

## Introduction to Sikhi



**Sikhi** is only 500 years old but, with over 23 million Sikhs around the world, is the fifth largest world religion. Sikhi was founded by **Guru Nanak Dev Ji** (left), the first Guru in the 15th century in the Punjab (the land of 5 rivers). Guru Nanak Dev Ji was succeeded by nine Gurus or holy teachers. Since 1708, the spiritual guide for the Sikhs or their Sikh Guru has been their religious scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Sikhi is the youngest of the world's major religions.

The word **Sikh** means "student" or "disciple" in the Punjabi language. The word Guru is composed of **Gu** meaning darkness and **Ru** meaning Light. In Sikhi therefore 'Guru' is the "Light that dispels all darkness" and Guru Nanak Dev Ji was the **Embodiment of Divine Light**.

Sikhi is based on compassion; service; equality between males, females and all religions and encourages an honest, truthful living with a rejection of idol worship, the caste system, ritualism and superstitions. In Sikhi, heaven and hell are states of mind represented by joy and sorrow, bliss and agony or light and darkness.

The tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji declared that there would be no other human Gurus after him and that instead the Sikhs could look to their holy scriptures for guidance - so the Guru of the Sikhs is the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

The special building where the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is kept is a Sikh place of worship and is called a **Gurdwara** or 'House of the Guru'. Sikh religious services are generally held daily but special services are held. These services are based on the writings from the Guru Granth Sahib, together with chants and prayers from the sacred Guru sung to music known as Kirtan. The service ends with a free meal from the langar (shared meal).

The place where the free food is eaten is called the Langar hall. People attending sit on the floor to eat their food. This habit of sitting on the floor is to show that as consumer, we are humbly receiver of food from the Creator, who is the supplier of everything on this Earth.

- Adapted from Bradford Gurdwara, Basics of Sikhi



## Guru Gobind Singh Ji (1666 – 1708)



Guru Gobind Singh Ji was the 10th and the last human Guru of the Sikhs. He was the son of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji, the 9th Guru and took the Guruship in 1675, aged 9. Guru Gobind Singh Ji held the Guruship for 33 years, until he left for heavenly abode in 1708.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji was a great scholar studying Persian, Sanskrit, Brj Bhasha and Arabic but also a great military genius. Guru Gobind Singh Ji accepted the use of power and the sword to fight tyranny in defense of religious freedom when other approaches failed. He fought twelve battles and the Guru's four sons (Char Sahibzadey) were killed in campaigns against tyranny when they were between the ages of 6 to 18.

### Khalsa

On the 13th April 1699, the first day of [Vaisakhi](#), Guru Gobind Singh Ji transformed the Sikh community into the **Khalsa Order** or saint-soldiers. He asked for five volunteers who would give their lives for the Guru. The five that accepted Guru Gobind Singh Ji's call were all from different castes:

- Dharam Das was a **jat** (farmer)
- Daya Ram was a **khatri** (soldier)
- Mokham Chand was a **dhobi** (washermen)
- Himmat Rai was a **jhir** (water carrier)
- Sahib Chand was a **nai** (barber).

Guru Gobind Singh Ji initiated these five Sikhs in the **Khanday Di Pahul** (initiation by the double-edged sword) ceremony. Guru Gobind Singh Ji prepared **amrit** by stirring water in an iron bowl with a [Khanda](#) (a special double-edged sword) whilst reciting the five baanis (sacred prayers);

Mata Jeeto Ji added "patasse" (sugar sweets) to the water to signify the balance of humility and sweetness to go with courage and bravery that the Khalsa would have to show. Guru Gobind Singh Ji named the five volunteers the **Panj Pyarey** (five beloved ones) and in doing so gave concrete shape to Guru Nanak's foundation – that we are all equal irrespective of caste.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji received amrit from the Panj Pyarey and gave the Sikhs the new greeting of **Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki Fateh**, meaning "The Khalsa belongs to God; all victory is the victory of God", the [Sikh National Anthem](#) along with the name **Singh** to males meaning **lion** and **Kaur** to females meaning **princess**.

- Adapted from Bradford Gurdwara



## Five Ks

The 5 Ks date from the [creation of the Khalsa Panth](#) by [Guru Gobind Singh](#) Ji in 1699. The Guru introduced them for several reasons. First these common symbols would identify members of the Khalsa. Because all members of the Khalsa wear the 5 Ks the members of the community are more strongly bound together

### The meaning of the 5 Ks

The 5 Ks taken together symbolize that the Sikh who wears them has dedicated themselves to a life of devotion and submission to the Guru.

The 5 Ks are 5 physical symbols worn by Sikhs who have been initiated into the Khalsa. They are Kesh (uncut hair), Kara (a steel bracelet), Kanga (a wooden comb), Kachera (cotton underwear), and Kirpan (steel sword)

### Kesh - uncut hair

Various reasons and symbolisms have been put forward for the Sikh practice of keeping hair uncut. Throughout history hair (kesh) has been regarded as a symbol both of holiness and strength. One's hair is part of God's creation. Keeping hair uncut indicates that one is willing to accept God's gift as God intended it. Uncut hair symbolizes adoption of a simple life, and denial of pride in one's appearance. Not cutting one's hair is a symbol of one's wish to move beyond concerns of the body and attain spiritual maturity. It is a highly visible symbol of membership of the group.

### Kara - a steel bracelet

- A symbol of restraint and gentility.
- A symbol that a Sikh is linked to the Guru.
- It acts as a reminder that a Sikh should not do anything of which the Guru would not approve.
- A symbol of God having no beginning or end.



### Kanga - a wooden comb

This symbolises a clean mind and body; since it keeps the uncut hair neat and tidy. It also symbolises the importance of looking after the body which God has created.

### Kachhera - special underwear

This is a pair of breeches that must not come below the knee. It was a particularly useful garment for Sikh warriors of the 18th and 19th centuries, being very suitable for warfare when riding a horse.



### Kirpan - a ceremonial sword

There is no fixed style of Kirpan and it can be anything from a few inches to three feet long. It is kept in a sheath and can be worn over or under clothing.

The Kirpan can symbolize spirituality, the soldier part of the Soldier-Saints, defense of good and of the weak, the struggle against injustice and a metaphor for God.

For a Sikh the fact that the Guru has instructed the Sikhs to wear the 5 Ks is an entirely sufficient reason, and no more need be said.

- Adopted from BBC and Bradford Gurdwara



## Guru Granth Sahib Ji

After ten human Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh Ji passed the Guruship to a final and eternal Guru: the [Guru Granth Sahib Ji](#). It is not merely a book but the vessel for the living words of the Gurus.

The Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the final version of the Adi Granth, the collection of hymns by our Gurus along with excerpts from Muslim and Hindu saints. In the process of compiling the Adi Granth, the fifth Guru, [Guru Arjan Dev Ji](#), added his own hymns, along with the Shabads of 36 Hindu and Muslim saints. By adding the teachings of non-Sikhs, he emphasized the Sikh belief in a oneness that is not threatened by alternative belief systems but accepts them all as one.

In 1604, Guru Arjan Dev Ji and Bhai Gurdas Sahib Ji finished their work. The Adi Granth was installed at the [Harmandir Sahib \(the Golden Temple\)](#) and the first reading took place on August 16, 1604.

In 1708, [Guru Gobind Singh Ji](#) finalized the Adi Granth, renamed it, and set it as his successor. Within the 1,430 pages, you will find the wisdom, guidance, and spirit of our Gurus today. Granth is a Sanskrit word for a holy book. Sahib is added to its name in the Sikh tradition of expressing respect and veneration towards the Lord.

The Guru Granth Sahib Ji is a collection of 1,430 pages, with 3,384 hymns consisting of 15,575 stanzas. The Granth is treasure house of spiritual and moral teaching, and contains the eternal Truth, proclaims God and shows the way of His realisation. Sections of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji are known as **Japji**, **Rehras**, **Kirtan Sohila** and **Anand Sahib** which form the basis of the Sikh daily prayers.

The Guru Granth Sahib Ji starts with the [Mool Mantar](#), which defines the basic beliefs of the Sikhs as set by Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of the Sikh faith.

The Guru Granth Sahib Ji contains gurbani by the following Gurus:

- Guru Nanak Dev Ji
- Guru Angad Dev Ji
- Guru Amar Das Ji
- Guru Ram Das Ji
- Guru Arjan Dev Ji
- Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji

A special cloth called a Rumalla is placed on the Guru Granth Sahib Ji when it is not being read. Above the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, there is a canopy called a Chanani. A person is always stationed at the [Takht](#) with a white fan to whisk over the Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

At night, the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is placed on a bed or small cot which also has a canopy. If it becomes old, worn, or is no longer required for another reason it must be respectfully cremated.

When in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, everyone must cover their heads, remove their shoes, and show respect by bowing to the floor if it passes by. During any service, people must refrain from eating, drinking, or talking while Guru Granth Sahib Ji is in their presence.

All of these reverences and rules remind us that the Guru Granth Sahib Ji is our eternal Guru.

- Adapted from wearesikhs.org



## Ek Onkar



Guru Nanak Dev Ji spread a simple message of **Ek Onkar**, we are all one, created by the one Creator of all Creation. He said that there is one God and the name of God is **Sat Nam** (truth). To show its importance, **Ek Onkar** is the first line at the head of all Gurbani (Speech of wisdom) and forms the first line of the [Mool Mantar](#) which begins the [Guru Granth Sahib Ji](#).

Guru Nanak Dev Ji's followers were the **Sikhs** (the seekers of truth) and came from different communities and castes. Guru Nanak Dev Ji taught the Sikhs to bow only before God and that in order to experience God within themselves they should do the following:

Naam Japna Meditating in God's name	To get up each day before sunrise, bathe to clean the body and then meditate on God's name and recite the Guru's hymns to cleanse the mind. Then, throughout the day to continually remember God's name. "By repeating God's Name I have made God's temple; O saints and followers, Sing God's praises day and night." (Guru Arjan Dev Ji)
Vand Chhakna Share with others	To share with others and support the entire community. "Love of worldly things, like a snake has entangled the whole world in its coils. Whoever holds it lovingly, gets bitten by it." (Guru Amar Das Ji)
Kirat Karni To work/earn an honest living	To work and earn an honest living. To practice truthfulness and honesty in all dealings. "Truth is the highest virtue, higher still is truthful living." (Guru Nanak Dev Ji).

By following this path, a Sikh can achieve liberation by becoming **gur-mukh** (God centred) instead of being **mun-mukh** (self centred).

- Bradford Gurdwara

