



# Sikhism

## Why in News

- The year 2019 marks the **550<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary** year of Sikhism founder **Guru Nanak Dev**, whose birthplace is Sri Nankana Sahib in Pakistan.
- On this occasion, **Kartarpur Sahib Corridor** was inaugurated by PM Modi and Pakistani PM Imran Khan to connect Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India's Punjab with Darbar Sahib in Pakistan's Narowal district.

## Introduction

- The word 'Sikh' in the Punjabi language means 'disciple'. Sikhs are the disciples of God who follow the writings and teachings of the Ten Sikh Gurus.
- Sikhs believe in one God. They believe they should remember God in everything they do. This is called simran.
- There are over 25 million Sikhs worldwide, the great majority of them living in the Indian state of Punjab.
- The Sikhs call their faith **Gurmat** (Punjabi: "the Way of the Guru"). According to Sikh tradition, Sikhism was established by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and subsequently led by a succession of nine other Gurus.
- All 10 human Gurus, Sikhs believe, were inhabited by a **single spirit**. Upon the death of the 10<sup>th</sup>, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the spirit of the eternal Guru transferred itself to the sacred scripture of Sikhism, **Guru Granth Sahib** (The Granth as the Guru), also known as the **Adi Granth** (First Volume), which thereafter was regarded as the sole Guru.
- Sikhism was well established by the time of **Guru Arjan**, the fifth Guru. Guru Arjan completed the establishment of **Amritsar as the capital of the Sikh world** and compiled the first authorised book of Sikh scripture, the Adi Granth.

## Philosophy and Beliefs

- There is **only One God** (*Ek Onkar "Ek" is One and "Onkar" is God*). He is the same God for all people of all religions.
- The soul goes through **cycles** of births and deaths before it reaches the human form. The goal of our life is to lead an **exemplary** existence so that one may merge with God.
- Sikhs should **remember** God at all times and practice living a virtuous and truthful life while maintaining a balance between their spiritual obligations and temporal obligations.
- The true path to achieving salvation and merging with God does not require renunciation of the world or celibacy, but living the life of a householder, earning an honest living and avoiding worldly temptations and sins.
- Sikhism condemns blind rituals such as fasting, visiting places of pilgrimage, superstitions, worship of the dead, idol worship etc.
- Sikhism preaches that people of different races, religions, or sex are all equal in the eyes of God. It teaches the full equality of men and women. Women can participate in any religious function or perform any Sikh ceremony or lead the congregation in prayer.

## History and Practices

- Guru Nanak preached a message of love and understanding and criticized the blind rituals of the Hindus and Muslims. Guru Nanak passed on his enlightened leadership of this new religion to nine successive Gurus.
- **Influences:** The development of Sikhism was **influenced by the Bhakti movement and Vaishnava Hinduism**. However, Sikhism was not simply an extension of the Bhakti movement. Sikhism developed while the region was being ruled by the Mughal Empire. Two of the Sikh gurus – Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur, after they refused to convert to Islam, were tortured and executed by the Mughal rulers. The Islamic era persecution of Sikhs triggered the founding of the Khalsa, as an order for freedom of conscience and religion.
- The final living **Guru, Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa order** (meaning 'The Pure'), soldier-saints. The Khalsa upholds the highest Sikh virtues of commitment, dedication and a social conscious.
- The Khalsa are men and women who have undergone the **Sikh baptism ceremony** and who strictly follow the Sikh Code of Conduct and Conventions and wear the prescribed physical articles of the faith (*5K's: Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (a wooden comb), Kara (a iron bracelet), Kachera (cotton underpants) and Kirpan (an iron dagger)*).
- Sikhism does not have priests, which were abolished by Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru felt that they had become corrupt and full of ego.
- Sikhs only have custodians of the Guru Granth Sahib (granthi), and any Sikh is free to read the Guru Granth Sahib in the Gurdwara (a Sikh temple) or in their home. All people of all religions are welcome to the Gurdwara. A **free community kitchen** can be found at every Gurdwara which serves meals to all people of all faiths. Guru Nanak first started this institution which outlines the basic Sikh principles of service, humility and equality.
- **Four Rituals:** "Sikh Rahit Marayada", the manual that specifies the duties of Sikhs, names four rituals that qualify as rites of passage.
  - The first is a **birth and naming ceremony**, held in a gurdwara.
  - A second rite is the **anand karaj** (blissful union), or **marriage ceremony**.
  - The third rite—regarded as the most important—is the **amrit sanskar**, the ceremony for initiation into the Khalsa.
  - The fourth rite is the **funeral ceremony**.
- The three duties that a Sikh must carry out can be summed up in three words; Pray, Work, Give.
  - **Nam japna:** Keeping God in mind at all times.
  - **Kirt Karna:** Earning an honest living. Since God is truth, a Sikh seeks to live honestly. This doesn't just mean avoiding crime; Sikhs avoid gambling, begging, or working in the alcohol or tobacco industries.
  - **Vand Chhakna:** (Literally, sharing one's earnings with others) Giving to charity and caring for others.
- **The five vices:** Sikhs try to avoid the five vices that make people self-centred, and build barriers against God in their lives. These are lust, covetousness and greed, attachment to things of this world, anger and pride

## The Ten Gurus in Sikhism

The Ten Sikh Gurus - Lineage Chart		
The First Master	Guru Nanak	(1469 to 1539)
The Second Master	Guru Angad	(1504 to 1552)
The Third Master	Guru Amar Das	(1479 to 1574)
The Fourth Master	Guru Ram Das	(1534 to 1581)
The Fifth Master	Guru Arjan	(1563 to 1606)
The Sixth Master	Guru Hargobind	(1595 to 1644)
The Seventh	Guru Har Rai	(1630 to

Master		1661)
The Eighth Master	Guru Harkishan	(1656 to 1664)
The Ninth Master	Guru Tegh Bahadur	(1621 to 1675)
The Tenth Master	Guru Gobind Singh	(1666 to 1708)

## Important Gurudwaras in Sikhism

- **Panj Takht:** There are five Takhts and these Takhts are five gurudwaras which have a very special significance for the Sikh community.
  - **Akal Takhat Sahib** means Eternal Throne. It is also part of the Golden Temple complex in Amritsar. Its foundation was laid by Guru Hargobind Ji, the sixth Sikh Guru.
  - **Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib** is situated at Anandpur Sahib, Punjab. It is the birthplace of the Khalsa, which was founded by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.
  - **Takht Sri Damdama Sahib** is situated in the village of Talwandi Sabo near Bathinda. Guru Gobind Singh stayed here for about a year and compiled the final edition of Guru Granth Sahib, also known as the Damdama Sahib Bir in 1705.
  - **Takht Sri Patna Sahib** is situated in Patna city which is also the capital of Bihar state. Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born here in 1666 and he spent his early childhood here before moving to Anandpur Sahib.
  - **Takht Sri Hazur Sahib** in Nanded, Maharashtra.
- **Nankana Sahib** (Pakistan): Birth place of Guru Nanak Dev.
- **Gurudwara Darbar Sahib** (Kartarpur, Pakistan): Guru Nanak Dev spent the last 18 years of his life.

## The Sikh Literature: The Adi Granth and the Dasam Granth

- **The Adi Granth** is believed by Sikhs to be the abode of the eternal Guru, and for that reason it is known to all Sikhs as the *Guru Granth Sahib*.
- **The Dasam Granth** is controversial in the Panth because of questions concerning its authorship and composition.

## Conclusion

The Sikhs understand their religion as the product of five pivotal events.

1. The first was the teaching of Guru Nanak: His message of liberation through meditation on the divine name.
2. The second was the arming of the Sikhs by Guru Hargobind.
3. The third was Guru Gobind Singh's founding of the Khalsa, its distinctive code to be observed by all who were initiated.
4. At his death came the fourth event, the passing of the mystical Guru from its 10 human bearers to the *Guru Granth Sahib*.
5. The final event took place early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when Sikhism underwent a profound reformation at the hands of the Tat Khalsa.