

Key Concepts:

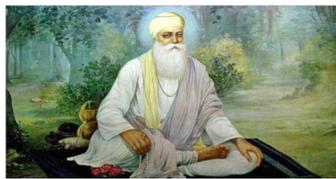
- **Guru** refers to a religious teacher or guide who leads a follower from spiritual ignorance ('gu' means darkness) into spiritual enlightenment ('ru' means light).
- **Monotheism** is a belief in One God.
- **Sikh** refers to a follower of Sikhism, a 'disciple' or 'learner' of the Guru.
- **Khanda** is the symbol of Sikhism, made up of two double-edged swords, one sword in the middle and a circular blade,
- **Ik Oankar** is Punjabi for 'One God'.
- **Khalsa** is the community of Sikhs founded by the 10th Guru, Gobind Singh..
- **Amrit** is sugar that is mixed into water using a sword; it is drunk at the Amrit Ceremony where people become part of the Sikh Khalsa.

Gurus of Sikhism

The Life of the Gurus

Guru Nanak

Nanak was born in 1469 CE in an area of India called the Punjab. He was born into a wealthy Hindu family. He grew up in an area with many Hindus and Muslims. We know a lot about Nanak's childhood as it was written down in a book called the Janam Sakhis. These stories show Nanak experienced lots of miracles, he was extremely intelligent and he was devoted to God. When Nanak was about 30 years old, he went to bathe in the river Bein to pray, but instead vanished. He was in a divine trance under the river, where God told him 'There is neither Hindu nor Muslim.' Three days later Nanak returned and, after a period of silence, taught 'there is not Hindu, no Muslim, so whose path should I follow? God's path.' He meant by this that all religions are just different paths to the same God.



Guruship

Guru Nanak died in 1539, at the age of 70. He chose his friend and follower Lehna to become the next guru to maintain the teachings of Guru Nanak. He is remembered for developing a written form of Punjabi, called Gurmukhi and collecting hymns from Guru Nanak. This lineage of guruship continued over 10 guru human gurus. Guru Amar Das developed the langar ceremony (a communal kitchen), Guru Ram Das laid the foundations for the holy city of Amritsar, Guru Arjan arranged the Golden Temple to built in Amritsar, and collected all the hymns of the previous gurus into a book called the 'Adi Granth'. He became the first Sikh martyr when he was executed by the Mughal rulers at the time. Guru Hargobind, the 6th Guru, developed Sikhism politically and militarily by fighting battles with the Mughals. Guru Har Rai travelled around the Punjab teaching peace and equality. Guru Har Krishan was a child guru (aged 5), who helped those suffering from smallpox. Guru Tegh Bahadur was the second martyr as he too was killed by the Mughals. The last human Guru was chosen to be Guru Gobind Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh

In 1699 Guru Gobind Singh arranged a dramatic event that changed Sikhism forever. At the annual spring festival of Vaisakhi, he called all Sikhs from across the Punjab together in Anandpur. Holding a khanda he asked for a volunteer from the crowd who was willing to die for Sikhism. After a nervous pause, one man hesitantly came forward. The Guru took him into a tent and returned with his sword stained with blood. Guru Gobind Singh asked for more volunteers. One by one, four more men disappeared with the Guru. Each time he returned, the sword was fresh with blood. The people were shocked. However, all of the men were later led out of the tent unharmed. Guru Gobind Singh initiated them with the amrit ceremony, and called them the Panj Pyare ('5 beloved ones'). These became the first members of the Khalsa. All men who were initiated were given the surname Singh (lion) and women Kaur (princess). He finally gave the guruship to the holy book—the Guru Granth Sahib.



Sikh Symbols

The 5 K's were 5 symbols set out by Guru Gobind Singh during Vaisakhi in 1699. These symbols are often only followed by Sikhs initiated into the Khalsa.

- ◆ **Kesh (uncut hair)** Sikhs believe their bodies are a gift from God, hence not cutting their hair is a sign of devotion to God. Sikhs often wear a turban to keep their hair clean and tidy..
- ◆ **Kangha (comb)** helps keep their hair clean and tidy, it symbolizes the importance of discipline and reminds Sikhs that their lives should be well-ordered.
- ◆ **Kara (steel bracelet)** symbolizes the eternity and oneness of God.

- ◆ **Kachera (cotton shorts)** is to symbolize 'readiness to defend in battle' as they are loose fitting, and also for sexual purity.
- ◆ **Kirpan (short sword)** to remind Khalsa Sikhs of their duty to defend their religion and fight for justice.

Other symbols might be shown in Sikh art, or on the gurdwara:

- ◆ **Khanda** is a Sikh symbol made up of three types of weaponry:
 - 1) Khanda (double-edged sword) symbolizing one true God.
 - 2) Kirpans (two short swords symbolizing spiritual and political authority).
 - 3) Chakhra (circular blade symbolizing oneness of God)

- ◆ **Ik Oankar** is the Punjabi for One God.



The 10 Gurus	
Guru Nanak	1
Guru Angad	2
Guru Amar Das	3
Guru Ram Das	4
Guru Arjan	5
Guru Hargobind	6
Guru Har Rai	7
Guru Har Krishan	8
Guru Tegh Bahadur	9
Guru Gobind Singh	10



There is only one God
 His name is true
 He is the Creator of this world
 He is present throughout his creation
 He fears nobody
 He hates noone
 His exist in this world as immortal
 He is free from the cycle of Birth and Death
 He is self-illuminated
 He can be realized through the grace of Guru

The prayer above is called the Mool Mantra. It was believed to have been the first hymn written by Guru Nanak. It is a key text in understanding Sikh teachings on God.. Sikhs describe God as immortal, creator, without form and being beyond life and death. God is the cause of creation and does not appear in human form. Sikhs believe the best way to learn about God is through the lives and teachings of the Gurus. They also believe they can come to know God and develop a personal relationship with him through prayer and service to others.

Sikh Worship

In the **Guru Granth Sahib** there are different names given to the same God. Sikhs believe it is particularly respectful to repeat the name of God over and over again in prayer. This is called **naam japna**. The most commonly used name for God in Sikhism is **Waheguru**, which translates as 'Wonderful Lord'. This term is used in the **Guru Granth Sahib 16** times, and is used by Sikhs in prayer and meditation as a way of expressing God's ultimate power and reality.

At Home	At the Gurdwara
⇒Sewa is considered an act of worship, helping those in need by providing service.	⇒Any building/room that contains the Guru Granth Sahib is a gurdwara.
⇒Many Sikhs work in charities such as Khalsa Aid. They help anyone in need, no matter who they are.	⇒Anyone can visit, but they must be respectful. Alcohol and tobacco are forbidden and you cover your hair..
⇒Sikhs might go on pilgrimage to Amritsar and see the Golden Temple.	⇒Nishan Sahib is an orange flag that is outside every gurdwara, with the Khanda symbol printed on it.
⇒On Vaisakhi Sikhs might dress up as the Panj Pyare and parade down the street with the Guru Granth Sahib.	⇒Diwan Hall is the main room in a gurdwara where services and worship takes place.
⇒Gurpurbs celebrate the birth and death of the Gurus.	⇒The Guru Granth Sahib is the main focus

Key Sikh Teachings

Sikhs believe in following the teaching and example of the gurus. Here are some of the key teachings:

- ◇ **Equality of all religions** (Guru Nanak taught there is no Hindu there is not Muslim, this means that all are equal in God's eyes and all can get to God in their own way. Gurdwaras have 4 doors showing that all are welcome to enter whatever religion you are from).
- ◇ **Equality of women** (Although all the gurus were male, they taught women, allowed women to participate in worship, Guru Gobind Singh's wife was one of the first members of the Khalsa. Guru Amar Das worked a lot for women's rights, abolishing the purdah which separated men and women in temples).
- ◇ **Karma** (similar to other religions that flourished in the Indian subcontinent, Sikhs believe in good deeds accumulating positive karma, and bad deeds accumulating negative karma. These influence our transmigration into the next life. The aim of Sikhism is to become liberated from the cycle of samsara (the wheel of life, death and rebirth) and attain Muhtki (union with God).
- ◇ **Environmental Ethics** (Sikhs believe that the world and everything within it was created by Waheguru (God). The Guru Granth Sahib teaches that humans and animals are both important—so animals must be treated with respect. Sikhs believe that every living thing should have the opportunity to live a good life and fulfil its duties in order to be liberated from the cycle of samsara, many Sikhs might be vegetarian).
- ◇ **Sewa** (service to others, this can be seen in the langar—a shared vegetarian meal eaten together in a gurdwara. It can be in three forms: 1. dhan is giving charity to those in need; 2. man is mental service such as sharing words and thoughts; 3. tan is physical service such as practical work or jobs (e.g. a nurse).

The Guru Granth Sahib

Sikh holy scripture started with Guru Nanak who travelled the Punjab region singing hymns. These were recorded and kept safe by later gurus. Guru Arjan (5th guru) compiled the **Adi Granth**, all the hymns from the first 4 gurus plus some of his own. The book was greatly respected by later gurus, and placed in the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Later gurus also added hymns, and before Guru Gobind Singh died, he announced this later version as the next guru. Sikhs look to this holy book for guidance and leadership. Until 1864 all editions of the **Guru Granth Sahib** were carefully copied by hand. It went until the twentieth century that printed editions were published. It is written in Gurmukhi, a written form of Punjabi developed by Guru Angad. It has 1,430 pages. Any misprints or damaged copies must be formally cremated in the same way that the dead body of a Guru would be treated. Sikhs do not worship the **Guru Granth Sahib**—it is not a God. However they do show it the same respect as they would a living Guru, and the book is given a room of its own in a house or gurdwara. It is used in Sikh worship, and important ceremonies such as weddings and the Amrit ceremony. At some Sikh festivals a **granthi** would read the complete **Guru Granth Sahib** from start to finish. This is called the **Akhand Path**. It takes about 48 hours and is performed by a group of individuals who will read each for 2 hours. At the end of most Sikh services, the **Guru Granth Sahib** is opened randomly and a few verses are read to the congregation. These verses provide Sikhs with wisdom and guidance.

