

KEYWORDS

Sikh – A person who follows the religion

Gurdwara – The Sikh place of worship – translates as 'gateway to the guru'

Guru – teacher

Guru Nanak – the founder of the faith

Guru Granth Sahib – holy text – a 'living Guru'

Turban – Sikh headwear

The 5Ks – Articles of faith which are worn by a

Khalsa Sikh – (baptised Sikh)

Khanda – The symbol

Guru Gobind Singh – 10th and final human Guru.

Waheguru – God 'The Wonderful Lord'



The Gurdwara – Any building can be a Gurdwara as long as it houses the holy scriptures as well as having certain features. Gurdwara's all have a **Nishan Sahib** flying outside – orange flag with the Khanda on. Inside they have a **prayer hall (Diwan)** in which Sikhs come together to worship in front of the Guru Granth Sahib. Men and women sit separately, all worshippers will sit cross legged or on their knees, it is considered rude to have your feet facing the Guru.

Another room in the Gurdwara is the Langar, first set up by Guru Nanak, **Langar** is a community space where all people can be fed, they sit together on the floor, food is served in the Langar.

Khalsa ("to be pure, to be clear, to be free from") refers to both a community that considers Sikhism as its faith, as well as a special group of initiated/baptised Sikhs. The **Khalsa** tradition was initiated in 1699 by the last living Guru of Sikhism, Guru Gobind Singh.



Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was one of the greatest religious innovators of all time and the founder of the Sikh religion.

Nanak was an original spiritual thinker and expressed his thoughts in extraordinary poetry that forms the basis of Sikh scripture. People felt that God had marked him out for something special and was keeping an eye on him. His family were Hindus, but Nanak soon showed an advanced interest in religion and studied Islam and Hinduism extensively. As a child he demonstrated great ability as a poet and philosopher.

He spent his life debating, travelling and teaching people about God and was inspired by a powerful spiritual experience that gave him a vision of the true nature of God. While he was bathing in a river he disappeared for 3 days and during that time he spoke to God.

The most famous teachings are that there is only one God, and that all human beings can have direct access to God with no need of rituals or priests. His most radical social teachings denounced the Hindu caste system and taught that everyone is equal, regardless of religion or gender.

"God is not a Hindu or a Muslim, so whose path should I follow? I should follow God's path"

The 5Ks

Kirpan – It is worn to remind a Sikh to be strong as steel, defend others, and protect the weak. It is only used in defence in the last resort.

Kesh – uncut hair symbolises love and commitment to God

Kanga – a comb to remind you to keep your mind tidy

Kachera It reminds a Sikh to have a pure mind and not have sexual thoughts

Kara – a bracelet, reminds a Sikh to always do the truthful and honest in anything they do. God is eternal.

The symbol of Sikhism is **The Khanda**. The Khanda is made up of different symbols – the two swords Miri and Piri symbolizing both worldly (political) and spiritual authority. The two **kirpan** of Miri and Piri are tied together with a khanda (a double edged sword) in the centre, Piri is considered supreme then Miri because it symbolizes Spirituality. In the centre there is a chakkar – a throwing weapon. It is a circle symbolising the eternity of God.

**The Guru Granth Sahib**

The Holy book is considered to be the living word. The Guru Granth Sahib, also called Adi Granth, is the holy book of the religion Sikhism. It contains prayers, hymns and songs of Sikh religion. Sikhs believe the Guru Granth Sahib to be a living Guru, hence the Guru Granth Sahib has its own place to sleep also commonly known as '**Sach Khand**' (the pure Heaven). While in the prayer hall it sits on a throne – **Takht** under a canopy – the chanani. It is treated like an Indian prince would be and worshippers will often wave the Chauri over it. In front of the takht is the **Golak** – a money/donation box where worshippers will make offerings to the Gurdwara.

