

Basics of Sikhism

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Basic beliefs of Sikhism



- Sikhs believe in one God. He is the same for all people of all religions.
- Sikhism teaches equality of all people. Sikhism preaches that people of different races, religions, or sex are all equal in the eyes of God. Sikhism teaches the full equality of men and women.
- Sikhism emphasizes daily devotion to the remembrance of God. One should remember God at all times.
- Sikhism teaches religious freedom. All people have the right to follow their own path to God without condemnation or coercion from others.
- Sikhism emphasizes a moral and ethical life. A Sikh should represent moral responsibility and righteousness.
- Sikhism rejects all forms of rituals such as idol worship, pilgrimages, fasting, and superstitions.
- Sikhism teaches service to others. The primary task in life should be to help the poor, needy, and oppressed. The Sikhs have a long heritage of speaking out against injustice and for standing up for the defenseless.
- Sikhs are supposed to be saints, scholars, and soldiers.
- The word Sikh means disciple or student. Sikhs are the disciples of God who follow the writings and teachings of the ten Sikh Gurus.



Mool Mantar

Mool Mantar is a basic prayer, composed by Guru Nanak Dev. It is the key prayer of Sikhs, which sums up the basic concepts of the Sikh religion.

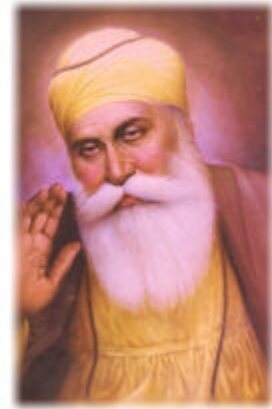
There is one God.	<i>Ik Onkar</i>
His Name is everlasting.	<i>Satnam</i>
He is the Creator.	<i>Karta</i>
He is present through His Creation.	<i>Purakh</i>
He fears none.	<i>Nirbhao</i>
He hates none.	<i>Nirvair</i>
His existence is immortal.	<i>Akal Murat</i>
He is not born, nor does He die.	<i>Ajuni</i>
He is self-illuminated.	<i>Saibhang</i>
He is realized through the grace of the Guru.	<i>Gur prasad</i>

Sikh Gurus

Sikhism was established by ten prophet-teachers called Gurus over the period from 1469 to 1708. Each Guru added to and reinforced the message taught by the previous, resulting in the creation of Sikhism.

Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539)

- First Guru of the Sikhs. Founder of Sikhism.
- Preached the equality of all humans. Guru Nanak said that all people are the children of one God.
- Traveled extensively throughout India and foreign lands to spread his message.
- There are 947 hymns from Guru Nanak Dev included in Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book).
- Born in Talwandi, now known as Nankana Sahib.



Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552)



- Compiled the biography of Guru Nanak Dev, known as the *Janam Sakhi*.
- Introduced Gurmukhi script and encouraged people to learn Punjabi.
- There are 63 hymns from Guru Angad Dev included in Guru Granth Sahib.
- Started a school at Khadur Sahib to teach children through Gurmukhi alphabet.
- Compiled the hymns of Guru Nanak Dev and spread his teachings.

Guru Amar Das (1479-1574)

- Guru Amar Das further institutionalized the free communal kitchen called langar among the Sikhs.
- Guru Amar Das not only preached the equality of people but also tried to foster the idea of women's equality. He tried to liberate women from the practices of *purdah* (wearing a veil) and preached strongly against the practice of *sati* (Hindu wife burning on her husband's funeral pyre).
- There are 869 hymns from Guru Amar Das included in Guru Granth Sahib.



Guru Ram Das (1534-1581)



- Founded the city of Amritsar in 1574.
- The standard Sikh marriage ceremony known as the Anand Karaj is centered on the Lawan, a four stanza hymn composed by Guru Ram Das.
- Spread Sikhism in North India.
- Organized the structure of Sikh society.
- Guru Ram Das stressed the importance of kirtan (hymn singing), which remains an important part of Sikh worship.
- There are 638 hymns from Guru Ram Das included in Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606)

- Compiled the Guru Granth Sahib in 1604.
- Built the Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib).
- Started the practice of *daswandh* (tithe) - contributing one tenth of one's earnings for community purposes.
- Author of *Sukhmani Sahib bani* - the Prayer for Peace.
- First Sikh Guru to be martyred. Guru Arjan Dev was imprisoned and martyred in 1606 by Emperor Jahangir for not amending the Adi Granth, the Sikh holy book to reflect his views. Guru Arjan Dev was made to sit on a scorching iron plate and had boiling sand poured over his body. Guru Arjan Dev tolerated this pain and sat there chanting hymns.
- There are 2312 hymns from Guru Arjan Dev included in Guru Granth Sahib.



Guru Hargobind (1595-1644)



- Transformed the Sikhs by introducing martial arts and weapons for the defense of the masses.
- Guru Hargobind put on two swords - one signifying *miri* (secular power) and other *piri* (spiritual power).
- Built the Akal Takht in 1608 at Amritsar in Punjab.
- He was imprisoned in the fort of Gwalior for one year. When he was released he insisted that his 52 fellow prisoners, who were Rajput kings, should also be set free. To mark this occasion the Sikhs celebrate Diwali (*bandi chod divas*).
- Fought four battles with the Mughal rulers which were forcing people to become Muslims.

Guru Har Rai (1630-1661)

- Continued the military traditions started by his grandfather, Guru Hargobind.
- The Guru made his son, Guru Harkrishan, the next Guru at the age of only five years.
- Defended the integrity of the Guru Granth Sahib by refusing to modify it's words.
- Made Sikhism strong and popular.



Guru Harkrishan (1656-1664)



- Became Guru at the age of five.
- Guru Harkrishan cured the sick during a smallpox epidemic in Delhi.
- Gurdwara Bangla Sahib in New Delhi was constructed in the Guru's memory. This is where the Guru stayed during his visit to Delhi.
- Guru Harkrishan died of smallpox at the age of eight.
- Before Guru Harkrishan died, he nominated his granduncle, Guru Tegh Bahadur, as the next Guru of the Sikhs.

Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675)

- Build the city of Anandpur Sahib.
- Sacrificed his life upholding the "right to freedom of religion". Guru Tegh Bahadur was responsible for saving Kashmiri Hindu pandits who being persecuted by the Mughals, but had to lay down his own life to protect their freedom of religion.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred by Emperor Aurangzeb because he would not become a Muslim. Gurdwara Sis Ganj in Chandani Chowk, New Delhi is located where he was martyred.
- Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib in New Delhi is located where the Guru's body was cremated.



Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708)



- In 1699, Guru Gobind Singh baptized the Sikhs and created the Khalsa (the "Pure"). The Khalsa consists of Sikhs who have been baptized and dedicate themselves to living by the high standards of the Sikh Gurus at all times.
- Instructed the Sikhs to keep the five K's.
- Compiled the 1428 page Dasam Granth Sahib.
- Author of several *banis* (hymns) which Sikhs recite daily: Jaap Sahib and Chaupai.
- Wrote his autobiography, the *Bichitra Natak*.
- Instructed Sikh males to use the last name of Singh (lion) and Sikh females to use the last name Kaur (princess).
- All four of Guru Gobind Singh's sons were martyred by the Mughals.
- He instructed the Sikhs to follow Granth Sahib as the Guru after him.

Guru Granth Sahib

- The Guru Granth Sahib is the holy book of the Sikhs.
- It is the eternal spiritual guide of the Sikhs.
- Compiled by Guru Arjan Dev, it has writings of the Sikh Gurus and other saints.
- The Granth Sahib is kept in all Gurdwaras and in many Sikh houses.
- It contains a total of 5867 hymns in 1430 pages.



Five Sikh Symbols

The Five Ks are the five items of dress and physical appearance given to Sikhs by Guru Gobind Singh when he gathered together the first members of the Khalsa on Baisakhi day in 1699.

Kesh

- Uncut hair, which is kept covered by a distinctive turban. Kesh are a traditional symbol of holiness in India, and the turban is a symbol of leadership.



Kirpan



- A ceremonial sword, symbolizing readiness to defend the defenseless, and defend one's faith against persecution.
- The kirpan is normally worn on a cloth belt called a *gatra*.
- The kirpan exemplifies the warrior character of a Sikh.

Kara

- A steel bracelet, symbolizing strength and integrity.
- Steel is symbolic of strength yet resilient under stress. In the same way, the human soul must become as strong and unbreakable as steel which has been tempered in the furnace.



Kangha



- A wooden comb, symbolizing cleanliness and order.
- The kangha is used to keep the hair clean. As a Sikh combs their hair daily, he or she should also comb their mind with the Guru's wisdom.

Kachhera

- Cotton boxer shorts, symbolizing self-control and chastity; prohibition of adultery.

Historical Gurdwaras

Gurdwaras are Sikh places of worship. The word Gurdwara means "gateway to the guru". Many gurdwaras are associated with significant events in Sikh history.

Harmandir Sahib (Amritsar, Punjab)

- Harmandir Sahib is the most important religious center for the Sikhs.
- It has doors in all four directions indicating that it is open to all people.
- Built by Guru Arjan Dev.
- It is called the Golden Temple because of the gold plating on it.
- Harmandir Sahib is also called Darbar Sahib.



The Akal Takhat (Amritsar, Punjab)



- Faces the Golden Temple in Amritsar.
- The Akal Takhat is the highest seat of justice for Sikhs.
- Founded by Guru Hargobind.
- The Guru used to address all important gatherings - religious, social and political - from the Akal Takhat.
- One of the five Sikh *takhats* (seats of authority).

Keshgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib, Punjab)

- Located where Guru Gobind Singh set up the Khalsa on Baisakhi in 1699.
- One of the five Sikh *takhats* (seats of authority).
- Some of the weapons of Guru Gobind Singh are displayed here.
- The annual Sikh festival of *Holla Mohalla* is celebrated here.



Patna Sahib (Bihar)



- Commemorates the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh.
- Also known as Harmandir Sahib.
- One of the five Sikh *takhats* (seats of authority).
- Built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
- Patna was also honored by visits from Guru Nanak as well as Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Hazur Sahib (Nanded, Maharashtra)

- Located where Guru Gobind Singh died in 1708.
- One of the five Sikh *takhats* (seats of authority).
- Built over the place where Guru Gobind Singh was cremated.
- Some of the sacred relics of Guru Gobind Singh are preserved here.



Damdama Sahib (Sabo ki Talwandi, Punjab)



- Guru Gobind Singh stayed here for nearly a year and prepared the revised and authentic version of the Guru Granth Sahib.
- The hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, were added into the Guru Granth Sahib at this location.
- One of the five Sikh *takhats* (seats of authority).

Sri Nankana Sahib

- Birthplace of Guru Nanak Dev.
- The town of Nankana Sahib was originally known as Talwandi.
- Located in present-day Pakistan.
- Thousands of Sikhs go on a pilgrimage there every year.



Bangla Sahib (New Delhi)

- Dedicated to the memory of Guru Harkrishan who stayed at this place during his travel in Delhi.
- While Guru Harkrishan was staying here, smallpox and cholera broke out in the city. The Guru gave water from a well to the sick. Now a sarovar at this Gurdwara stands whose water is believed to have curative powers.



Sis Ganj Sahib (New Delhi)

- The Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib is built at the site in the Chandni Chowk area of Old Delhi, where Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded on the orders of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb for refusing to convert to Islam.



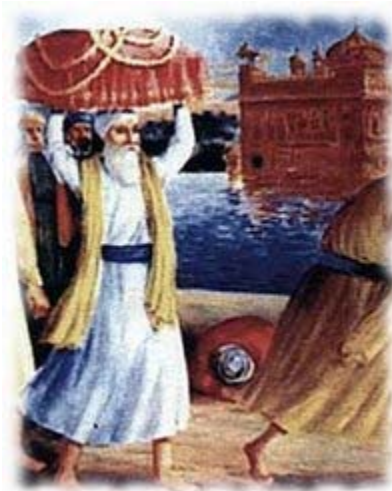
Rakab Ganj Sahib (New Delhi)

- Situated where the body of Guru Tegh Bahadur was cremated after he was martyred at Sis Ganj.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib

The Guru Granth Sahib contains the scriptures of the Sikhs. It is an anthology of prayers and hymns which contain the actual words and verses as uttered by the Sikh Gurus. The Guru Granth Sahib, also known as the Adi Granth, consists of 1430 pages and has 5864 verses. Its contents are referred to as bani or gurbani. An individual hymn is a shabad.

The Granth was compiled by the fifth Sikh guru, Guru Arjan Dev ji. He undertook the enormous task of collecting, compiling, and scrutinizing the hymns and compositions of Guru Nanak and his predecessors. He decided to include not only the hymns of the Gurus but also that of other saints. At the invitation of the Guru, followers of different sects, both Hindu and Muslim, came to the Guru and recited the hymns of their teachers. Guru Arjan chose only those hymns which echoed sentiments he wanted to inculcate in his own community. After the selections were made, the Guru dictated the hymns to Bhai Gurdas ji, who wrote the Granth Sahib.



Having compiled the Granth, the Guru placed it in the newly- built Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar. The first parkash (opening ceremony) was performed in the Golden Temple by Guru Arjan on August 30, 1604. The Guru nominated Bhai Buddha as the custodian of the Granth Sahib. At this time, the Guru bowed before the collection, acknowledging the higher authority of the bani to that personal importance and significance which he possessed as Guru. After this time, he no longer sat at a level above the Granth Sahib, but below it. The Guru also instituted daily public worship at the temple where the Granth was recited all day long to the accompaniment of stringed musical instruments (kirtan).

With the passage of time, the original Granth Sahib passed on from Guru Arjan to Guru Hargobind and then to his grandson, Dhir Mal, who took permanent possession of it. To restore the Granth compiled by Guru Arjan to the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh ji sent some Sikhs to Dhir Mal's descendants, who possessed the original Granth Sahib, and requested for its return. But they refused to part with it and asked the Guru to write his own Granth if he was a real Guru. Therefore, the second version of Guru Granth Sahib was prepared by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706. At Damdama Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh dictated the entire Granth Sahib from his memory to Bhai Mani Singh ji; the Granth Sahib was dictated word by word as it originally was. At this time, Guru Gobind Singh re-edited the Adi Granth to the form in which we find it today. The Guru removed some unauthenticated writings in the Granth and added four hymns in the beginning for evening prayers. Guru Gobind Singh also added several hymns from his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Otherwise, the Granth was left as it was before in the days of Guru Arjan.

Several copies of this Granth were transcribed by hand by Baba Deep Singh ji at Damdama Sahib. It is believed that four copies of the Granth Sahib were prepared; the first one was sent to the Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar, the second to Anandpur, the third to Patna and the fourth was kept by Guru Gobind Singh at Nander.

Guru Gobind Singh ended the line of living Sikh Gurus by raising the Adi Granth to the status of a permanent Guru. Guru Gobind Singh ji transmitted Guru Nanak's divine light into the divine Word and declared that after him, the next Guru would be Guru Granth Sahib. He commanded the Sikhs that it was to be revered as the body and spirit of the ten Gurus:



*Agia bhai akal ki, tabi chalaio panth
Sab sikhian kau hukam hai guru manio granth
Guru granth ji manio pargat guran ki deh
Ja ka hirada sudh hai khoj sabad men leh*

From the Timeless One there came the injunction,
In accordance with which was established the Panth.
To all Sikhs there comes this command:
Acknowledge the Granth as Guru,
For it is the manifest body of the Masters.
Ye whose hearts are pure, Seek Him in the Word. (Ardas)

When the Guruship was passed on, Guru Granth Sahib like the Gurus became the embodiment of Divine Light. It should, therefore, be remembered very clearly that bowing before Guru Granth Sahib as Sikhs, is not bowing before a book, but it is a bowing before the Divine Light or Jot (Guru) which was passed on when the Guruship was conferred upon it. Respect and veneration for Guru Granth does not imply idol worship, but rather respect for a divine message, the ideas and ideals contained in the Sikh scripture. It is the source or a means to the worship of God through His Word, and

not an object of worship in itself. Both the Gurus and the Book deserve the respect which they are accorded because of the bani which they express, the word of divine truth. Bhai Gurdas ji states that "the picture of the Guru is the gurbani" (Bhai Gurdas, Var 24, pauri 11).

Revelation In The Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Granth Sahib is a remarkable storehouse of spiritual knowledge and teachings which does not preach any rites or rituals but stresses meditation on the Name of God; salvation can be obtained by means of regular, persistent and disciplined meditation. Most of the hymns are addressed to God and often describe the devotee's condition: his aspirations and yearning, his agony in separation and his longing to be with the Lord. There are no mythological narratives, although God is described in anthropomorphic terms and the Gurus are not afraid to use the imagery of family relationships to describe the union of God and man.



The subject of Guru Granth Sahib is truth: how to become a 'person of truth', that is, an ideal person or gurmukh. As Guru Nanak states in the Mool Mantar, God is the Ultimate Truth and one has to cultivate those qualities which are associated with Him. Through its teachings, the Granth can enable men and women to lead a purposeful and rewarding life while being members of a society. It seeks universal peace and the good of all mankind. There is not a word in the Guru Granth Sahib that might be derogatory to any other belief or religion. The Guru Granth Sahib also stresses the democratic way of life and equality of all people. It teaches that we are karam yogis, that is we reap what we sow. The emphasis is on moral actions, noble living and working for the welfare of all people.

One of the most distinctive features of the Guru Granth Sahib is that it is the first religious book which contains the writings of persons belonging to different communities, castes, and diverse regions of the country. It incorporates and sanctifies the writings of holy men of different faith. Therefore, the language of the Granth is a mixture of almost all the Aryan languages current in India, yet it is written exclusively in Gurmukhi script. Guru Arjan Dev ji, unlike many other religious leaders, did not believe that there is one particular sacred language in the sense that man can pray to God only in that language.

The Granth Sahib contains 937 hymns of 36 Hindu saints, Muslim sufis and bards. The hymns of these holy men cover a period of six centuries (from the 12th to the 17th century). Regardless of the author, this gurbani has an equal status as the hymns of the Gurus.

Kabir	Muslim weaver	292 hymns
Namdev	Calico printer from Maharashtra	60
Ravi Das	Shoe maker from Uttar Pradesh	41
Trilochan	Brahmin from Maharashtra	4
Dhanna	Cultivator from Rajasthan	4
Sain	Barber from Uttar Pradesh	1
Jaidev	Poet from Bengal	2
Pipa	King from Uttar Pradesh	1
Sur Das	Blind poet	2
Baba Farid	Muslim saint from Punjab	134
Parmanand	Maharashtra	1
Sadhna	Butcher from Sindh	1
Beni		3
Ramanand	Uttar Pradesh	1
Bhikhan	Sufi saint from Uttar Pradesh	2

There are also some hymns from Sikhs during the time of the Gurus, including those from Baba Mardana ji, Baba Sunder ji, Sata Doom, and Rai Balwand. In addition, the Granth Sahib includes some bani from eleven bards (bhats) who came to the court of Guru Arjan in 1580. They were men of wisdom and were much impressed by the personality and the work of the Guru. Their names are Kalashar, Jalap, Kirat, Bhikha, Sal, Mathura, Bal, Bhal, Nal, Gayand, and Harbans. Yet, overall, the majority of bani in the Guru Granth Sahib contains the hymns of the Gurus:

Guru Nanak	974 hymns
Guru Angad Dev	62
Guru Amar Das	907
Guru Ram Das	679
Guru Arjan Dev	2218
Guru Tegh Bahadur	115
Guru Gobind Singh	1

Most of the introductory bani in the Granth Sahib is written by the Sikh Gurus. The Guru Granth Sahib starts with Guru Nanak's composition, Mool Mantar followed by Japji, Rehras (the morning and evening prayer respectively) and Kirtan Sohila, the night prayer. This introductory gurbani occupies the first thirteen pages of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Jap Ji, also called Guru Mantar, was written by Guru Nanak. It occupies about 9 pages and consists of 40 sloks, called pauries of irregular length. The mode of composition implies the presence of a questionnaire and an answer. Jap Ji is followed by Sodar Rehras, another composition by Guru Nanak, although later on additions were made to it by Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev. Sodar is the yearning of the soul for the door of the house of God. Kirtan Sohila follows Sodar and occupies a little over one page. It was also composed by Guru Nanak but has additions by Guru Ram Das and Arjan Dev.

The next portion of the Granth is divided into thirty one sections each according to a particular raga. This portion occupies 1154 pages.

Usage of Ragas

The Gurus considered divine worship through music the best means of attaining a state of bliss. Therefore, each of the hymns in the Guru Granth Sahib is noted with the melody and rhythm (raga) to which it is to be sung or read. There are 31 musical measures (ragas) in the Guru Granth Sahib. The selecting of ragas was carefully made by the Guru. Generally speaking, ragas are composed to suit various moods. Some are appropriate to the morning, others to the evening, some to joy, others to grief. Guru Arjan indicated that faith should produce a balanced outlook, tempering both happiness and sadness. Therefore, the Guru omitted those that aroused passions of any kind. Likewise, certain ragas were rejected for their melancholy.

The basic concept behind the hymns is that kirtan (sacred music), when sung or listened to with devotion and undivided attention, can link the individual's consciousness with God. A mind may become stable and enjoy the peace of His divine presence, as listening to the hymns can exert a powerful influence on the mind and help to establish its communion with God.

Role of the Guru Granth Sahib in Sikh Life

In all gurdwaras and many Sikh homes, the Granth is read every day. No Sikh ceremony is regarded as complete unless it is performed in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. On a daily basis, Sikhs receive a hukam or divine order in the form of a hymn from the Guru Granth Sahib, either in a Gurdwara or at home. The hukam is the first hymn of the holy book from the left hand page when it is opened at random. Similarly, at the end of a service, after the ardas, the Adi Granth is opened at random and a portion is read. Many Sikhs do this daily, regarding the verses as words from God which they will find helpful during the day. This is called vak lao, taking advice.

On special occasions, the Granth Sahib is recited non-stop from cover to cover by a string of readers. This continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib is known as an akhand path. It is regarded as the highest and the noblest ceremony in the Sikh religion, and can be performed on any important occasion. It requires nearly 48 hours to complete the continuous reading. According to Sikh history, the first akhand path was performed by Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, after the death of his wife, Mata Damodri ji. An akhand path was also performed by Baba Deep Singh ji when he pledged before God at Damdama Sahib to sacrifice his life for the protection of human rights.

A saptahak path is a daily reading of Guru Granth Sahib to be completed in seven days. It is sometimes undertaken in private homes as a mark of supplication on special occasions. A sehaj path is a reading of Guru Granth Sahib that can be completed at any length of period beyond seven days.

Guru Granth Sahib ji remains as a permanent unchangeable guide for all Sikhs as a living Guru or Teacher. It is a representation of the undaunted strength of the Sikh community. Guru Arjan Dev preferred a martyr's death to saving his life through making alterations in the hymns as required by Emperor Jahangir. Any Sikh can open the pages of the Guru Granth Sahib and find strength and guidance through His Word: "The Guru is now always with me" (Guru Arjan, Rag Asa)

Vaisakhi



Vaisakhi (also spelled Baisakhi) is the festival which celebrates the founding of the Sikh community known as the Khalsa. It is celebrated on April 14 each year. On Baisakhi day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh summoned Sikhs from all over India to the city of Anandpur Sahib. At this gathering, the Guru called upon Sikhs to uphold their faith and preserve the Sikh religion. Guru Gobind Singh then lifted his sword and asked that anyone prepared to give his life for his faith to come forward. There was a big silence, but the Guru went on repeating his demand. One Sikh finally came forward and followed the Guru into a tent.

Shortly after, the Guru reappeared alone with his sword covered in blood, and asked for a second volunteer. Another Sikh stepped forward and again the Guru took him into the tent, and re-appeared alone with his sword covered with blood. This was repeated until five Sikhs had offered their heads for the Guru. Finally, the Guru emerged from the tent with all five men dressed piously in blue. Guru Gobind Singh called the five Sikhs the *Panj Pyare*, the Five Beloved Ones.

The Panj Pyare were then baptized in a unique ceremony called *pahul*. Guru Gobind Singh prepared amrit (holy water) in a bowl using a short steel sword. Then the Guru's wife, Mata Sundri, added *patashas* (sugar crystals) into the amrit. After completing prayers, Guru Gobind Singh sprinkled the amrit on each of the Panj Pyare. The Guru then knelt before the five and asked them to baptize him as well. The Guru proclaimed that the Panj Pyare would be the embodiment of the Guru himself: "Where there are Panj Pyare, there am I. When the Five meet, they are the holiest of the holy."



The Panj Pyare were the first members of the new Sikh community called the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh gave the Khalsa a unique identity with five distinctive symbols of purity and courage, known today as the Five K's. The Guru gave all Khalsa men the surname of Singh (lion) as a reminder to be courageous. Women took on the surname Kaur (princess) to emphasize dignity. With the distinct Khalsa identity, Guru Gobind

Singh gave all Sikhs the opportunity to live lives of courage, sacrifice, and equality. These Sikhs were to dedicate their lives to the service of others and the pursuit of justice.

Bhai Daya Singh

- First of the Panj Pyare.
- Along with Bhai Dharam Singh, was sent to deliver the *Zafarnamah* to Emperor Aurangzeb.
- Exemplified kindness.



Bhai Dharam Singh

- The second of the Panj Pyare.
- Son of a farmer from Hastinapur, a small town along the river Ganges.
- Accompanied Guru Gobind Singh to Nanded and was with him at the time of his death.
- Exemplified justice and righteousness.

Bhai Mukham Singh

- The third of the Panj Pyare.
- Son of a cloth-printer from Gujarat.
- Practiced martial arts and took part in many battles against the Mughal forces.
- Died in the battle of Chamkaur.
- Exemplified organization.

Bhai Himmat Singh

- The fourth of the Panj Pyare.
- Son of a water-supplier from Jagannathpuri.
- Proved himself as a brave warrior.
- Died in the battle of Chamkaur.
- Exemplified courage.

Bhai Sahib Singh

- The fifth of the Panj Pyare.
- Son of a barber from Bidar, a town in Karnataka.
- Died in the battle of Chamkaur.
- Exemplified majesty.

Important Facts

- Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world.
- Sikhism is a distinct religion with its own unique, divine scriptures and beliefs.
- Sikhism is a 500 year old religion.
- The Sikh religion originated in India.
- There are over 26 million Sikhs worldwide.
- There are over 1 million Sikhs in the United States and Canada.



- Sikhs have lived in North America for over 100 years.
 - Sikhs DO NOT believe in terrorism or hurting innocent people.
 - Sikh men and women cover their heads at all times as an expression of respect to their Gurus.
 - The Sikh turban symbolizes discipline, integrity, humility, and spirituality. The turban is a mandatory part of Sikh faith, not a social custom, or a hat that can be easily taken on or off.
- Most people in North America with turbans are Sikhs.
 - The universal symbol of Sikhism is the *khanda*, the double-edged sword flanked by two daggers (representing worldly and spiritual powers, bound by the oneness of God).
 - The traditional greeting used by Sikhs is "*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh*" which means "The Khalsa belongs to God, Victory belongs to God". Another traditional greeting is "*Sat Sri Akal*" which means "Immortal God is Truth".



Common Sikh Words

Akhand Path

- A continuous reading from beginning to end of the entire Guru Granth Sahib. This is usually accomplished in shifts by a group of readers and takes about two days to finish.

Amrit

- Holy water - a mixture of sugar and water, used in ceremonies.

Anand Karaj

- The anand karaj is the Sikh wedding ceremony. Anand Karaj means "ceremony of bliss."

Ardas

- A special prayer that is done before performing or after undertaking any significant task. Ardas is recited after reading the daily prayers or completion of any religious service.

Bhog

- The ceremony marking the completion of a conclusion of a paath.

Chaur

- Whisk that is ceremonially waved over the Guru Granth Sahib as a symbol of respect.



Diwan

- Congregational worship where Guru Granth Sahib is present.

Giani

- Closest concept to "priest" in Sikhism. It means a person of spiritual knowledge.

Gurbani

- The writings of the Gurus as recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib.

Gurmukhi

- Gurmukhi is the cursive script in which Punjabi is written. The word gurmukhi means "from the Guru's mouth".

Gurpurb

- Celebration of the anniversary of the birth or death of a guru, and of the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Gutka

- A gutka is a book containing a collection of the Sikh daily prayers.



Kirtan

- Devotional singing of the hymns of the Gurus; divine music.

Langar

- The langar is an open kitchen found in all Sikh Gurudwaras which provide free meals after Sikh services. The langar was instituted by Guru Amar Das, and is open to the public. The food served in the Langar is vegetarian in deference to the food restrictions of visitors of other faiths. Participants in the Langar are served while seated on the floor, a tradition emphasizing the equality of all persons.

Nitnem

- The daily prayers that Sikhs are expected to read morning, sunset and bedtime.

Paath

- A reading from the sikh scriptures. Paath may be done alone or in a group with others listening or reciting along.

Panth

- The entire Sikh community.

Ragi

- A musician who sings the hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib in gurdwaras.

Sangat

- Congregation; group of devotees.

Sarovar

- Pool for bathing found at many Gurdwaras.

Sewa

- Service to one's fellow beings.