

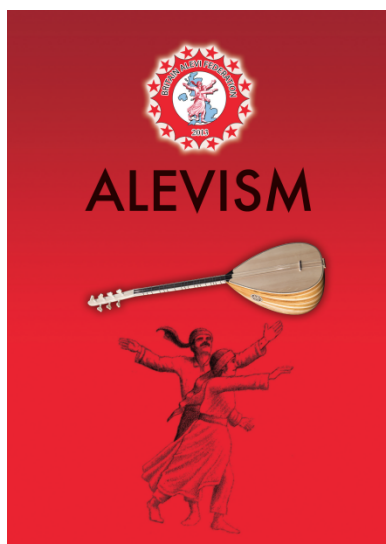
Upper Key Stage 2

ALEVISM

Key figures in Alevism

Key figures in Alevism

Are Alevi values relevant today?



Contents	Page
Learning objectives	4
Introduction: Learning about Alevism: guidance for SACREs and schools	5
Some basic Alevi beliefs for teachers	7
Lesson 1 Who is Ali?	9
Lesson 2 Who influenced Alevi values?	13
Lesson 3 What are the most important teachings about life in Alevism?	17
Assessment Opportunity: Alevi beliefs and values	20
Glossary	21

Learning objectives

By the end of the three lessons pupils should be able to:

- discuss the importance of Ali for Alevism
- discuss the importance of Haci Bektas Veli in relation to Alevi values
- explain Alevi beliefs

Introduction

Learning about Alevism: guidance for SACREs and schools

One of the greatest strengths of the local arrangements for religious education in England is that it enables SACREs and schools to take account of the significant 'other' religions and worldviews in the local area. Whether you are a SACRE seeking to provide options for your schools to meet localised contexts, or an individual school with a significant Alevi cohort, this pack provides you with a basis for planning learning about Alevism within your RE curriculum. For those who may just be looking for another religion for their students to study, one which raises many questions and concepts about what we mean by 'religion', Alevism provides a stimulating and thought-provoking alternative with which to explore religion in the modern world.

In the UK Alevism was recognised as a distinct religion by the Charity Commission (2015). It is estimated that there are approximately 300,000 Alevis living in the UK who are ethnically Kurdish and Turkish. Alevism is a collection of rich traditions and it is difficult to define it clearly and succinctly. Alevi people themselves have diverse interpretations, understandings and practices according to their geographical place of origin and level of awareness of aspects of the traditions. There are differences according to East and West Turkey, rural and urban, Anatolia, the Balkans and the European diaspora. This makes the study of Alevism a fascinating journey of discovery and enquiry, which in turn helps to enrich the religious education in any school, not just those with significant numbers of Alevi children. A brief introduction to Alevism can be found on the website of the British Alevi Federation <http://www.alevinet.org/> by clicking on the 'English' button at the top.

The materials have been developed by the local Alevi communities of Northeast London and the British Alevi Federation, the Prince of Wales Primary School, Enfield, Highbury Grove High School (now City of London Academy) Islington and the University of Westminster Sociology department. All illustrations were produced by Hasan Bolucek. The materials were revised by RE consultant Bill Moore to fit the RE National Curriculum framework. Resources on Alevism, both general and specifically designed for schools, can be accessed on their website: http://www.alevinet.org/RP.aspx?pid=Alevism-Resorces_en-GB

In exploring Alevism, children are encouraged to learn:

- what the main beliefs and teachings are;
- the sources of wisdom that inspire and sustain Alevi life;
- how Alevi people live out and express their faith in different contexts in Turkey and the UK;
- what Alevism has to say about the nature of reality and truth underpinning life;
- what it means to be an Alevi and what it has to say about human identity, diversity and belonging;
- core Alevi values and living in a community.

Learning will be planned to suit the context and ethos of each school, in accordance with the appropriate agreed syllabus. The structure provided here is illustrative to support planning for appropriate knowledge, understanding and learning as children progress

through their education. In planning children's learning, teachers may take the following into consideration:

- what can children learn about Alevism as a religion or worldview from an exploration of the beliefs, practices, structures and sources of the faith?
- how can we provide opportunities for children to reflect on their own experience and values through their exploration of Alevism?
- how can we help children make sense of what it means to be an Alevi through their exploration of Alevism as lived and practised in the UK and Turkey?
- which central concepts in Alevism provide the richest opportunities for critical reflection and analysis?
- what insights can Alevism provide into what it means to be human, how we should live and the nature of reality that might help children reflect on how they make sense of life?
- how might an exploration of Alevism contribute to a child's growing sense of self in relation to their world?

On behalf of the Alevi community, we hope you find the materials produced here useful to your SACRE, school and children.

For further information please contact the British Alevi Federation
<http://www.alevinet.org/>.

See also: *The School of Alevism* on YouTube

Some basic Alevi beliefs for teachers

God

- The Alevi word for God is 'Hak' which means Truth. Hak is not a person or even a personal God, but more like a force or an energy. 'May Hak be with you!'
- Alevis believe that everything in the whole universe is the expression of Hak. The universe and Hak are 'one'.
- Alevis believe that we are all from the universe and all will return to the universe. We are all one with the universe. We are all equal. We are one with nature and must live at one with nature.

Humanity

- There is something of Hak present in all living creatures and most fully in humans.
- Because of this, all people are equal and all living creatures are sacred. Alevis call each other 'can' (pronounced 'jan'), meaning 'soul'. This represents the belief that within all people is the spark of Hak, the soul.
- Alevis consider all nations as one regardless of ethnic, racial, sex and gender, and linguistic differences, simply because each creature carries the same sacred essence of life.
- Humanism, egalitarianism, mutual assistance, gender equality and challenging oppression and injustice are the main social characteristics commonly shared by Alevi communities.

Other religions

- Alevis consider all religions and living philosophies to be different ways of reaching Hak.

Code of Morality in Alevism:

In Alevism, morality is the main requirement of belief. A person who cannot control their behaviour is not regarded as suitable to participate in Alevi rituals. This morality is simply explained with the motto:

Being the master of one's hand, tongue and loins

which requires Alevis not to behave immorally by using their hand (e.g. do not steal), their tongue (e.g. do not tell lies), their loins (e.g. respect other people's bodies).

These rules summarise a strong moral system which is described as *thinner than hair, sharper than a sword*. A person who is not capable of conserving his or her morality is not regarded as suitable to participate in Alevi rituals.

Teaching about Alevism

Alevism provides a rich source of learning and reflection. Identity and diversity can be explored both within Alevism and between Alevism and other beliefs as can the concepts of truth/reality, religion, belief, humanism and humanity. It has rituals that express beliefs which can be superficially simple and yet which can be interpreted in increasingly deep and mystical ways. Its origins lie in the distant past, with a host of syncretic accruals from other faiths and beliefs over the centuries. Alevism as it exists today provides a fascinating window through which to explore the nature of reality, the universe, what it means to be human and the nature of the 'good life'.

It is important for teachers to know that there is a debate within Alevism about its relationships to Islam and whether it is a part of Islam or completely distinct from it. Whatever its origins, it is not the purpose of these lessons to enter into this debate but to present to children how Alevism as a distinct religion is practised today.



This represents the seven saints in Alevism

Notes on using the handbook

The Handbook provides suggested activities for each lesson along with the PowerPoint slides to accompany them. The PowerPoint slides reproduced in the Handbook are available in separate folders.

The italics in the Teachers' Notes are information that provide background to the lesson activities rather than the actual content of the lesson.

Links on the slides work on the actual slides but not on the copy of the slides in the Handbook.

Lesson 1 Who is Ali?



Introduction

- *In this unit, we are going to look at people and teachings that have influenced and inspired Alevi over the centuries.*

Learning Outcome:

- *Pupils should be able to discuss the importance of Ali in terms of Alevi beliefs*

Exercise 1

What do you
remember/know
about Alevism?

Are there any rules that Alevi need to follow?

What is their god called?

Do they have a place of worship?

Do men and women worship together?

How important is community to Alevi?

Do they have any special food?

Do they wear special clothes?

Do they have a special symbol?

What languages do they speak?

Do they sing or dance during their worship?

Is light important in Alevism?

Activity: What do you know about Alevism?

Recap on what is your understanding of Alevism.

Teacher's notes

You can organise the children in pairs or groups to see if they can answer the questions on the slide:

What do you remember/know about Alevism? Here are some answers:

- Are there any rules that Alevi need to follow? Yes, they need to be careful how they use their hands, mouth and body.
- What is their god called? Hak.

- Do they have a place of worship? Cemevi.
- Do men and women worship together? Yes.

How important is community to Alevis? Very important they visit different community centres which could include a range of activities e.g., saz lessons, semah lessons, maths, English course, arts, social events and so on.

- Do they have any special food? No but they make a special pudding for the festival Aşure and share it.
- Do they wear special clothes? No.
- Do they have a special symbol? Yes, Pir Sultan holding the saz is the sign you will see at Alevi events and on the website. The zülfikar is a sword that belongs to Ali, and it is seen as the Sword of Justice.
- What languages do they speak? Turkish, Kurdish and English. They speak other languages too but we have not covered them in KS1 and 2
- Do they sing or dance during their worship? They dance the semah (a religious dance) and sing and musicians (zakir) play the saz in the cem ceremony.
- Is light important in Alevism? Yes, they light candles in the cem ceremony, and the candle lighter is one of the 12 Services in the ceremony.

Exercise 2

Which people are important to you?

Activity

Ask the children who is important in their lives, who influences them.

How are they a good influence on them?

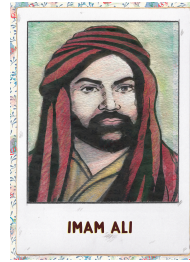
What makes someone a positive or a negative influence?

Briefly discuss the importance of role-models

In Alevism, Ali is the key figure and is important as a role model for Alevis.

Ali's life

- He was born in March 599 CE and was killed in 661 CE (62 years old)
- He was married to Fatma and father of Hasan, Hüseyin and Zeynep
- He led the Cem of Forties, the first Cem known to have taken place.
- Ali died and came back to life



Exercise 3

Who is Ali?

- Alevis believe Ali is the most important figure in Alevism.
- Ali is one with Hak and on the side of the oppressed
- Ali represents the ideal human
- What qualities would the ideal human need?



Teacher's notes

In Alevism, Ali is the most important figure. He is one with Hak and on the side of the oppressed.

Please note: In Islam, Ali was the fourth person to be given permission to help lead the Islamic religion.

NB: This could raise the question of whether Alevism is part of Islam. It is advisable NOT to give a definitive answer here, as opinion is divided. Simply state this as a fact, and that even among the Alevis themselves, some identify Alevism as a separate religion and others as part of Islam.

Exercise 4

What are the key values of Ali?

These are the key values Ali stood for:

Justice
Peace
Equality



Can you link the examples with the values

1. Ali wanted to abolish slavery.
2. Ali wanted to abolish men having more than one wife at a time.
3. Ali wanted to end wars.
4. Ali wanted fair pay for servants

Activity: Use the slide to examine the key values of Ali.

Lesson 2

How did Hacı Bektaş influence Alevism?



Learning outcomes:

- Pupils should be able to discuss the importance of Hacı Bektaş in relation to Alevi values

This lesson is about Hacı Bektaş who is one of the most important figures in Alevism. (Hacı is pronounced Haji.)

Exercise 1

Who is Hacı Bektaş?

- One of the most important figures in Alevism (1209-1271)
- He said: "It is not enough to seek truth; we must also live truthfully."
- What do you think this means?



Teacher's notes

Activity: Discuss the difference between searching for truth and living truthfully. Which is harder? Why?

Exercise 2

What does this statement from Hacı Bektaş mean?

“Any road that doesn't follow science, ends in darkness” (Hacı Bektaş Veli)



Teacher's notes

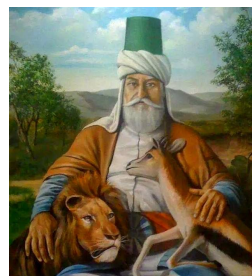
It means Alevi faith and beliefs should be based on reason, experience and evidence.

Activity: Discuss the statement that Alevi faith and belief should be based on reason, experience and evidence. Check pupils' understanding of these terms and ask them what counts as good evidence.

Exercise 3

What do you see in this picture?

- He taught that Hak is in everything.
- He is pictured with a gazelle and a lion because he said:
'Greed and malice disappear by love in our midst. The lion and gazelle are friends in our embrace.'
- Once we accept that Hak is in everything we cease being violent. It shows true humanity.



Teacher's notes

Activity:


Have a look at the picture- what does it tell you about the lion and the gazelle and the power relationship between them.

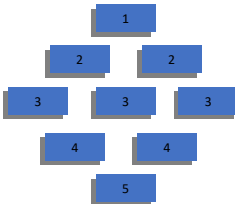
Malice means wishing harm on others; greed is wanting everything for yourself. Can these be driven out by an inner attitude of love? What else might be needed to make people less greedy and cruel?

Both greed and malice exist within each of us and we have to learn how to tame them in the way we live our lives.

Exercise 4

What is most important in life?





Teacher's notes

Activity: This can be done in pairs or groups. The children select the order of importance, with 1 as the most important and 5 as the least important. Can the whole class agree on which order to place the cards?

In the discussion afterwards, keep it as open as possible. Ask for reasons and examples to back up opinions.


Some possible stimulus questions:

- Is there anything they think is missing that they would want in the D9? If so, what would they take out?
- Is there anything that holds life together?
- Are the physical things enough on their own?
- How do we know what is most important in life?

Exercise 5

What do you think these statements mean?

<p>"Whatever you are searching for, search in yourself Not in Jerusalem, not in Makkah."</p>	<p>How might they influence Alevi people?</p> <p>What difference might it make if everyone held these beliefs?</p>
<p>"My Ka'aba (temple) is all human being."</p>	<p>Do you agree with them? Why?/Why not?</p>



Teacher's notes*Extension Activity*

Facilitate open discussion – a search for truth! Try not to impose your views but use questions to encourage their views.

The main idea here is that we find Truth (Hak) in ourselves, not in external places and things. See if pupils can explain the reference to Jerusalem and Makkah, but you may need to explain their significance. Look into yourself, who you are, what is important in life and what kind of a person you are and want to be.

Ask what they remember about the cem ceremony. The semah helps them look into themselves and the music and hymns provide teachings and emotional attachment to the process. All these help Alevis to reflect more deeply and get more meaning from their worship.

Lesson 3

What are the most important teachings about life for Alevis?



Exercise 1

Teacher's notes

Activity: Explain that you will introduce some ideas and you want to see how they respond and what they think. Make it clear that as long as they use reason and good thinking, they will be okay. Encourage them to challenge and question each other politely.

You might want to provide the teachings together and then discuss them all at once, rather than by each slide. Keep the focus on what is most important for Alevis, but also encourage pupils to link this to their own ideas and thinking.

The children in the picture are about to light three candles representing Hak (God/Truth), Muhammed and Ali. Alevi children learn, through participation and encouragement, about their beliefs and traditions.

Exercise 2

What do you remember about Alevi beliefs?

- Why is Ali important?
- What is Hak?
- Why is Hak is important?

Teacher's notes

This is a recap of Alevi beliefs.

- Ali is the ideal human and Alevis try to grow to be like him (role model).
- He is the source of spiritual guidance.
- Alevis are seekers after Truth (Hak) which is found within ourselves.
- The way to find Hak is by reflecting on the qualities of Ali.
- Everything must be given to Hak and we must resist anything that opposes Hak.
- Truth lies hidden within us all and cannot be easily described or explained in direct words but through symbolism and symbolic language

Exercise 3

Who is Pir Sultan?

- One of the most famous saints, poets and musicians (1480-1550)
- His hymns are used a lot in the Cem ceremony. They are very symbolic and use a lot of metaphor and imagery.
- His poems carry deep meaning that helps Alevis think about the meaning of life.



Teacher's notes

Pir Sultan's poems are sung and danced to, producing a deep spiritual experience or sense of being at one with yourself, humanity and Hak. The saz accompaniment adds to the tone of the experience and has the effect of helping the participants to reflect deeply on their own life and the world.

Exercise 4

What do you think Pir Sultan means in this poem?

Extracts from one of his poems

"If you want to enter the cem of the wise
Rid yourself of hatred and arrogance."

"Why do you need to see the imperfection of others
Look in your own mirror and then come."



Exercise 5



Teacher's notes

Activity: P4C Philosophy for Children (sapere.org.uk): ask for an initial response to this and facilitate their further responses. This can be fairly informal for those who have not done P4C, or can be used as a full P4C session in schools with training, allowing the pupils to develop their own questions on the stimulus of their learning about Alevi teachings and values and choosing one to explore.

Give it a go! See what they come up with. Be amazed! Get them to write and draw their ideas after discussion. Keep this open. It is better to let the pupils question each other than you to restrict or impose ideas on them.

This can be the basis for some creative cross-curricular work using English, Art, Music, Science, Drama, and Dance.

Assessment opportunity: Alevi beliefs and values

Write your answers to the following questions

- What qualities do they have that you admire?
- How do they influence you?
- Can you think of famous people who are a bad influence on others?
- What makes someone a good or a bad role model?
- Why are role models important?

Teacher's notes

4. It is important to encourage pupils to reflect on role models as in Alevism, character and personal qualities are so important.

Activity: Explain that Ali is the main role model for Alevis, young and old. A role model is someone, either famous or close to you, who sets an example of how to live and behave.

Ask the children to think of two of their role models, one who is close to them and one who is famous.

Glossary

Ana: literally 'mother' in Turkish; religious equivalent to Dede (see below).

Aşure/Germe: (Aşure in Turkish and Germe in Zazaki) A special dessert made of cereals, fruits and nuts and shared after the Muharrem fast.

Bağlama/Saz: (Turkish) An Alevi musical instrument of religious and cultural significance. As a part of religious ceremonies, it is perceived as a holy musical instrument.

Can: (Turkish) Literally 'soul'; an Alevi individual.

Cem: (Turkish) Literally 'gathering'; it is the fundamental ritual of Alevism.

Cemevi: (Turkish) Means cem house, a gathering place for cem rituals.

Dede/Pir: Dede, literally 'grandfather' in Turkish and Pir in Kurdish and Zazaki; clergy belonging to an ocak and believed to be descended from a sacred lineage. Every Alevi is the follower (talip) of a particular dede/pir.

Hak: The Alevi word for God, which means Truth.

Lokma/Loqme: (Turkish/Zazaki) Food offered during the ritual provided by the followers. It has a symbolic meaning of sharing.

Ocak/Ucağ: (Turkish/Zazaki) Literally 'hearth'; an extended family claiming to be descended from a holy lineage. Ocaks are Alevi institutions of leadership where religious knowledge is passed down orally through the families responsible for the community's religious and social leadership.

Semah/Sama: (Turkish/Zazaki) A spiritual and sacred dance that is traditionally performed as a part of cem gatherings. It is a principal form of Alevi worship and a figurative representation of the relationship between humans and the universe.

Talip/Talıb: (Turkish/Zazaki) Follower of an ocak. Every Alevi individual is the talip of a particular ocak.

Turna: (Turkish) Crane bird, a prominent figure in Alevi poetry and ritual.

Xızır: (Zazaki and Kurdish) One of the main cults of Kizilbash Alevism symbolising the sacred power of nature. As the 'God of hard times', it is believed that he is omnipresent and helps everyone in hardship.

Yol/Rae: (Turkish/Zazaki) Spiritual path. It is how Alevis describe their faith.

Zakir: (Turkish) The musical conductor at the Alevi cem gathering.

Ziyaret/Jare: (Turkish/Zazaki) Sacred places of pilgrimage.