

Topic

Sikhism:

- Beliefs
- Worship
- Practice



Vaisakhi

Guru Gobind Singh was the last of the ten gurus of the Sikhs and the founder of the Khalsa (a special community of initiated Sikhs who take on the wearing of the 5Ks). Vaisakhi is the festival celebrated by Sikhs to remember the formation of the Khalsa, and celebrate the start of the Sikh New Year.



Sikhism

Beliefs	Sikhism was founded in the Punjab region of India by Guru Nanak who was born in the year 1469. Guru Nanak taught that everyone is equal in the eyes of God. The word Guru means a spiritual guide or teacher. Sikhs believe in one God called Waheguru which means 'Wonderful Lord' or 'Wonderful Teacher'. Waheguru gives life to everything, and all life is part of Waheguru. Many Sikhs today join the Khalsa, which is a special community of initiated Sikhs. It was started by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru. To be part of the Khalsa, Sikhs must take part in the amrit ceremony, where they promise to keep all the rules of their religion and wear the 5 Ks.
Holy Book	The most important Sikh holy book is called the Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru Granth Sahib is a collection of songs, prayers and hymns from the Sikh Gurus and other holy men, as well as teachings from other faiths. Sikhs believe that the Guru Granth Sahib is the word of God, and it is used in all Sikh worship and ceremonies. Sikhs show the Guru Granth Sahib great respect and it is treated as if it is a living person. The Guru Granth Sahib is placed on a throne in the gurdwara called a takht, and is cared for by a Granthi who reads aloud from the book during ceremonies. The Granthi also make sure that the book is covered by cloth when not in use and that it is protected from heat and dust.
Worship	Sikhs worship in a gurdwara. The word gurdwara means 'door to the guru'. The gurdwara brings Sikhs together and supports the Sikh message of equality by offering food, shelter and company to anyone who may need it, regardless of their faith. A gurdwara does not have to be a special building, but it must contain the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book. You can identify a gurdwara by a yellow flag flying outside with the Sikh symbol on it. This is called the Nishan Sahib
Symbol	The Khanda is the symbol of the Sikh faith. It consists of three different types of weapons: -A double edged sword or khanda in the centre. -A round throwing weapon known as a chakkar. -Two single-edged swords called kirpans, crossed either side of the other weapons.
The Khalsa	The amrit ceremony is one of the most important ceremonies in Sikhism. It was started by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, who called for Sikhs to defend their faith against the persecution that was happening to them at the time. Guru Gobind Singh asked for volunteers who were prepared to die for their

How is Guru Nanak celebrated?

To celebrate Guru Nanak Gurpurab, the Sikh community gathers together to take part in a street procession called a nagar kirtan. The Guru Granth Sahib (the Sikh holy book) is carried through the streets on a specially decorated float, Sikhs join together to sing, dance and play musical instruments.
Sikh worship and festivals are followed by the langar. This is a free, vegetarian meal which takes place in the Gurdwara, the Sikh holy building. This meal is offered to everyone, regardless of their faith and is cooked and served by both men and women, with everyone sitting together on the floor to eat. The langar symbolises equality, which was one of the most important teachings of Guru Nanak

Sikhism

Kesh (uncut hair)	Throughout history hair (kesh) has been regarded as a symbol both of holiness and strength. One's hair is part of God's creation. Keeping hair uncut indicates that one is willing to accept God's gift as God intended it. It follows the appearance of Guru Gobind Singh, founder of the Khalsa.
Kara (Steel bracelet)	A symbol of restraint and gentility. A symbol that a Sikh is linked to the Guru. It acts as a reminder that a Sikh should not do anything of which the Guru would not approve. A symbol of God having no beginning or end. A symbol of permanent bonding to the community-being a link in the chain of Khalsa Sikhs (the word for link is 'kari'). The Kara is made of steel, rather than gold or silver, because it is not an ornament.
Kanga (Wooden comb)	This symbolises a clean mind and body; since it keeps the uncut hair neat and tidy. It symbolises the importance of looking after the body which God has created. This does not conflict with the Sikh's aim to move beyond bodily concerns; since the body is one's vehicle for enlightenment one should care for it appropriately.
Kaccha (cotton under garment)	This is a pair of breeches that must not come below the knee. It was a particularly useful garment for Sikh warriors of the 18th and 19th centuries, being very suitable for warfare when riding a horse. It's a symbol of chastity.
Kirpan (Steel sword)	There is no fixed style of Kirpan and it can be anything from a few inches to three feet long. It is kept in a sheath and can be worn over or under clothing. The Kirpan can symbolise: Spirituality The soldier part of the Soldier-Saints Defence of good Defence of the weak The struggle against injustice A metaphor for

Key Words

- Sikhism
- Guru
- Khalsa
- Kirpan
- Kesh
- Kara
- Kanga
- Kaccha



What Are the Sikh Gurus?

Founded in the Punjabi region of India over 500 years ago, one would think the Sikh religion would have more than ten Gurus, who are holy leaders and teachers. Sikhism developed in an area where contact between Muslims and Hindus occurred frequently with periods of cooperation and conflict. Sikhism, while sharing some traits with each, is a completely separate religion that follows a single god but believes that all religions follow this god in their own way. Let's look at how each Guru helped shape Sikhism.

