



Overview

Sikhism is one of the world's major religions. It is the **world's 5th largest religion**, with about 28 million followers. It began over 500 years ago.

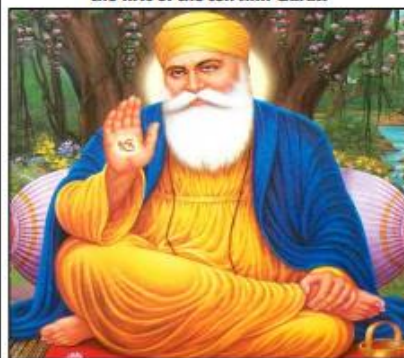
Sikhs are the people who follow Sikhism. Sikhs believe in one God who guides and protects them. Sikhs see everybody as being equal in God's eyes.

Sikhism was founded by a man called **Guru Nanak**. It is based on what he taught people. They believe that he received messages from God telling them how to live.

Leading a good life and making the right choices are important in Sikhism.

Granth Sahib is the holy book of **Sikhism**. Sikhs worship at home and in Sikh temples called **Gurdwaras**.

Image of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism and the first of the ten Sikh Gurus.



Sikh Beliefs

Guru Nanak



-Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak was born in a small village called Punjab in India. He was born into a Hindu family, but grew up around Hindus and Muslims.

-Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak was spoken to by God, who told him to follow a simple faith, in which everybody was equal. In other religions, some people were thought of as better than others.

-His message was simple: pray to God, be honest, work hard, care for your family and your community. These ideas formed the basis of Sikhism.

Vaisakhi

-Vaisakhi marks the Sikh New Year. At this time, Sikhs remember when Khalsa was created.

-Khalsa was the purified Sikh community created by Guru Gobind Singh, in which all were equal.

-This event takes place in April, and also marks the start of the Harvest.



The Five Ks



- Sikhs often display their commitment to their religion by adhering to the 5 Ks, which are the 'Sikh Articles of Faith.'

1. Kesh – Uncut Hair
2. Kangha – Comb
3. Kara – Steel Bracelet
4. Kirpan – Sword
5. Kaccha – Soldier's shorts

The Five Ks are symbols for different Sikh ideals – each item links to a different belief.

Answers to Important Questions and Key Vocabulary

Where and how do Sikhs worship? Why?



-Sikh temples are called gurdwaras. They are built with a large central dome.
-Gurdwaras have four doors, to show that they are open to all people, as a part of the Sikh belief that everyone is equal.
Before Sikhs worship in a gurdwara, they should take a bath as a mark of respect and cleanliness. Shoes are taken off, and heads are covered.

What is the Sikh holy book?



-The Sikh holy text is the Guru Granth Sahib. It is exactly 1430 pages long in its printed form, and all of the hymns in it are in the same order. This helps Sikhs from everywhere to read it the same way.

Where do most Sikhs live in the world?



-Sikh people are mainly found in the Punjab region of north India, in Asia. In total, there are nearly 23 million Sikhs in India.



-However, there are also populations of Sikhs on every inhabited continent.
-The largest populations of Sikhs in countries outside of India are in the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Malaysia. There are very few Sikhs in parts of Africa and Central America.

What are some other Sikh traditions?



-When a Sikh baby is born, the whole community turns out to celebrate! Fathers traditionally tell the news to friends and family, and the baby name is revealed in a ceremony at the gurdwara.
-Sikh names are easily distinguishable. Boys and men are given an extra Sikh name – Singh – meaning 'lion.' Girls and women have Kaur – 'princess.'

Key Vocabulary

Sikh

Guru Nanak

India

Punjab

Granth Sahib

El Onkar

Gurdwara

Gobind Singh

Nishan Sahib

Golden Temple

Vaisakhi

The Five Ks

Top 10 Facts!

1. Sikhs take their name from 'sikha', meaning disciples.
2. El Onkar ('God is one') is the most powerful teaching in the Sikh religion.
3. Sikhs often sit on the floor together whilst eating, to show that everyone is equal.
4. Most of the hymns sung in gurdwaras today were written by the Sikh Gurus.
5. To keep their long hair tidy, many men wrap their hair in a turban – a piece of material.
6. Not all Sikh men and women join the Khalsa. It is a choice and involves an initiation ceremony.
7. The most holy place for Sikhs is the Golden Temple of Amritsar, in Punjab, India.
8. The last Guru, Gobind Singh, decided that there should be no more Gurus.
9. The symbol of Sikhism is known as the Khanda.
10. Sikhs have their own flag. It is known as the Nishan Sahib and is found outside gurdwaras.

Sikhism Timeline

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| 1469 CE: Birth of Guru Nanak. | 1481 CE: Guru Nanak refuses to wear the 'golden thread.' | 1500 CE: Nanak travels, spreading the message of equality. | 1539 CE: Guru Nanak dies. | 1606 CE: Guru Arjan, the 5 th Guru, is tortured to death for being a Sikh. | 1699 CE: The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, founds the community of the Khalsa. | 1708 CE: Gobind Singh dies. He is the last of the human Sikh Gurus. | 1716 CE: The first of the Sikh military leaders – Banda Singh Bahadur. He leads many military campaigns. |
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Are Sikh stories important today?

Guru Nanak, the bowl and the jasmine flower.



The holy men of a city were frightened by Guru Nanak's kindness. They sent a full bowl of milk and said it was full like the city. Guru Nanak thanked the messenger and very gently picked a jasmine flower from a nearby bush and floated it on the top of the milk saying that there would always be room in the world for more goodness. The flower floated on top of the milk and not a drop was spilt: there was room for it!

Theme of this story is that there is always more room for kindness. What is there still more room for in the world? e.g. goodness, honesty, happiness, peace etc.

Guru Nanak, Malik Bhago and Lalo.



Guru Nanak rejected the rigid caste system on which Indian society was based. At that time, many people would have been shocked to find the Guru eating with someone of a lower caste as he does in this story; according to Sikhism, to eat with someone is a mark of respect. Therefore, Guru Nanak's decision to accept Lalo's invitation and refuse Malik Bhago's, holds great significance in Sikh culture.

Themes in this story are equality and honesty. Are these important in today's world? Where is there inequality? What can be done about it?

The founding of the Khalsa.



The Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, called a crowd together, then stepped out of a tent carrying a sword. He asked if anyone was prepared to give their life to God. One brave Sikh volunteered. The Guru took him into his tent and reappeared with his sword covered in blood. After the fifth follower had entered the tent, the Guru emerged with all five alive – the blood had been from a goat. He then blessed the five calling them the Five Faithful and Beloved Ones – they became the first members of the Khalsa Sikh community. A Sikh willing to die for their faith can be baptised and join the Khalsa.

Themes of this story are courage and standing up for what you believe in.

Guru Nanak and the Cobra.



When the child Nanak was sleeping under a tree a big poisonous snake called a cobra saw him. At that moment, Rai Bular rode by and at first was worried for the boy. Then he realised, to his amazement, the cobra was using its hood to shelter the boy's face from the sun. After seeing this divine scene, Bular was convinced that Nanak was a divine spirit.

Theme of this story to Sikhs is that Guru Nanak is very special as the first of ten human Gurus or teachers.