Rehat Maryada). Guidance also comes from the example set by the gurus, and from the experience of the Sikh community over the last 500 years. These do not give detailed answers to many ethical questions, but rather set down general principles and provide a framework for Sikhs to answer those questions.



Sikhs view life as a gift from God ©

Euthanasia

Sikhs have a high respect for life which they see as a gift from God. Most Sikhs are against euthanasia, as they believe that the timing of birth and death should be left in God's hands.

The Sikh Gurus rejected suicide (and by extension, euthanasia) as an interference in God's plan. Suffering, they said, was part of the operation of karma, and human beings should not only accept it without complaint but act so as to make the best of the situation that karma has given them. However, this is not absolute. Sikhism (as already said) believes that life is a gift from God, but it also teaches that we have a duty to use life in a responsible way. Therefore Sikhs contemplating euthanasia for themselves or others should look at the whole picture, and make appropriate distinctions between ending life, and not artificially prolonging a terminal state.

Care for others

Much of Sikh moral teaching is devoted to caring for others who are less fortunate. This suggests that the Sikh reaction to situations where people think about euthanasia would be to provide such good care that euthanasia became an unattractive option.