


Sikhism



- **Sikhism** comes from the word “Sikh”- **Disciple**
- Is a distinct and unique religion, not a sect of Hinduism or Islam
- **Guru** is made from two words: **Gu** (dispeller of ignorance) and **ru** (bringer of enlightenment)
- **Gurdwara** - House of worship (Sikh Temple)
- **Waheguru** – One of the Name of God/Almighty
- **Khalsa** - belonging to the divine, ‘Pure’
- **Guru Granth Sahib ji** - The Spiritual Scripture of Sikhs
- **Mool Mantar** – Basic Tenet(s)
 - There is but one God
 - True is his name
 - The Creator, without fear, without enmity
 - Timeless, Without birth i.e. unborn and Self illumined


 Gurudwara

Sikhism

Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak in the 15th century in the Punjab region which is now India and Pakistan at a time when Hinduism and Islam were the dominant religions. Early Sikhs were persecuted for their beliefs, but today Sikhism is practiced by 30 million people worldwide and it is the fifth most popular organized religion.

Nine other gurus followed Guru Nanak who further shaped Sikhism into what it is today. The fifth guru, Guru Arjan, made Amritsar the capital of the Sikh world and assembled the first Sikh scripture called the *Adi Granth*. Guru Arjan was seen as a threat by the state and was executed for his beliefs in 1606. The sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, militarized the Sikh followers so that they would be prepared to resist oppression. Sikhs have fought many battles in order to preserve their faith. The tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, made the military structure more apparent by forming the *Khalsa*, a military group of men and women in 1699. The purpose of

the *Khalsa* is to defend the faith. Guru Gobind Singh also created Sikh baptism and the 5 *Ks* which are the characteristics that make up the Sikh appearance. This was the last guru. The Sikhs now treat their scripture as gurus and now called the scripture *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion that stresses good actions over ritual. They believe that the way to lead a good life is to always keep God in your mind, to live honestly and work hard, to treat everyone as an equal and to be generous and serve the less fortunate. Sikhs believe religion is practiced by living in the world and coping with everyday problems. Sikhs believe in one God who no form or gender. They believe that everyone is equal before God and that everyone has direct access. Sikhism stresses service to others and living a good life. They believe that the three duties in life are to pray, work, and give:

- **Nam japna:** always keep God in your mind
- **Kirt Karnā:** earn an honest living, seek to live in honesty, avoid crime, gambling, begging, and working in the alcohol and tobacco industry
- **Vand Chhakna:** give charity and care for others, especially those who have less than you

To live a good life, Sikhs also stress the avoidance of the five vices that make people self-centered:

- lust
- greed
- attachment to material objects
- anger
- pride

Sikhs worship in the *Gurdwara*, which means “residence of the Guru” or “the door that leads to the Guru.” The Gurdwara has four main purposes:

- a place to learn spiritual wisdom
- a place for Sikh ceremonies
- a place where children learn about Sikhism
- the place that functions as a community center that offers things like food and shelter to the needy in their community

Because Sikhs believe in one God with no physical form there are no statues or idols inside of the Gurdwara. The focal point of the service is the *Guru Granth Sahib* which is kept in its own room and brought down the main aisle during the procession before the worship. It is placed on a raised platform called the *Manji Sahib* which means “throne.” The Gurdwara also features four doors: the Door of Peace, the Door of Livelihood, the Door of Learning, and the Door of Grace. These four doors symbolize that all are welcome. Every Gurdwara is also attached to a *Langar*. The *Langar* is a kitchen that serves food to the community at no charge. There is a communal meal served at services that consists of vegetarian food. Sikhs are not required to be vegetarian, but these foods symbolize that all are welcome.

Before entering the Gurdwara, you must remove your shoes and cover your head. Upon entering you bow to the *Guru Granth Sahib* and touch your forehead to the floor as a sign of respect and place offerings like money or food in front of the scripture. These offerings are used later for the *Langar*. If you cannot offer anything, you must offer your thanks for charity. Once inside, everyone sits on the floor to create equal status and men and women sit on opposite sides. Sikhs do not have religious leaders. Every Gurdwara has a *Granthi* who organizes the daily service, but any Sikh can lead the daily worship. The only requirements are that they must be able to fluently speak Gurmukhi and must know how to properly handle the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

The most important day is the Sikh New Year called Vaisakhi. This festival is celebrated on April 13th or 14th and it includes parades, dancing, and singing. Many Sikhs also choose to be baptized on this day.

The Sikh baptism is called *Amrit Sanskar*. There is no age limit on baptism, but the person must be old enough to fully understand the commitment they are making. The ceremony takes place in the Gurdwara in front of five baptized Sikhs. Those being baptized must drink *amrit* which is a mixture of sugar and water. Everyone drinks from the same bowl and some is splashed on the eyes and hair. Everyone must recite the *Mool Mantra* which explains the fundamentals of Sikhism. The ceremony ends when the candidates eat *karah parshad*, a sweet tasting food made of semolia, sugar, and ghee. Once baptized, the Sikh takes on the 5 *Ks* as a symbol of their baptism and faith:

- **Kesh:** uncut hair (regarded as a symbol of holiness and strength, shows adoption of the simple life and rejects pride in one's appearance)
- **Kara:** a steel bracelet (a symbol of God having no beginning or end, a symbol that all Sikhs are linked to the Guru)
- **Kanga:** a wooden comb (symbolizes a clean mind and body, helps to maintain the body which God has created)
- **Kaccha:** cotton underwear (a symbol of chastity)
- **Kirpan:** steel sword (kept in a sheath and can be worn under clothing, symbolizes defense of the good and weak, their struggle to maintain their beliefs and religion)

Another celebration is the Sikh marriage called the *Anand Karaj*. Both people entering the marriage must be of Sikh faith. The marriage takes place in the morning and any Sikh can perform the marriage. Sikhs practice monogamy, believe widows and widowers can remarry, and view the husband and wife as equals within the marriage. An example of a Sikh marriage: Sikhs believe in a life cycle: birth, life, and rebirth. Other religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism share this similar belief. Sikhs believe that your good deeds on earth determine your next life. This concept is called *Karma*. Karma decides your next life based on how well or how poorly you acted in your previous life.