

Sikhism



What is Sikhism?

Sikhism began over 500 years ago in an area called the Punjab in India. It was founded by a man called Guru Nanak and is based on what he taught people.

There are over 25 million Sikhs all over the world, although most still live in India. Sikhism is the world's fifth most-popular religion.

Sikhs believe in one God who guides and protects them. Sikhs see everybody as an equal. Leading a good life, doing good things and making the right choices are an important part of the Sikh faith.

1

You can tell someone is Sikh by their name. Boys and men are given an extra Sikh name, Singh, which means 'lion'; girls and women have Kaur, which means 'princess', in their name.

2

Sikhs can pray anywhere and at any time (though they often start each day with the morning prayer, japji). They don't have a holy day of the week.

3

The Sikh Holy Book is called the Guru Granth Sahib. All ten living Guru's have contributed and wrote parts and verses of the holy book.



Sikhs often display their commitment to their religion by wearing **the Sikh articles of faith, which are known as the 5 Ks**. They consist of:

1. Kesh (uncut hair) - the most important of the 5 Ks
2. Kangha (comb)
3. Kara (steel bracelet)
4. Kirpan (sword)
5. Kaccha (soldier's shorts).



The **most important Sikh festival, Vaisakhi** (also known as Baisakhi, Vaishakhi, or Vasakhi), marks the Sikh New Year and involves music, dancing and sport. At Vaisakhi Sikhs remember when the Khanda was created and takes place in April. It also celebrates the harvest.

Facts about Sikhism

Sikh temples, called gurdwaras, are built with a large central dome. They have four doors to show that they are open to all people. There are no pictures or statues in the gurdwara. Before Sikhs go to worship at the gurdwara, they must take a bath. To show their respect to God, shoes are removed before they enter and people cover their heads. Children often practise singing hymns or learn to play instruments in their local gurdwara.

The symbol or emblem of Sikhism is known as the Khanda.

The Sikh flag is called the Nishan Sahib and is found outside the gurdwara. The term nishan means 'flag' and sahib is a term of respect. The Nishan Sahib is orange, with a black Khanda symbol on it.

The Sikh holy text, the Guru Granth Sahib, is exactly 1430 pages long in its printed form, and

all the hymns in it are printed in the same order so Sikhs throughout the world can read it in the same way.

Many Sikhs wear a metal bracelet called a kara which helps to remind them of their faith.

The city of Amritsar is very important to Sikh people. Amritsar is situated in the Indian Punjab where Sikhism originated. It houses a **great temple called Harmandir Sahib, or Golden Temple**, and is visited every year by thousands of Sikhs from all over the world. There is a huge sacred pool around the temple and Sikhs bathe in it and call it a "pool of nectar".

Websites:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/topics/zsjpyrd/articles/zkjpkmn>

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TOP TEN FACTS

- Sikhs believe that Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion, received messages from God to teach people how to follow a simple faith.
- Sikhs take their name from the word sikha, meaning disciples. A disciple is someone who follows a teacher or a leader.
- Ek Ongkar, which means God is one, is the most important teaching in the Sikh religion. Sikhs believe that God is a spiritual power, not a person, and should always be in Sikhs' minds. Waheguru simran, meditating on God, is a way to worship.
- Sikhs believe there is one God and everyone is equal.
- After the religious service in the Sikh temple, the gurdwara, a special meal called langar is served to everyone, rich or poor, Sikh or non-Sikh. Everyone eats the meal together, sitting on the floor to show that all people are equal. The meal includes vegetables, rice, salad and kheer, a rice pudding.
- Many of the hymns sung as part of services in the gurdwara were written by the Sikh Gurus.
- Traditionally **Sikhs do not cut any body hair**. Some men don't ever cut their hair (this is known as kesh). They tie it in a topknot called a jura and wear it in a turban, a long length of material that is wound around a cap or the head, to keep it tidy.
- **Some Sikh adult men and women decide to become members of the Sikh community of the Khalsa**, founded by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699. There is an initiation ceremony and the Khalsa follow five rules, known as the 5 Ks.
- **Vaisakhi, the most important Sikh festival**, celebrates the Sikh new year on 13 or 14 April and the foundation of the **Khalsa**.
- The most holy place for Sikhs is the Golden Temple of Amritsar, Harmandir Sahib, in Punjab in India.