

When he discovered a monk sick and uncared for, the Buddha said to the other monks:

“Whoever would care for me, let him care for those who are sick”

Mahavagga VIII.26.1-8, Kucchivikaravattu: The Monk with Dysentery. Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

There are many different Buddhist traditions, and organ donation is an individual choice, but:

“Giving is the greatest of Buddhist virtues. The Buddha in a previous life gave his body to a starving tigress who could not feed her cubs. There are many such Jataka tales some in which he even gave his eyes to someone who wanted them.

“What loss do I suffer to give an unwanted organ after my death to give another person life?”

Dr Desmond Biddulph, Chairman of The Buddhist Society

“I would be happy if I was able to help someone else live after my own death.”

Dhammarati, Western Buddhist Order

“Non-attachment to the body can be seen in the context of non-attachment to self and Buddhist teachings on impermanence. Compassion is a pre-eminent quality. Giving one’s body for the good of others is seen as a virtue.”

The Amida Trust

“Organ donation is acceptable in Theravada Buddhism. It is a Buddhist virtue to generously extend help to other sentient beings and this covers the case of organ donation.”

Phramaha Laow Panyasiri, Abbot, The Buddhavihara Temple



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NHS

Blood and Transplant

Organ donation and religious beliefs



To find out more about organ and tissue donation, visit **organdonation.nhs.uk**

A guide to organ donation and Buddhist beliefs

Buddhism and organ donation

Organ donation

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Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups.

Why is it important to think about donating organs?

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Consent

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Care and respect

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Buddhism and organ donation

There are no injunctions in Buddhism for or against organ donation. The death process of an individual is viewed as a very important time that should be treated with the greatest care and respect. In some traditions, the moment of death is defined according to criteria which differ from those of modern Western medicine, and there are differing views as to the acceptability of organ transplantation. The needs and wishes of the dying person must not be compromised by the wish to save a life. Each decision will depend on individual circumstances.

Central to Buddhism is a wish to relieve suffering and there may be circumstances where organ donation may be seen as an act of generosity. Where it is truly the wish of the dying person, it would be seen in that light.

If there is doubt as to the teachings within the particular tradition to which a person belongs, expert guidance should be sought from a senior teacher within the tradition concerned.

"What loss do I suffer to give an unwanted organ after my death to give another person life?"

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organ donation compromises the special honour accorded to man and this cannot be allowed whatever the cost. Scholars, such as the Islamic Fiqh Academy of India, allow live donations only."

Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt, Muslim Council of Britain

Therefore it is very clear that in Islam:

"Organ donation is a very personal choice and one should consider seeking the opinion of a scholar of their choosing."

Mufti Mohammed Zubair Butt, Muslim Council of Britain

That said, one of the fundamental purposes of Islamic law is the preservation of life. Allah greatly rewards those who save the life of others.

To help in this matter the reader's attention is drawn to the following life-saving Fatwa:

In 1995, the UK-based Muslim Law (Shariah) Council resolved that:

- the medical profession is the proper authority to define signs of death
- current medical knowledge considers brain stem death to be a proper definition of death
- the Council accepts brain stem death as constituting the end of life for the purpose of organ transplantation

- the Council supports organ transplantation as a means of alleviating pain or saving life on the basis of the rules of the Shariah
- Muslims may carry donor cards
- the next of kin of a dead person, in the absence of a donor card or an expressed wish to donate their organs, may give permission to obtain organs from the body to save other people's lives
- organ donation must be given freely without reward, trading in organs is prohibited
- this is supported by Muslim scholars from some of the most prestigious academies of the Muslim world who call upon Muslims to donate organs for transplantation. These include:
 - the Islamic Fiqh Academy of the Organisation of Islamic Conference (representing all Muslim countries)
 - the Grand Ulema Council of Saudi Arabia
 - the Iranian Religious Authority
 - the Al-Azhar Academy of Egypt



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A guide to organ donation and Muslim beliefs

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Islam and organ donation

In Islam there are two schools of thought with regard to organ donation. The human body, whether living or dead, enjoys a special honour and is inviolable, and fundamentally, Islamic law emphasises the preservation of human life. The general rule that **'necessities permit the prohibited'** (al-darurat tubih al-mahzurat), has been used to support human organ donation with regard to saving or significantly

enhancing a life of another provided that the benefit outweighs the personal cost that has to be borne. The following are some verses which have been used to support organ donation:

"Whosoever saves a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind."

Holy Qur'an, chapter 5, vs. 32

"Whosoever helps another will be granted help from Allah."

Prophet Muhammed (pbuh)

"If you happened to be ill and in need of a transplant, you certainly would wish that someone would help you by providing the needed organ."

Sheikh Dr MA Zaki Badawi, Principal, Muslim College, London

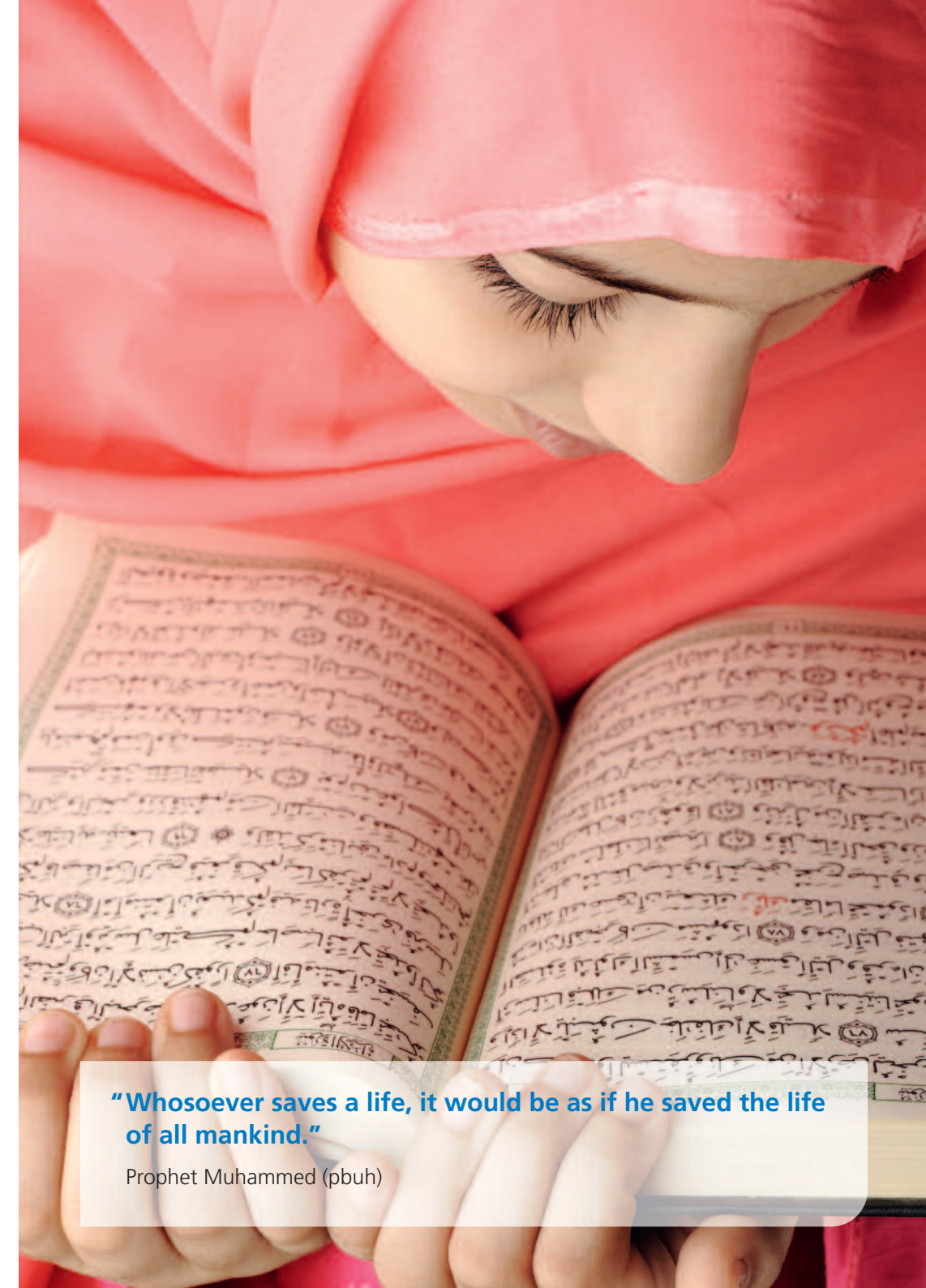
An alternative view clearly states that:

"The saving of life is not absolute, but subject to the amount of cost that has to be borne. Therefore, although the above quotation enjoins the saving of life this is not without restriction or caveats."

"According to a similarly large number of Muslim scholars organ donation is not permitted. They consider that

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widely information on the cultural risk factors for kidney disease keeps people informed, assists in breaking barriers and engendering hope as people make better health choices which will positively impact their life.”

Sharon Platt-McDonald, Director for Health, Women Ministries & Disability Awareness for the Seventh-Day Adventist Churches in the British Isles

To donate your organs is a very personal choice. The process of transplantation is acceptable in terms of moral Christian law. The Catechism of the Catholic Church 2296 explains:

“...organ transplants are in conformity with the moral law if the physical and psychological dangers and risks to the donor are proportionate to the good sought for the recipient. Organ donation after death is a noble and meritorious act and is to be encouraged as an expression of generous solidarity.

“It is not morally acceptable if the donor or his proxy has not given explicit consent. Moreover, it is not morally admissible to bring about the disabling mutilation or death

of a human being, even in order to delay the death of other persons.”

As Christians we believe in eternal life and preparing for death should not be a source of fear. Nothing that happens to our body, before or after death, can impact on our relationship with God:

“Neither death nor life, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Romans 8:38-9

Ensuring that we are on the NHS Organ Donor Register and that our relatives know our wishes in advance will help to relieve our loved ones of anxiety if the opportunity to donate arises, because:

“Giving organs is the most generous act of self-giving imaginable”

Rt Revd Dr Barry Morgan,
Archbishop of Wales, 2011

“There is a need to instil in people’s hearts, especially in the hearts of the young, a genuine and deep appreciation of the need for brotherly love, a love that can find expression in the decision to become an organ donor.”

Pope John Paul II, address to the 18th International Congress of the Transplantation Society, 2000

“Over the past year or so, the Department of Health has supported a project which encourages UK faith communities and faith representatives to raise

awareness about organ donation. The aim of the project is not only to explore faith-based perspectives towards organ donation but also to harness the potential of faith communities to address an important social issue. Faith communities have strong social networks and share common values of helping others; it is entirely appropriate that the Church of England has supported this initiative.”

Rt Revd James Newcome, Bishop of Carlisle and lead bishop on healthcare issues for the Church of England



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Blood and Transplant

Organ donation and religious beliefs



A guide to organ donation and Christian beliefs

Christianity and organ donation

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Organ donation and Christianity

The Christian faith is based upon the revelation of God in the life of Jesus Christ. Jesus taught people to love one another, and to embrace the needs of others. Organ donation can be considered by Christians as a genuine act of love.

We can choose to donate our organs to save the lives of many people:

"Thousands of people in the UK today are waiting for an organ transplant that could save or dramatically improve their lives. The simple act of joining the donors' register can help make the world of difference to those in need. I hope that everyone will consider whether they can give life to others after their own death."

† Sentamu Ebor, Archbishop of York, 2010

"The Methodist Church has consistently supported organ donation and transplantation in appropriate circumstances, as a means through which healing and health may be made possible."

Methodist Church UK

"Identifying specific faith groups and their beliefs and practice around organ donation provides a basis for discussion. We then need to share information on what faith groups believe in order to foster better understanding of cultural norms. Disseminating more

"In eternity we will neither have nor need our earthly bodies: former things will pass away, all things will be made new."

Revelation 21:4,5

often wish to consult with their own experts in Jewish law and tradition before making a final decision.

Judaism holds that organs may not be removed from a donor until death has definitely occurred. Again, for some Jews the 'brain stem death' criteria are acceptable. Other Jews will only agree to removal of organs from a 'non-heart beating' donor. The latter approach may cause problems concerning heart and lung transplants, where time is of the essence, but does not exclude donation of other organs.

After donation it is important to recognise that *kavod hamet* still applies. In Judaism avoidance of any further unnecessary interference with the body and immediate internment are again the prime concern.

Judaism, therefore, approaches the question of organ donation very much on a case-by-case basis. Also

on an individual basis, if the families wish to seek advice in most instances they would make an approach to their own known and respected religious adviser. If they are unable to obtain such advice easily, or in circumstances of uncertainty, the main religious organisations (e.g. United Synagogue, Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, Spanish and Portuguese Synagogues, Federation of Synagogues, Masorti Synagogues, Reform Judaism, Union of Liberal and Progressive Judaism) can provide useful supportive information. In all instances the principles of *kavod hamet* and *pikuach nefesh* would be considered, and in addition during the difficult decision process Judaism would also incorporate another principle, which must not be neglected: that of providing *nichum aveilim* – comfort for those who are bereaved.

“One who saves a single life – it is as if he has saved an entire world”

Pirke D’Rav Eliezer, Chapter 48



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A guide to organ donation and Jewish beliefs

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Judaism and organ donation

In principle Judaism sanctions and encourages organ donation in order to save lives (*pikuach nefesh*). This principle can override the Jewish objections to any unnecessary interference with the body after death, and the requirement for immediate burial.

It is understandable that there will be worries and concerns for the Jewish family who are asked to consider organ donation. At a time of stress and grief, linked to sudden unexpected illness and death, reaching a decision can be difficult for them. They may be worried that giving consent may not be consistent with the honour and respect that Jews believe is due to the dead (*kavod hamet*). Judaism considers each case as different, and recognises that at this time any known wishes of the dead person can be valuable. For example, some people will tell their families to consult with specific Rabbis or religious authorities. Some Jewish groups encourage their members to join the NHS Organ Donor Register.

In Judaism, whether or not the wishes of the dead person are known, it is widely recognised that families are entitled to decide for themselves; and that they will

"One who saves a single life – it is as if he has saved an entire world"

Pirke D'Rav Eliezer, Chapter 48

“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 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.”

This leaflet had been developed with the input of the Network of Sikh Organisations and contributions from British Sikh Consultative Forum. More information on Sikhism is available from:
www.nsouk.co.uk and
www.bscf.org



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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:

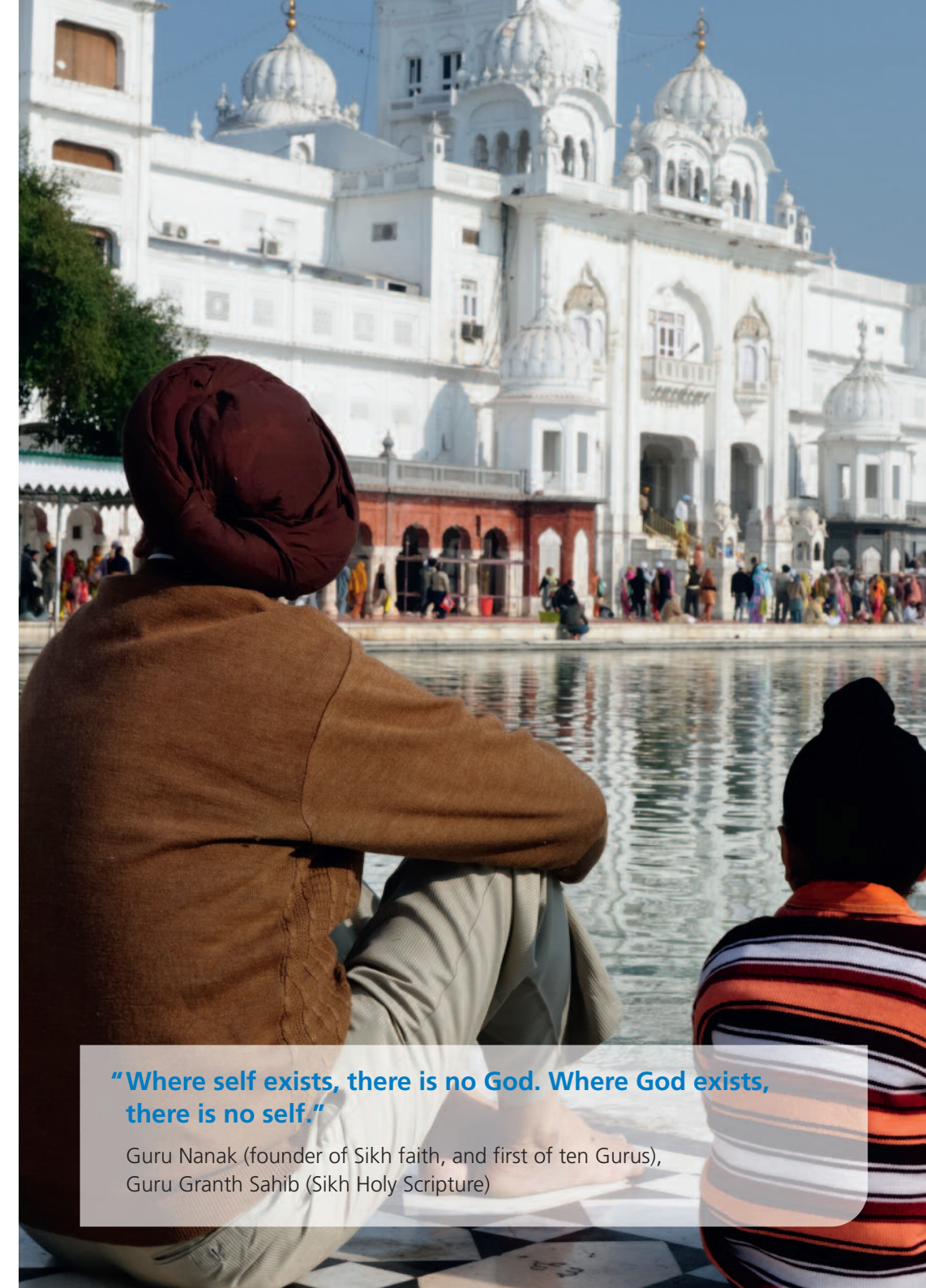
"Within this world take the opportunity for selfless service to others; then in divine abode we get the chance to be," says Nanak. **"The Eternal will embrace you."**

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, as 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."

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Guru Nanak (founder of Sikh faith, and first of ten Gurus),
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“As a person puts on new garments giving up the old ones, the soul similarly accepts new material bodies giving up the old and useless ones.”

Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2:22

Scientific and medical treatises (Charaka and Sushruta Samhita) form an important part of the Vedas. Sage Charaka deals with internal medicine while Sage Sushruta includes features of organ and limb transplants:

“Organ donation is in keeping with Hindu beliefs as it can help to save the life of others.”

The Late Mr Om Parkash Sharma MBE, President, National Council of Hindu Temples

“I always carry my donor card with me. It says that my whole body can be used for organ donation and medical purposes after my death. I would like to encourage as many people as possible to do the same.”

The Late Dr Bal Mukund Bhala, Co-ordinator Hindu International Medical Mission, Former President Hindu Council UK

“I believe in organ donation. If my body can help someone else live a better quality of life after my soul has vacated it then it is good Seva.”

Mr Arjan Vekaria JP, President Hindu Forum of Britain

Information on Hinduism is available from: www.bbc.co.uk/religion



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Organ donation

Organ donation is the gift of an organ to help someone else who needs a transplant. Hundreds of people's lives are saved or improved each year by organ transplants.

Organs that can be donated by people who have died include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, pancreas and small bowel. Tissue such as skin, bone, heart valves and corneas can also be used to help others.

Donation is an individual choice and views differ even within the same religious groups.

Why is it important to think about donating organs?

With medical advances it is now possible to use transplanted organs and tissues to enhance the life chances of those suffering from a range of terminal conditions such as renal, liver and heart failure. More people than before now suffer from these conditions and some ethnic groups seem to be more affected than others.

The person in need of an organ today may be a stranger, but tomorrow that person could be someone you know and love dearly. So please take the time to think about becoming an organ donor and discuss your thoughts with loved ones.

Consent

The consent or permission of those closest to the potential donor is always sought before organs can be donated. This is why it is so important to discuss your wishes with your loved ones should you decide to become a donor. Many families who agree to organ donation have said that it helps to know some good has come from their loss.

When can organ donation take place?

Doctors and their colleagues are committed to doing everything possible to save life. Organs are only removed for transplantation once all attempts to save life have failed and after death has been certified by doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Most donated organs in the UK come from people who die from a severe brain injury, and who are on a ventilator in an Intensive Care Unit. The brain injury will have damaged the vital centres in the brain stem which are essential to maintain life. Doctors call this 'brain stem death'. This is not the same as being in a coma or 'persistent vegetative state'. Tests are carried out to strict guidelines to show conclusively when this has happened. When brain stem death is pronounced the patient may still be on a ventilator, and have a heart beat which continues to circulate blood around the body. This prevents the organs from losing the oxygen-rich blood supply which is necessary for a healthier transplanted outcome.

Organs can also be donated from people whose death has been certified because their heart has stopped. Certification in these 'non-heart beating' donors is also by doctors who are entirely independent of the transplant team.

Care and respect

The removal of organs and tissues is carried out with the greatest care and

respect. The family can see the body afterwards and staff can contact a chaplain or local religious leader if the family wishes.

Hinduism and organ donation

There are many references that support the concept of organ donation in Hindu scriptures. Daan is the original word in Sanskrit for donation meaning selfless giving. In the list of the ten Niyamas (virtuous acts) Daan comes third.

"Of all the things that it is possible to donate, to donate your own body is infinitely more worthwhile."

The Manusmriti

"In the joy of others lies our own."

His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj,
BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha

Life after death is a strong belief of Hindus and is an ongoing process of rebirth. The law of Karma decides which way the soul will go in the next life. The Bhagavad Gita describes the mortal body and the immortal soul in a simple way like the relationship of clothes to a body:

"Vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya navani grhnati naro 'parani tatha sarirani vihaya jirnany anyani samyati navandi dehi"

Bhagavad Gita, chapter 2:22

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