



Sikhism and organ donation

The Sikh philosophy and teachings place great emphasis on the importance of giving and putting others before oneself.

'Where self exists, there is no God. Where God exists, there is no self.'

Guru Nanak, (founder of Sikh faith, and first of ten Gurus) Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Holy Scripture)
Sikh Gurus devoted their lives for the benefit of humanity and some even sacrificed their lives looking after the welfare of others. The Guru Granth Sahib says:

"Within this world take the opportunity for self less service to others; Then in divine abode we get the chance to be'; Says Nanak, 'the Eternal will embrace you.'

Seva or selfless service is at the core of being a Sikh; to give without seeking reward or recognition and know that all seva is known to and appreciated by the Eternal. Seva can also be donation of one's organ to another. There are no taboos attached to organ donation in Sikhi nor is there a requirement that a body should have all its organs intact at or after death. According to Sikhi the soul migrates in a perpetual cycle of rebirth but the physical body is only a vassal in its long journey, left behind each time and dissolved into the elements The Guru Granth Sahib says in Asaa Mahala 5:

'That time, which the mortal does not wish for, eventually comes. Without the Eternal's order the understanding of mortality is never understood. The body is consumed by water, fire and earth. But the soul is neither young nor old, O human, thus it is the soul and not the body which continues its journey.'

"The Sikh religion teaches that life continues after death in the soul, and not the physical body. The last act of giving and helping others through organ donation is both consistent with and in the spirit of Sikh teachings." Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Director of the Network of Sikh Organisations, UK. (Endorsed by Sikh Authorities in Amritsar, Punjab)

The Sikh faith stresses the importance of performing noble deeds. There are many examples of selfless giving and sacrifice in Sikh teachings by the ten Gurus and other Sikh:

"Guru Har Krishen, our eighth Guru, gave his life helping sufferers during a smallpox epidemic. It is entirely consistent with his spirit of service that we consider donating organs after death to give life and hope to others... In my family we all carry donor cards and would encourage all Sikhs to do so." Lord Singh of Wimbledon CBE, Director, Network of Sikh Organisations UK.

Donating one's organ to another so that the person may live is one of the greatest gifts and ultimate seva to human kind and hence to Satguru says:

'Through selfless service, eternal peace is obtained. The Gurumukhi is absorbed in intuitive peace.' Guru Granth Sahib

"Donation without reward is one of the characteristics of a Guru's Sikhs. The life of Gurumukhi is useful because by their natural temperament they are donors. And why not donate an organ so another can live?" Dr Jasdev Rai, British Sikh Consultative Forum (bscf)



The Guru Granth further says:

'Through virtuous deeds, the dead establish a bond with the living.'

More information on Sikhism is available from: www.nsouk.co.uk and www.bscf.org