

UNIT 2 - INTRODUCTION TO SIKHISM

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UNIT 2 - BASICS OF SIKHISM .

1. Sikhism is the youngest of the World religions. Its history dates back to 1469.
2. Its founder Guru Nanak Dev was born in a village called Talwandi, now known as Nankana Sahib in Pakistan, in 1469.
3. The Sikhs have ten Gurus. It is believed that they all had same soul though they had different bodies, and that it was Guru Nanak Dev's spirit which passed on into his nine successors.
4. The Sikhs call God as 'Waheguru', meaning that God is great. Their common salutation is "Sat Siri Akal" (God is supreme and is immortal). Some Sikhs say, "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh" (God belongs to the Khalsa and God is invincible).
5. Guru Granth Sahib is the holy book of the Sikhs. It is believed that the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh bestowed upon the Granth the title of the Guru.
6. The Sikhs worship only one Almighty God in his abstract form. They are not allowed to worship any idols, images or photographs.
7. According to the Sikh belief, God is the eternal truth; he is beyond fear, enmity and death. He is unborn and is self illuminated. He himself is the creator, preserver and destroyer.

The Sikhs believe that all existence is controlled by one omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient Lord called by different names: Ishwar, Jehovah, Allah and Waheguru.

8. Who is a Sikh?

A Sikh is a person who believes in one God and in the teachings of the ten Sikh Gurus; he believes in the sovereignty of Guru Granth Sahib and respects all other scriptures, prophets and religions. A Sikh also believes in the importance and necessity of baptism as initiated by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.

9. The Khalsa:

A baptised Sikh is called Khalsa, who must observe and follow strict code of conduct.

He must-

- @. worship only one Almighty God,
- a. recite five prescribed banis (hymns) everyday
- b. learn Punjabi language and read Guru Granth Sahib,
- c. wear and observe the significance of five Ks: kesh -uncut hair, kanga-a small comb, kara-a stainless steel bracelet, kirpan - a sword and kuchcha - an underwear.
- d. live a truthful life and treat all humans as equal

He must not-

- @. cut body hair
- a. eat kosher meat,
- b. smoke, take drugs or intoxicants,
- c. have faith in black magic, superstitions, charms and rituals

10. The nitnem (Daily prayers)

The banis which must be recited everyday are:

The bani	The author	Where is it recorded
Japji Sahib	Guru Nanak Dev	pages 1-8 Guru Granth Sahib
Jap Sahib	Guru Gobind Singh	pages 1-10 Dasam Granth
Swayas	Guru Gobind Singh	pages 13-15 Dasam Granth
Rehras	Guru Nanak	pages 8-12 Guru Granth Sahib
	Guru Amardas	

Kirtan Sohila	Guru Amardas Guru Arjan Guru Nanak Guru Ramdas Guru Arjan	pages 12-13 Guru Granth Sahib
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11. Rules, Concepts and Commandments:

A Sikh lives by the rules made for him by the ten Gurus. The fundamental rules, concepts and the commandments are as follows:

1. **Worship of God**

- @. Worship only God and no one else.
- a. Make worship and prayer a part of your daily life.
- b. Do not make images of God, worship him in his abstract form.

2. **Truthful life and honest living**

- @. Work hard and work with honesty.
- a. Lead a truthful life.
- b. Share your earnings with others.
- c. Help the needy and the poor.
- d. Love your children.
- e. Respect your parents.
- f. Do not harm others.

3. **Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man**

- @. Believe that everyone is the child of God.
- a. Believe that all human-beings are equal.
- b. Do not discriminate on the basis of colour, religion, cast and creed.

4. **Rituals and Superstitions.**

- @. Do not believe in any rituals and superstitions.
- a. Do not believe in the worship of images, tombs and graves.

5. **Social and Family Guidelines**

- @. Do not take alcohol, tobacco and drugs.
- a. Do not eat halal meat.
- b. Do not eat any food which inflames the passions.
- c. Be true to your parents and children.
- d. Do not steal.
- e. Do not gamble.
- f. Love and respect your guests.

6. **The belief**

- @. Believe in the oneness of the ten Gurus.
- a. Believe in the sovereignty of Guru Granth Sahib
- b. Believe in the spiritual authority of the five takhats.

12. **The Sikh Takhats:**

Five historical Sikh gurdwaras have been declared as the Sikh Takhats (thrones). These gurdwaras are vested with the power and authority to regulate the religious life of the Sikh nation. The head priests of these shrines constitute a Sikh parliament and they are empowered with executive, legislative and judicial powers regarding the Sikh religious issues. All Sikhs are under the authority of the five takhats.

The takhats are as follows:

The name of the Shrine
 Takhat Akal Takhat
 Takhat Patna Sahib
 Takhat Hazoor Sahib
 Takhat Kesgarh Sahib
 Takhat Damdama Sahib

The names of the Guru its relates to:

Founded by Guru Hargobind
 The birth place of Guru Gobind Singh
 The place where Guru Gobind Singh breathed his last.
 The birth place of the Khalsa
 The place where Guru Gobind Singh composed the second version of Guru Granth Sahib.

All the five takhats relate to the two Gurus who were Saint-soldiers.

13. A few details regarding the Sikh Gurus are given below:

Name	Age	Age at Guruship	No. of Children	Name of town founded	Contribution to Sikh religion
Guru Nanak	70	38	2	Kartarpur	The founder
Guru Angad	48	35	3	Khadur	Panjabi Grammar, health
Guru Amardas	95	73	4	Goindwal	Seva
Guru Ramdas	47	40	3	Amritsar	Kirtan & katha
Guru Arjan	43	18	1	Taran Taran	Adi Granth, Harimandir Sahib
Guru Hargobind	49	11	6	Kiratpur	Miri & Piri
Guru Harrai	31	14	2	xxxxx	Zoos & Hospitals
Guru Harkrishen	8	5	x	xxxxx	Schools, education
Guru Tegh Bahadur	54	43	1	Anandpur	Jiwanmukt, living for others
Guru Gobind Singh	42	9	4	Paonta Sahib	Amrit, Sacrifice

Some points to remember:

1. Out of the 10 Gurus, only 3 Gurus lived beyond 50 years of age.
2. All Gurus were married and had children except Guru Harkrishen who died at the young age of 8.
3. Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind, Guru Harrai, Guru Harkrishen and Guru Gobind Singh became Gurus when they were either children or were in their teens. Guru Amardas became Guru when he was in his seventies.
4. The period of Guruship ranges from 3 years (Guru Harkrishen) to 38 years (Guru Hargobind).
5. Eight out of ten Gurus founded new towns and set up new gurdwaras and missionary centres there.
6. The relationship of the Gurus was as follows:
 - a. Guru Angad to Guru Nanak, a follower
 - b. Guru Amardas to Guru Angad, a follower
 - c. Guru Ramdas to Guru Amardas, son-in-law
 - d. Guru Arjan to Guru Ramdas, youngest son
 - e. Guru Hargobind to Guru Arjan, only son
 - f. Guru Harrai to Guru Hargobind, grandson
 - g. Guru Harkrishen to Guru Harrai, younger son
 - h. Guru Tegh Bahadur to Guru Harkrishen, grand-uncle
 - h. Guru Gobind Singh to Guru Tegh Bahadur, only son.

14. The main sources of Sikh material to understand the religion in depth are:

- a. Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book
- a. Dasm Granth, the holy book of the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh
- b. Janam Sakhis, the life stories of the Sikh Gurus
- c. Hukamnama, the letter written by the Sikh Gurus
- d. Varan Bhai Gurdas, the hymns composed by Bhai Gurdas I & II, contemporaries of Guru Arjan and Guru Gobind Singh Ji respectively.

15. The Sikh prayers and their timings:

The prayers are classified as: Individual and Collective prayers. The Individual prayers are Morning prayers: Jap ji, Jap Sahib and Sudha Swayas Evening prayer: Rehras Sahib Night time prayer: Kirtan Sohila

The Congregational prayer is: Morning prayer: Asa di var(composed by Guru Nanak Dev)

In addition to the above prayers a Sikh normally reads the following: At the end of every service or prayer: Anand Sahib (composed by Guru Amardas) At any special occasion or otherwise: Sukhmani Sahib (composed by Guru Arjan) At the time of marriage: Lavan (composed by Guru Ramdas) At the time of cremation: Kirtan Sohila

16. The Sikh Festivals:

The Sikhs celebrate both religious and social festivals. The religious festivals are however called Gurbpurbs.

The important Sikh festival calendar is as follows:

Month	Gurpurb	Other festivals
Jan-Feb	Birthday Guru Harrai Birthday of Guru Harrai	Maghi, Basant
Feb-March	xxxxxxx	Hola Mohalla
March-April	Birthday Guru Angad	Baisakhi
April-May	Birthday Guru Arjan Birthday Guru Tegh Bahadur	
May-June	Birthday Guru Amardas Martyrdom day Guru Arjan	
June-July	Birthday Guru Hargobind	
July-August	Birthday Guru Harkrishen	
August-September	xxxxxxxxxxx	Rakhsa Bandan
September-October	Birthday Guru Ramdas Installation Guru Granth Sahib	
October-November	Birthday Guru Nanak	Diwali
November-December	Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur	
December-January	Birthday Guru Gobind Singh	Lohri

17. The Sikh Holy Book

@. The Sikh holy book is called Guru Granth Sahib.

- a. The first version of the scripture was composed by Guru Arjan in 1604. He called it Pothi Sahib and installed it in the Harimandir, now called Golden Temple, in 1604.
- b. The Pothi Sahib, later known as Adi Granth contained hymns of:
 0. First five Gurus
 - i. 15 Saints (both Muslims and Hindus, of lower caste and high caste)
 - ii. 17 Bhats.
 - iii. Three Sikhs: Baba Sundar, Mardan and Satta & Balwand
- c. Guru Gobind Singh included in this version the hymns of the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur and gave it the status of a living Guru. He called it Guru Granth Sahib.
- d. The completed version has 1430 pages.
- e. The languages of the Granth are: Panjabi, Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Lehndi and Dakhni.
- f. It is believed that all hymns included in the Granth are the word of God, spoken through the Sikh Gurus and other saints and the holy men. Guru Arjan had selected only those hymns for inclusion in the Granth which had come true to the Sikh doctrine.
- g. Every Sikh must show proper respect to the Granth when he/she comes in its presence. Taking off the shoes before entering the room where the Granth is installed, bowing to it on entry, keeping the head covered in its presence and sitting with folded hands and closed eyes are some of the gestures which must be observed.

18. The Sikh Shrine:

@. A Sikh shrine is called a Gurdwara, meaning the doorway to the house of God.

- a. The first Gurdwara was built by Guru Nanak Dev at Kartarpur.
- b. The Sikh Gurdwaras must have a religious flag, called Nishan Sahib in the front of the Gurdwara.
- c. Guru Granth is placed on the far side centre of the hall.
- d. There should be no photographs of the Gurus or others in the hall where Guru Granth Sahib is installed.
- e. Gurdwaras normally have two halls/rooms. The main hall where Guru Granth Sahib is placed and the second hall where the community kitchen is served.
- f. All entrants must take off their shoes, wash their feet and cover their heads before entering the main hall.
- g. All Sikh services end with the distribution of parshad (sweet pudding) and langar (dinner/lunch).