

Core Sikh Beliefs

- Sikhism recognizes a single Creator who sustains all people of all faiths.
- Everyone has equal status before God. All positions of authority in Sikh religious and political life are open to both men and women.
- Sikhism considers no place, day or time more auspicious than another. Only the time and place where God is remembered is sacred.
- Sikhism does not have a clergy. With God's grace, all human beings are capable of realizing God.
- Everyone has the sacred duty to make a contribution towards the welfare of humanity. The more fortunate have an obligation to help the less fortunate. All Sikhs must donate ten percent of their income and time to some humanitarian cause.
- Sikhism denounces polytheism, idolatry, superstitions and blind rituals.
- Sikhism emphasizes living in the present as the human life is a precious opportunity to realize the Divine.
- Sikhism encourages literacy, individual growth, hard work, family life and honest living.
- Sikhism seeks to create a world society where all human beings may live as equals without any form of coercion.



Darbar Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple, is located in Amritsar, Punjab. It is the theo-political capital of the Sikhs.

Gurdwara

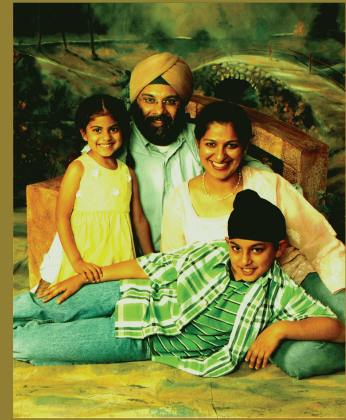
The Gurdwara is the Sikh place of worship where the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture, is installed. All Gurdwaras across the globe support the Sikh institution called the *langar*, which is a free community kitchen open to all. Visitors irrespective of their religion can expect shelter, comfort and food at all Gurdwaras. Since the Sikh faith does not have an ordained clergy, any woman or man from the congregation may lead religious services.

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THE SIKHS

A brief introduction to the beliefs and practices of the Sikhs, the adherents of the fifth-largest world religion.



Sikhs are a people sharing common religious, social and political institutions. Twenty-five million people worldwide identify themselves as adherents of the Sikh faith, making it the fifth largest world-religion. Sikhism teaches that all human beings are equal and can realize the divine within them through devotion to God, truthful living and service to humanity. The Sikh faith was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and shaped by his nine successors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in South Asia.



Sikh Gurus

For Sikhs, the "Guru" is an enlightener who awakens human beings to the full experience of God. Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru, spoke forcefully against political tyranny, social injustice, religious hypocrisy, empty rituals and superstitions. The succeeding Gurus gave a concrete identity to institutions started by Guru Nanak. The last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666- 1708), did not appoint a human successor. Instead, he transferred his authority jointly to two institutions: the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the Sikh scripture) and the Guru Khalsa Panth (the community of committed Sikh believers initiated through a special ceremony).

Sikh Scripture Guru Granth Sahib

The Sikh Gurus based their teachings on a definitive revelation from God, which forms the basis of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh scripture. The *Guru Granth Sahib* teaches through divine poetry that is set to a formal system of Sikh classical music. The hymns of the *Guru Granth Sahib* provide broad guidelines for harmonious living. In the compilation of the Sikh scripture, the Gurus included the hymns of many non-Sikh spiritual guides from diverse religious traditions, making the *Guru Granth Sahib* truly universal.



A Sikh reading from the Guru Granth Sahib. A royal whisk in hand is majestically oscillated over the scripture as a reminder that God's revelation is sovereign.

Order of Khalsa Guru Khalsa Panth

In 1699, the tenth Sikh Guru founded the Order of the Khalsa to establish a society dedicated in the face of all odds to practicing the essential Sikh values: truthfulness, trust, loyalty, productive labor, sharing, integrity and spirituality. Members of the Khalsa are expected to devote themselves to the service of society. They are famous for defending the oppressed and empowering the downtrodden. Historically, the Khalsa has provided leadership to the Sikh community. All Sikhs initiated into the Order of the Khalsa can be identified by their articles of faith.



Clockwise: Kirpan, Kanga and Kara are some of the Sikh articles of faith.



Articles of Faith Kakaar

Sikhs display their commitment to their beliefs by wearing the Sikh articles of faith. Sikhs do not cut their hair (*kesh*). Sikh men cover their hair with a turban, while Sikh women may either wear a turban or a scarf. The *kirpan*, which resembles a sword and symbolizes the protection of the weak by Sikhs, is suspended near one's waist with a shoulder strap. The *kanga*, which is similar to a small comb and affirms its bearer's commitment to society, is tucked neatly in one's uncut hair. The *kachhera*, which is worn much like under-shorts, reminds a Sikh to restrain from overindulgence. The *kara* is worn around one's wrist like a bracelet and its circular shape reminds a Sikh that the Creator is infinite—without a beginning and without an end (see images above). All of these articles of faith have deep spiritual meaning. These articles, however, cannot be reduced to symbols and must be worn in their full form.