

# Learning the Sikh Way



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Ten Gurus



# FOREWORD

The harmonious development of our Multi-Faith and Multi-Racial society requires it to be actively nurtured by its many commitments. The Sikh Community in Britain has a proud record of contribution to the promotion of mutual understanding and respect. Countless teachers and their pupils have over the years benefited from the generosity of the Sikh Community. We have been invited into Sikh homes and gurdwaras thus experiencing at first hand their commitment to the promotion of understanding and mutual respect. Those of us involved in education are also indebted to organisations like the S.M. Society U.K. and the Sikh Cultural Society of G.B. for a range of publications which brought the Sikh way of life to those who were willing to find out about it.

This book-*Learning the Sikh Way*, continues that tradition. It is designed to provide an accessible, authentic and accurate portrayal of the Sikh Religious and cultural tradition to pupils in the middle years of schooling. It will undoubtedly also serve as a very effective primer for many adults. I hope that this first publication from the British Sikh Education Council will be one of many.

I have reason to be grateful to all those Sikh organisations and individuals who have contributed to the development of multi-faith religious education in Inner-London and I am honoured to have been invited to write a foreword to this book. I commend it to pupils, teachers and all those who want to learn about their fellow British Sikh citizens in our multi-faith and multi-cultural society.

KARL D'CRUZ  
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London Boroughs of Lewisham and Greenwich  
(Formerly Head of I.L.E.A.R.E. Teachers Centre)

ੴ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਵਾਗਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥  
**SIKH MISSIONARY SOCIETY, U. K. (Regd)**  
8-10 Featherstone Road, Southall, UB25AA

The Sikh Missionary Society was the brain child of three eminent postgraduate literates, namely Gurbachan Singh Sidhu, Gurbakhsh Singh and Kirpal Singh Rai, who were really passionate about providing an insight into the Sikh Religion, culture and history to wider audience, especially the younger generation. Their idea of providing reading material free of charge is being followed even today.

The Society continues to produce literature in English and Punjabi and this enables people of other faiths to learn about Sikhism. In addition to this, the Society participates in other activities such as arranging lectures on Sikhism, teaching of Punjabi language, Gurbani recitation, Akhand and Sehaj Paths, AnandKarj as well as registration of marriages.

For the past 38 years the Society has also been organising highly successful annual Gurmat Camps for young Sikhs to promote community living in the Gurmat way as part of wider society, respecting others and being good citizens.

With the completion of the Guru Angad Dev Complex, a new National Resource Centre has been opened where prayer books, books on Sikhism in Punjabi and English, GCSE and A Level Punjabi books, greeting cards, CDs, DVDs and a wide range of Sikh Artifacts are available. The Sikh Missionary Society uses the latest IT tools in order to do Sikhi Parchar and has its own website as well as Email ID.

The membership of the Society is open to all those who are sympathetic to the cause of the Sikh Faith and agree with the aims and objectives of the Society by completing the prescribed membership form.

Bahadur Singh  
General Secretary  
The Sikh Missionary Society, UK (Regd)  
December 2015

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Many books on Sikhism have appeared in recent past in response to the requirements of the Agreed Syllabi on Religious Education in School. Many of these books have been written either by non-Sikh authors or non-practising Sikhs who failed to give an authentic and acceptable view of Sikh Ideals and Traditions. It was therefore, felt that text books on the Sikh faith should be made available by writers who are well-versed in Sikh faith, history, culture and traditions.

We are greatly indebted to S. Khushwant Singh and the Sikh Missionary Society U.K. for their permission for the use of pictures from their publications. Many thanks are due to Ramgarhia Sabha Southall and Singh Sabha Gurdwara Southall for allowing the use of pictures from their exhibitions. Our sincere thanks are also due to Pictorial Chart Education Trust West London and to ICOREC of Manchester Polytechnic for letting us use pictures from their open libraries.

In particular, we thank the Sikh Missionary Society U.K. for their encouragement, active support and generosity.

December 1990

Dr. Kanwaljit Kaur O.B.E.  
British Sikh Education Council

I gratefully acknowledge the initial input to the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Published in December 1990 by the much-remembered late colleagues:-

Dr. Gobind Singh Mansukhani  
S. Balwant Singh Grewal  
S. Harcharan Singh Dua  
S. Yadwinder Singh

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# CHAPTER 1

## GURU NANAK - THE FOUNDER

Sikhism was started in india. Now a days we find Sikhs living all over the world. The male Sikhs are easily recognized by their turbans and beards and Sikh females by their dress and long un-cut hair, sometimes tied neatly in a bun at a back of the head. The Sikhs are very hard working people and are engaged in a variety of professions such as medicine, engineering, teaching, business, police, army and construction industries.

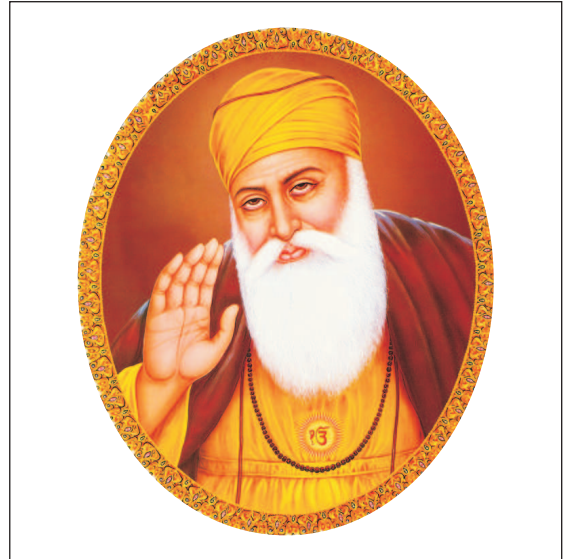
Let us look at their religious beliefs, places of worship, ceremonies, festivals and family life in some detail.

### GURU NANAK (1469-1539)

Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469 A.D. at Talwandi, since called Nankana Sahib (now in Pakistan). His father was Mehta Kalu and mother Tripta. He had an older sister, Nanaki. Nanak was a very intelligent boy who thought a lot about God and people. He was always ready to help the poor and he kept his mother very busy cooking and serving meals to poor hungry people, whom he regularly invited to his house.



*The birthplace of Guru Nanak (now in Pakistan)*



*GURU NANAK : The founder of Sikhism*

Nanak's father was an officer in the local revenue department but he wanted Nanak to become a good business man. He gave Nanak twenty Indian rupees (which was a lot of money in those days) to start a business, but Nanak spent the money on feeding a large number of hungry people. According to him the most profitable business was to look after God's people.



*Guru Nanak Dev Ji with Bala Mardana*



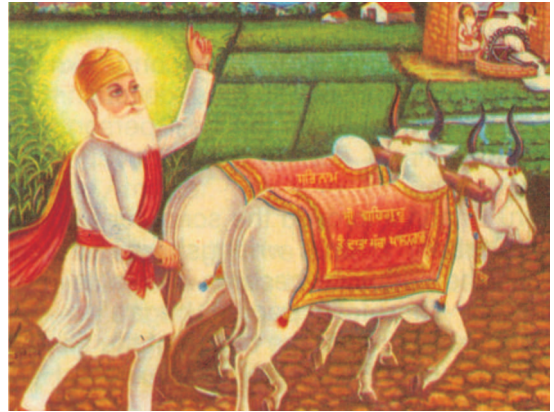
*Guru Nanak feeding the hungry*



Guru Nanak serving at Nawab's grocery store

Guru Nanak worked as a storekeeper for many years. He used to spend a large part of his wages on feeding the poor and hungry.

When Guru Nanak was 30, God's message was revealed to him and he decided to travel all around to preach God's message of love and peace to people.



Guru Nanak farming his fields at KARTARPUR



Hindus and Muslims dividing Guru Nanak's shroud

Guru Nanak taught us that there is one God, who is the True and Ultimate Reality. God is the Creator of this Universe and is everywhere. God is not born and does not die, is without form or visible shape.

Guru took four different long journeys to spread his message about God's Truth and the way to lead a truthful life. Many people liked his preachings and called him 'Guru'. The word Guru is used for a spiritual teacher. Guru Nanak's followers came to be known as 'Sikhs'.

Guru Nanak, after 20 years of travels, settled down at Kartarpur and worked as a farmer. He held his congregations in his home and taught his followers the Sikh way of life.

Guru Nanak was very popular both with Hindus and Muslims. He was called 'Guru' by the Hindus and a 'Peer' (religious leader) by the Muslims. When he passed away at the age of 70, the Hindus and Muslim followers divided his shroud into two. The Hindus cremated their half and the Muslims buried the other half.

### His Teachings

Guru Nanak taught us that all human beings, black or white, high or low, rich or poor, men or women are equal before God. He said:

'There is neither  
Hindu nor Muslim'

It means that we are all God's people. In God's eyes the labels such as Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jew or Buddhist do not mean anything. It is the behavior and good deeds of people that are important.

### TASKS

1. Who was the founder of Sikh faith?
2. What is the most profitable business according to Guru Nanak?
3. a) How many long Journeys did Guru Nanak take?  
b) What was the purpose of his journeys?
4. Write Guru Nanak's teaching about God.
5. Guru Nanak said, "There is neither Hindu nor Muslim". What did he mean by that?
6. Write the story of Guru Nanak feeding the hungry.
7. Draw a picture of Guru Nanak feeding the hungry or as a farmer.



# CHAPTER 2

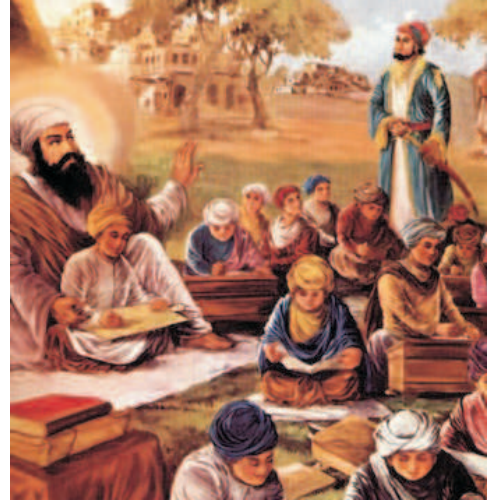
## THE TEN GURUS

The life and teaching of Guru Nanak, the founder, have been described earlier. This chapter covers the lives and teachings of the next nine Gurus.

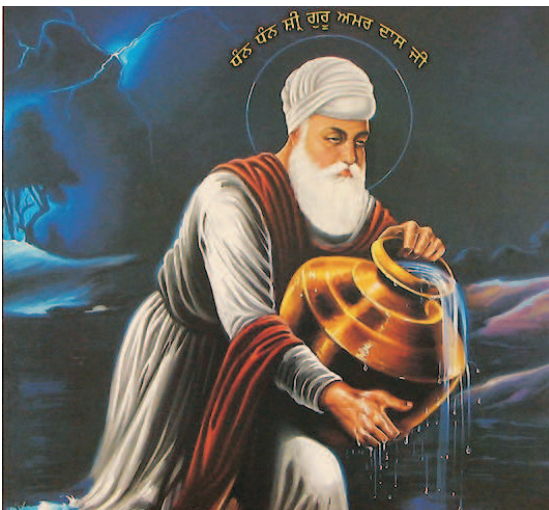
### GURU ANGAD DEV (1539-1552)

Guru Angad Dev was the second Sikh Guru. He had served Guru Nanak with great devotion. So Guru Nanak considered him to be the best person to carry out his mission.

Guru Angad improved the script for writing Panjabi and all 'Gurbani' (Gurus writings) was written in Panjabi. Thus the scripture became available to the common people. Therefore people began to call the script 'Gurmukhi' i.e. from the mouth of the Guru. Guru Angad himself taught Panjabi to his followers. He also encouraged physical recreation.



*Guru Angad teaching a Panjabi class*



*Guru Amar Dass doing sewa. He is carrying a pitcher of water for bathing Guru Angad Dev.*

### GURU AMAR DAS (1552-1574)

Guru Amar Das, the third Guru, believed in and preached the equality of humanity. People of lower class were having difficulty in getting drinking water. He had a deep well dug at Goindwal. The water of this well could be reached by going down 84 steps. People of all castes and classes could draw water from the same well, thus allowing people of low and high caste to mix together. The Guru ordered that anyone who wished to see him must first sit with common people and share the same food from 'langer' (free kitchen). When Akbar, the mighty Moghul Emperor came to visit the Guru he shared the 'langer' with common people.

Guru Amar Das sent many men and women missionaries far and wide to spread the teachings of Guru Nanak.

### GURU RAM DAS (1574-1581)

He built the sacred pool of immortality around which he founded the present city of Amritsar. Traders, businessmen and craftsmen were encouraged to settle in Amritsar which soon grew to become a big trading and religious centre.



*Guru Ram Das carrying bricks to build the sacred pool at Amritsar*

## GURU ARJAN DEV (1581-1606)



*Guru Arjan Dev compiling Guru Granth Sahib. Bhai Gurdas is taking dictation.*

Guru Arjan Dev became the fifth Guru in 1581. He wrote more hymns than any other Guru. His most well known 'Bani' (composition) is Sukhmani (the Peace Hymns).

He collected the hymns of all previous Gurus and those of many Hindu and Muslim saints which he compiled into one large volume, now known as the 'Adi Granth'.

He built the 'Harmandir' (house of God), also known as the Golden Temple, in the middle of the pool of Immortality at Amritsar.

He also opened a lepers home at Tarn Taran, which is about 10 miles from Amritsar.

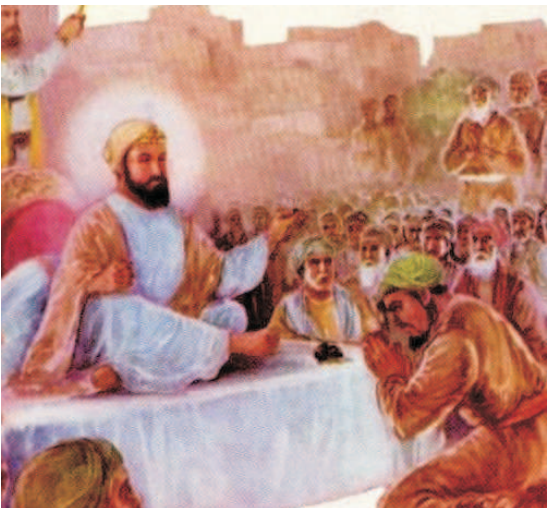
He was tortured to death by the orders of the then Emperor Jahangir because of his beliefs and teachings of respect for all religions and equality of all human beings and thus he became the first Sikh martyr.

## GURU HAR GOBIND (1606-1644)

After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, his eleven year old son Hargobind became the next Guru. He combined the spiritual and temporal powers into one authority. From then on the Sikh community was organised to defend the weak and the helpless. The Guru trained his followers in military arts and encouraged them to use the sword only to protect the weak and the poor. This made the Emperor angry and the Guru was imprisoned in Gwalior fort. But soon people began to gather near the prison to have an occasional sight of the Guru. The Emperor thought it best to release him. But the Guru refused to come out of the prison until other captives were released. These were 52 imprisoned innocent rulers. That is why Guru Hargobind is known as Bandi Chhor (liberator.)



*Guru Har Gobind (Bandi Chhor). Leaving Gwalior prison with 52 captive rulers.*



*Guru Har Rai working in his free dispensary.*

## GURU HAR RAI (1644-1661)

The seventh Guru Har Rai was very gentle and kind hearted. He opened a hospital where medicines and treatment were free. Even Prince Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan was healed by his medicine.





*Guru Har Krishan tending the sick stricken with smallpox epidemic in Delhi*

### **GURU HAR KRISHAN (1661-1664)**

He became the eighth Guru at the age of five. He displayed great spiritual leadership and courage. He continued serving and healing the sick during a smallpox epidemic in Delhi at risk to his life. Before his own death at the age of eight, he nominated Tegh Bahadur as his successor.

### **GURU TEGH BAHADUR (1664-1675)**

Guru Tegh Bahadur spent many years in meditation and reached sublime heights before he was appointed the ninth Guru. He travelled far and wide to preach the message of Sikhism.

The persecution of the people by the Emperor Aurangzeb led the Hindu brahmins from Kashmir to appeal to Guru Tegh Bahadur to save them from forced conversion to Islam. Afterwards the Guru was executed for his beliefs in the basic human right of people to practise their own religion. He became the second Guru martyr.



*Hindu brahmins from Kashmir, appealing to Guru Tegh Bahadur for help*



*Guru Gobind Singh: The creator of Khalsa*

### **GURU GOBIND SINGH (1666-1708)**

Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom had far reaching effects. His son Gobind Rai created a community of people called Khalsa. He first baptised the five Sikhs who offered to give their lives for their Guru and faith. Then he asked them in return to initiate him. Thus Gobind Rai became Gobind Singh. Many men and women were then initiated. The Guru called them 'Khalsa' and asked them to wear five things called the five K's as outward symbols of their faith. (See page 23 for the five Sikh symbols).

The creation of Khalsa was a big step forward in the Sikh movement. The fearless Khalsa fought many battles to defend themselves against mighty Moghul armies who were far superior in numbers and equipment. His two older sons died fighting at Chamkaur and the younger two were bricked up alive in a wall at Sirhind because they refused to give up their faith.

The Guru declared that after him only the 'Adi Granth' would be the Guru of the Sikhs. He was thus the last Sikh Guru in human form.



## TASKS

There are 20 phrases below in the questions list. Select the answers from the answer list down below and write down the correct answer against each phrase.

## QUESTION LIST

1. Taught Panjabi
2. Died fighting at Chamkaur
3. Founded the city of Amritsar
4. Declared the 'Adi Granth' to be Guru
5. First to train the Sikhs in military arts.
6. Khalsa was created by
7. Preached equality of humanity
8. Who were bricked alive in a wall.
9. Built Golden Temple
10. Last Guru in human form
11. Started the system of langer
13. Compiled 'Adi Granth'
14. Opened hospital
15. Emperor Akbar visited him
16. Combined the religious and political powers
17. Founder of Sikhism
18. Died while serving the smallpox patients
19. Bandi Chhor Guru
20. Gave his life for human rights and freedom of worship

## ANSWER LIST

Guru Amar Das                      Guru Angad Dev  
Two elder sons of G. Gobind Singh  
Two younger sons of G. Gobind Singh  
Guru Har Krishan                      Guru Arjan  
Guru Nanak                      Guru Gobind Singh  
Guru Har Rai                      Guru Hargobind  
Guru Tegh Bahadur                      Guru Ram Das



*The Ten Gurus*

## CHAPTER 3

### THE SIKHS

The followers of the ten Gurus, as mentioned in the first chapter, came to be known as 'Sikhs'. Sikh means a learner or disciple. Sikhism spread rapidly all over India.

A Sikh is one who believes and follows the teachings of the ten Gurus. These teachings are contained in Guru Granth Sahib and other Sikh scriptures. A pious Sikh works hard to live up to the principles, ideals and codes of conduct as given in the sacred writings.

Many Sikhs emigrated to other countries in the 20th century. About a million and half Sikhs have settled outside India.



*A Sikh regiment*



*Modern Sikh farmer on his tractor*

#### Sikhs in Public Life

Sikhs are well-known for their many qualities. They are very hardworking and are good farmers. They are honest, resourceful and brave and have joined the army and police services in India and many other countries. Besides, many of them are doctors, teachers, civil servants and craftsmen.

#### TASKS

1. What does the word 'Sikh' Mean?
2. How many Sikhs are settled outside India?
3. Do you know of any Sikh pupils in your school or neighbourhood?  
(a) Find their full names.  
(b) Ask them what their parents do for a living.
4. Why do you think many Sikhs join the army or police.
5. Draw the picture of a Sikh, with a turban.



*Colonel Harjit Singh Sajjan Gets Canadian Military's Highest Recognition*



# CHAPTER 4

## GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The Guru Granth Sahib (previously known as the Adi Granth) is the Sikh holy scripture. The fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, collected all the sacred writings of the first five Gurus and also those of many Hindu and Muslim saints whose views were in accord with the Sikh teachings. He compiled these into one large volume known as the 'Adi Granth'. It is written in Panjabi script and contains 1430 pages.

Later on, the tenth Guru Gobind Singh added the writings of his father, the ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur. He declared that there would be no more Gurus in human form after his death. The Sikhs would recognise 'Adi Granth' as their Guru. Therefore it is called Guru Granth Sahib and the Sikhs respect it as they would a living Guru.

Guru Granth Sahib begins with 'Mool Mantar' which contains Guru Nanak's description of God.

The hymns from Guru Granth Sahib contain the philosophy of Sikhism. These teach us the love of God and mankind: service to God, Guru and community: equality of man and woman and respect and tolerance for other religious.



*Guru Granth Sahib*



*Guru Gobind Singh declaring Guru Granth Sahib as the Guru of the Sikhs*

The Gurus teachings also forbid Sikhs from worshipping idols, fasting and performing meaningless rituals which were very common practices in India at that time. The Guru attached great importance to a simple family life.

The Sikhs do not worship Guru Granth Sahib but they worship and revere the 'Word of God' revealed through the sacred hymns. Guru Granth Sahib is central to all Sikh ceremonies and festivals.

The Sikhs have great devotion for Guru Granth Sahib. It is placed on a 'palki' (decorated seat) which is kept on a 'takhat' (raised platform) at a prominent position in the gurdwara hall. It is covered in richly embroidered clothes called 'romalas'. Above it, almost at the ceiling level, is a colorful 'chandni' (canopy).

Every day Guru Granth Sahib is installed ceremoniously and a hymn is read from a page opened at random. This is called 'hukam' or order of the day. This whole process is called 'parkash'. The 'ragees' are professional singers who sing 'kirtan' i.e. hymns in praise of the Lord.





A woman reading from Guru Granth Sahib

A 'granthi is appointed to perform all ceremonies and other duties. S/he reads from Guru Granth Sahib and conducts prayers. During singing of hymns s/he sits behind Guru Granth Sahib and waves a 'chauri' occasionally, with respect. A 'chauri' is made from fine synthetic hair embedded into a wooden or metal handle. The chandni and chauri are symbols of authority.

After evening prayers the Guru Granth Sahib is ceremoniously closed and taken to its place or rest. This is called 'sukh-asan'.

A continuous reading of Guru Granth Sahib from beginning to end by a relay of readers is called 'akhand path'. It usually takes about 48 hours and is done on special occasions such as births, weddings, moving to a new home or on Guru's special days.

### THE BASIC BELIEF

ੴ IK ONKAAR	ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ SAT NAAM	ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖ KARTA PURKH
ਨਿਰ ਭਉ NIR BHAU	ਨਿਰ ਵੈਰੁ NIR VAIR	ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ AKAAL MOORAT
ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ AJOONI SAIBHANG	ਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ GUR PARSAAD	

This is the **MOOL MANTAR**, the basic belief of the SIKHS. It is the opening verse of the Guru Granth Sahib and every Sikh is expected to recite it daily. Here is the english translation.

<b>IK ONKAAR</b>	There is one and only ONE GOD
<b>SAT NAAM</b>	Truth is his name
<b>KARTA PURKH</b>	The Creator
<b>NIR BHAU</b>	Without fear
<b>NIR VAIR</b>	Without hate
<b>AKAAL MOORAT</b>	Immortal without form
<b>AJOONI</b>	Beyond birth and death
<b>SAIBHANG</b>	Self illuminated (the Enlightener)
<b>GUR PARSAAD</b>	Realised by the kindness of the TRUE GURU.

### TASKS

1. Name the most holy scripture of the Sikhs.
2. Give the original name of Guru Granth Sahib.
3. 'Mool Mantar' is the opening verse of Guru Granth Sahib. How does this describe God?
4. In which language is Guru Granth Sahib written?
5. It is said that the Sikhs do not worship the Guru Granth Sahib. What do they worship?
6. What is 'hukam'? How is it read?
7. Write the meaning of the following words;

- i 'takhat'
- ii 'parkash'
- iii 'palki'
- iv 'sukh-asan'
- v 'chandni'
- vi 'chauri'



A Lady waving 'Chauri'

# CHAPTER 5

## GURDWARA

The word 'gurdwara' means way to the Guru. It is a Sikh place of worship. Guru Nanak held the very first prayer meeting at his home in Kartarpur and thereafter any place where the Guru stayed and held a religious gathering became known as a gurdwara. Later, gurdwaras were built at important Sikh historical places in memory that had occurred there. Probably the most important gurdwara is called Harmandir Sahib better known as the Golden Temple.

Other important historical gurdwaras were built at Anandpur where the Khalsa was Revealed, Damdama Sahib where Guru Gobind Singh took rest and added Guru Tegh Bahadur's writings to the final version of Guru Gobind Singh, Patna Sahib the birth place of Guru Gobind Singh, and Hazoor Sahib at Nander where the tenth Guru was cremated. There are many others but they are too numerous to mention.

Gurdwaras have been built all over the world where there is a Sikh population. In Great Britain alone there are over two hundred gurdwaras. A gurdwara not only serves as a place for worship and singing of hymns but also serves as a centre to promote Sikh culture and knowledge of Sikh history.



*A gurdwara in West London*



*Prayer Hall in a Gurdwara*

Rooms are set aside in gurdwara buildings for libraries to promote the teaching of Panjabi, religious education, music and physical activities. The gurdwara provides religious and community service.

'Nishan sahib' (Sikh flag) flies high on every Sikh gurdwara. The gurdwara building consists of two main halls, a prayer hall and a dining hall.

### PRAYER HALL

Guru Granth Sahib is the focal point of a prayer hall and is placed in a prominent position. As a mark of respect to the Guru, everyone must take off shoes and cover one's head when entering the prayer hall. Then one walks down towards the altar and bows, touching the forehead to the ground. Generally a token offering of cash is made. One then sits on the carpeted floor facing the 'palki' (altar) upon which the Guru Granth Sahib is placed. It is a sign of disrespect to sit with your back or soles of your feet pointing towards the Guru's direction. Men and women generally sit apart but this is not a hard and fast rule.

Worship takes the form of hymn singing, readings from the Guru Granth Sahib or related religious text. It is normal practice for a Gurdwara to employ a 'granthi' (a learned Sikh) to recite scriptures or perform religious ceremonies. 'kirtan' is the singing of hymns in praise of the Lord and is usually performed by professional singers called 'ragees'. If a granthi or a ragee is not available, any able member of the congregation may lead the service.





People often use the gatherings to discuss political and social issues affecting the Sikhs. This enables the Sikh community to be aware of relevant events.

All religions gatherings are concluded by reciting an 'ardas'-the main Sikh prayer seeking the Guru's blessing and a random reading known as a 'hukam' from the Guru Granth Sahib. The 'hukam' is regarded as 'order of the day' to be followed by the congregation. 'karah parshad' (a sweet pudding made of flour and sugar) is then distributed to the congregation.

## THE DINING HALL

The dining hall is open all day. 'langar' (free food) is served there. The food is made and distributed by volunteers. All people are expected to eat in the same place. This served to remind us that people of all castes and classes are to be treated equally. The langer is run by donations from the public and voluntary labour. Food that is served is strictly vegetarian and all are welcomed to eat there regardless of caste, creed, colour or social status.

The gurdwara is open to people of all religions and cultures. Visits are encouraged.

A gurdwara does not have to be in a special building, it can be set up in any place where the Guru Granth Sahib is present.



*karah parshad is being distributed after 'ardas'*



*SEWA: langer is being prepared*



*SEWA: Serving the langar*



*SEWA: Cleaning dishes*

## TASKS

1. a) What is the Sikh place of worship called?  
b) What does this mean?
2. Why must the Visitor's remove shoes and cover their heads before entering the prayer hall?
3. Describe how a Sikh would enter a gurdwara and show respect to Guru Granth Sahib?
4. What are the duties of a granthi?
5. Why is 'langar' (free kitchen) so important in Sikhism?
6. Match the following words against the phrases written opposite:

sewa  
palki  
karah parshad  
ardas  
langer

free kitchen  
sacramental pudding  
prayer  
voluntary service  
the alter



# CHAPTER 6

## THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

The Harmandir Sahib (The Temple of God) is considered one of the most important Sikh gurdwaras. It was built during the time of the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev in the middle of the 'Pool of immortality'. The foundation stone of Harmandir was laid by a Muslim saint Mian Mir in 1588 A.D. On completion of the gurdwara building Guru Arjan Dev installed the Sikh scripture (later to be renamed Guru Granth Sahib). In 1803 Maharaja Ranjit Singh decided to cover the dome of the Harmandir Sahib with gold leaf: hence it is also known as 'The Golden Temple'.

The Harmandir Sahib is not only a place of worship but also a rallying centre for Sikh solidarity. It is the heritage of the Sikh people gathered in their five hundred year old history. Many legends are associated with various spots in the gurdwara grounds. The sacred pool is said to have great healing powers. The gurdwara symbolises the history, thought, literature and folklore of the Sikh people.



*Mian Mir (a Muslim saint) laying the foundation stone of Golden Temple.*

But probably the second most important building in the complex is Akal Takhat. It faces the Harmandir Sahib. Built in 1609 by the sixth Guru it has been the nerve centre of Sikhism ever since. All orders affecting the Sikh community as a whole are issued from here. The Akal Takhat has been used for holding courts and Sikh congregations in the days of the Gurus. The Akal



*Devotees coming out of Harmandir Sahib to have a drop of water from Sacred Pool*

The Harmandir Sahib is itself a part of a very large complex. Some of the other buildings are Guru ka langar (free kitchen), Guru Ramdas Niwas (a free hostel for visitors), Baba Atal (a nine story tower built in memory of Atal Rai who died at the age of nine). He was the son of the sixth Guru. There are many others built in memory of certain events or to store the huge resources of the gurdwara.



*A family having dip in sacred pool*

Takhat has been attacked and pulled down several times in its history. In earlier times it was destroyed by Muslim raiders and recently Akal Takhat and many other buildings were destroyed in the Indian Army attack in 1984.



Artwork in gold trim on the ceiling of Harmandir Sahib



A view of Guru's langar being served

## TASKS

1. Why Harmandir Sahib is called the Golden Temple?  
What does it mean?
2. a) In which city is the Harmandir Sahib built?  
b) Who built it?
3. Who laid the foundation stone of the Harmandir Sahib?
4. What facilities are available for the visitors to the Harmandir Sahib?
5. What is the importance of Akal Takhat to the Sikhs?



The Golden Temple



Akal Takhat (the seat of Sikh Authority)



# CHAPTER 7

## BIRTH OF KHALSA

In 1699 the Sikhs were preparing as usual to gather at Anandpur Sahib to see Guru Gobind Rai (as he was then known) and celebrate Baisakhi (a holy day and a fair). The Guru sent messages all over India that there would be special celebrations on this occasion. Therefore the Sikhs gathered in thousands at Anandpur.



*The tenth master asking for the head of a Sikh*

On the Baisakhi day 30th March, 1699 the Guru wore a special saffron coloured robe with a blue sash as waist-band and held a long sword at his side. He welcomed the Sikhs and praised them for their devotion. Then he drew his sword and declared "I want the head of a Sikh who is prepared to give life for Faith and Guru".

There was a complete hush for sometime and people were amazed and scared. Then they saw a Sikh named Daya Ram bowing before the Guru and offering his life. The Guru took him to nearby tent. People heard a thud and the Guru re-appeared, his sword apparently dripping blood.

The Guru repeated his demand four more times and four more persons offered themselves. The congregation saw each of them being taken away into the tent.

After some time the Guru and the five Sikhs re-appeared. The five had the same dress as the Guru. The Guru explained that this was a test of their courage and willingness to die for their faith and the Guru. The Sikhs had passed the test. He called the five chosen ones as Panj Piaray (five beloved ones). He then asked for an iron bowl, 'KHANDA' (the two edged sword), and water to be brought.



*Guru Gobind Singh with Panj Piaray (five beloved ones)*

Guru Gobind Rai performed the 'amrit' ceremony (initiation to the khalsa). He poured water into the iron bowl and began stirring it with Khanda. His wife added some 'patashas' (puffed sugar cakes). At the same time he recited five prayers. Now amrit was ready, amrit means elixir.

The Guru gave each of them five palmfuls of amrit to drink, sprinkled amrit five times onto their eyes and hair. Each time the Guru said "say khalsa belongs to God and victory be to God", and they so repeated. The Guru announced, "They have become 'khalsa' (literally meaning the pure ones)". He called them panj piaray (five beloved ones). He explained the khalsa code of conduct called 'Rehat'. They were to take solemn vows.

Thus the nation of khalsa was born. Then strangely enough, the Guru knelt down before the panj piaray and asked to be initiated by them, and this they did. Guru Gobind Rai became Guru Gobind Singh. He bestowed upon panj piaray the same status as that of Guru, an example of democracy without parallel in history.

The Guru invited all to join khalsa. Thousands of men and women took amrit. The title of Singh (lion) was given to men and Kaur (princess) to women.



*Guru Gobind Singh preparing amrit: His wife is adding patashas, symbolic of sweetness and humanity*



*A woman taking amrit*

These days Amrit ceremony can be performed at any place or time where any five practising Sikhs who themselves had taken Amrit can organise it. Young boys and girls are encouraged to take Amrit when they understand and promise to keep the vows. These are:

i) Always wear five symbols as uniform of Khalsa.

These symbols are called 5 K's. These are:

KESH (hair never to be trimmed) KANGHA (wooden comb) to tidy the Kesh. KARA (steel bangle) to restrain from doing bad deeds. KACHH (special Sikh style shorts) and KIRPAN (sword): to be used as a last resort to defend the weak.

- ii) Recite five sacred prayers daily.
- iii) Give up all caste and class differences.
- iv) Never do the four forbidden acts.

These are:

- a) Never cut hair
- b) Never use tobacco, alcohol or other harmful drugs.
- c) Never indulge in adultery, (no sex except with husband/wife).
- d) Never eat halal (meat of animal killed slowly by any ritual).

Writing about the ideals of the khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru says,



"Khalsa is one who nourishes the poor  
Khalsa is one who destroys oppressors  
Khalsa is one who recites the Name  
Khalsa is one who rises above the evil  
Khalsa is one who is blessed with God's  
presence"



## TASKS

1. What does the word 'khalsa' mean? Who are the people known as 'khalsa'?
2. Name the town where khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh.
3. What method did Guru Gobind Singh use to test the courage and willingness of the Sikhs to die for their faith?
4. What does the phrase 'panj piaray' mean?
5. What is 'Amrit' Describe the amrit ceremony.
6. Match the names of 5K's below against their meanings given opposite.

- |           |                       |
|-----------|-----------------------|
| 1. Kesh   | a) steel bangle       |
| 2. Kara   | b) sword              |
| 3. Kachh  | c) wooden comb        |
| 4. Kirpan | d) uncut hair         |
| 5. Kangha | e) The Sikh underwear |



*Birth place of Khalsa Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib (Sri Anandpur Sahib)*



# CHAPTER 8

## SIKH FESTIVALS

Sikh festivals are occasions for Sikhs to rededicate themselves to their faith. A 'gurpurab'-Guru's day is a festival connected with some important events in Guru's Life. The gurpurabs are celebrated to remember events in the Sikh calendar, and to offer personal commitment to Sikh beliefs. On these occasions they join in mass prayers and sometimes organise processions. They make offerings in cash and kind for charitable causes, and to improve the services in the gurdwara. In addition to this they participate in 'SEWA' i.e. voluntary service. Sewa in 'Guru ka langar' (free community kitchen) and sharing food on this occasion is considered very important.

Even martyrdom/death anniversaries of the Gurus are not the occasions to express grief but are festivals to inspire the faithful and remind them of their history and the value of sacrifice for good cause.

People of various other faiths are also invited to these celebrations to give them a view of the Sikh faith and way of life.

### BAISAKHI (VAISAKHI)

Baisakhi is a New Year Festival in the Sikh calendar. Khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh on this day by performing the amrit ceremony. Traditionally, on this day which usually falls on 14th April, 'nishan sahib' The Sikh flag is replaced by a new one. A service in the open compound is held, led by 'panj piaray'. The flag post is taken down and 'chola' (the flag cloth) is removed and the flag post is cleaned and washed. It is covered with a new 'chola' and re-hoisted. The ceremony is completed by the ardas. The whole scene is very inspiring.



*The Nishan Sahib is being rehoisted after renewal of 'chola'*



*A Baisakhi procession in progress in Leicester*

In common with other festivals, 'akhand path' (continuous reading of Guru Granth Sahib for 48 hours) is arranged to start two days earlier and 'bhog' (completion ceremony) takes place on the morning of Baisakhi. This is followed by the singing of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib. Later, learned preachers give talks on the importance of Baisakhi. Amrit ceremony is performed at most places for those ready to take amrit.

Competitions are held in sports, martial arts, poetry and essay writing on the festival theme. In addition the Sikh men, women and children take part in 'sewa' voluntary service in langar which stays open throughout the three days for all visitors.

## Bandi Chhor

Bandi Chhor Gurburab falls on the same day as the Hindu Diwali. On this day Guru Hargobind arrived Amritsar after his release from Gwalior Jail. He had also got 52 princes freed from prison. That is why this festival is very important for the residents of Amritsar. The Harmandir Sahib complex is illuminated and wonderful displays of fireworks are held. Priceless historic treasures and weapons used by the Gurus are put on display.

## GURU NANAK'S BIRTHDAY

This is celebrated by the Sikhs as 'Founder's Day'. This is the day after the night of full moon in November. The akhand path starts two days earlier. In the Punjab and many other towns of India, the festival is celebrated with great spirit. The gurdwaras, houses, and shops are lit with candles. Children have new clothes and have fun with fire crackers. Special processions are held along important routes led by panj piaray and Guru Granth Sahib in beautifully decorated 'palki'. The school children join in with school bands. All along the route the masses sing hymns and young people give displays of martial arts.

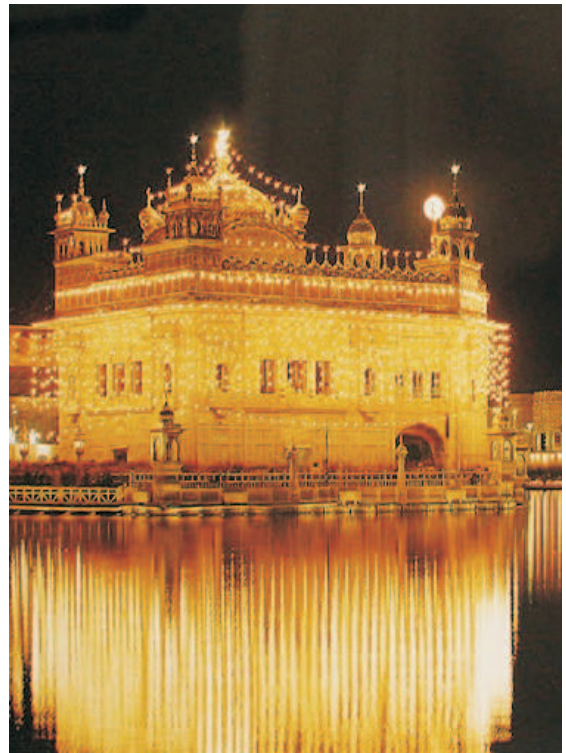
Special celebrations are held at gurdwaras of Nankana Sahib (birth place of Guru Nanak) and Punja Sahib, both in Pakistan. Processions also take place in some towns in the United Kingdom.

## GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S MARTYRDOM ANNIVERSARY

This festival also falls in November. The Sikhs celebrate it in memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur who sacrificed his life for the religious freedom of another faith. To commemorate this day, the Sikhs in very large numbers gather together particularly in Gurdwara Sis Ganj in Delhi, where the Guru was beheaded by the orders of the Moghul Emperor.

## TASKS

1. What does the word 'gurburab' mean?
2. Why was Guru Tegh Bahadur martyred?
3. What is 'nishan sahib'? Describe how it is changed every year?
4. Why is the Sixth Guru Har Gobind as Bandi Chhor (Liberator)?
5. What is 'akhand path'? How is it conducted?
6. What is the importance of Baisakhi to Sikhs?



*Bandi Chhor celebrations Harmandir Sahib illumination*



*Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib (Delhi)*



# CHAPTER 9

## SIKH CEREMONIES

There are special ceremonies for events like birth, initiation, marriage and death in a Sikh family. The idea behind them is to seek blessings of God and to renew the spirit of devotion and service.

All Sikh ceremonies are held in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib and include singing of shabads (hymns), a formal prayer (ardas) suitable to the occasion, (hukam) a random reading from the Guru Granth Sahib and distribution of karah parshad (sacred pudding) made from flour, butter, sugar and water. Langar is provided for all the guests.

### THE NAMING CEREMONY

After the birth of a child, the mother and the child, when in good health, go to the gurdwara with their relatives and friends for the naming ceremony. The granthi or a senior member of the congregation stirs water and sugar crystals in a bowl with a 'khanda' placed in front of the Guru Granth Sahib while reading the 'Mool Mantar' and the first five verses of the 'Japji Sahib'. A few drops of this water are then put into the child's mouth and the remaining is given to the mother to drink. Shabads (hymns) are recited or sung to bless the child.

Then 'ardas' is recited and the 'hukam' read. The child's name is chosen to begin with the first letter of the 'hukam'. The title of Singh (lion) is given to the male and Kaur (princess) to the female child. For example if the first letter is 'R', the child may be named Ranjit Singh in case of a boy, or Ranjit Kaur in case of a girl.

Karah parshad is distributed to the congregation. The use of caste or surname in addition to one's personal name is discouraged.



*Granthi performing the ceremony*

### DUSTAR BANDI

A very important and exciting event in the life of a Sikh boy comes when he starts tying the turban. Sometimes the family will have a special function to celebrate the occasion. It is called dustar bandi. He is seated in front of Guru Granth Sahib. An elder relation ties the turban on his head. The granthi explains why he must keep uncut hair and wear a turban. Prayers are said to invoke Guru's blessings on the boy. (See photo page 29.)

### INITIATION CEREMONY/BAPTISM/AMRIT

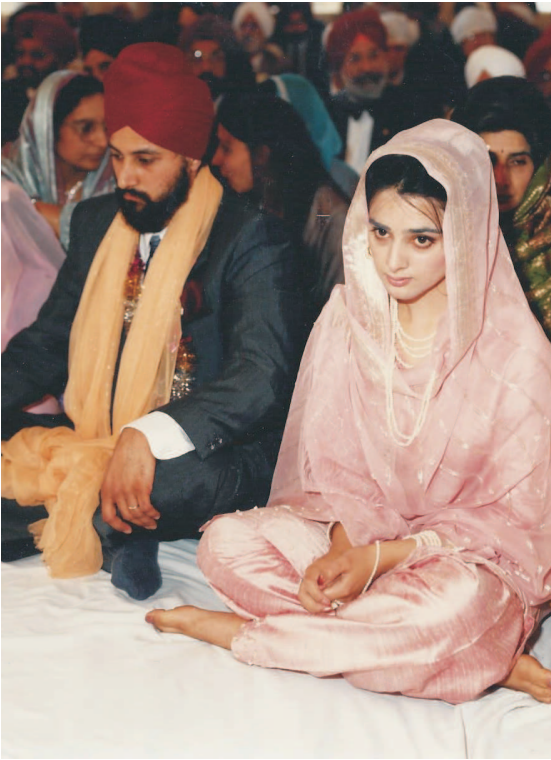
Amrit is the initiation ceremony. It is necessary for any non-Sikh who wishes to become a Sikh. Those who are born to Sikh parents are also encouraged to take amrit

Usually the amrit ceremony is organised on Baisakhi day. Only the persons, both males and females, who understand the khalsa code of conduct and are willing to take the vows are offered amrit.

The candidate for amrit must wear the 5 K's and a turban (for a male or scarf (for a female). For details of the ceremony see Chapter 7 on birth of Khalsa.



*Amrit being prepared*



*The couple - Guru Granth Sahib before wedding*

## **MARRIAGE CEREMONY/ANAND KARAJ**

The Sikh marriage is called 'Anand Karaj' which means the ceremony of joy. The Sikh wedding is held in the morning, either in a gurdwara or in any suitable place.

The bridegroom wears fine clothes. He looks like a prince. He usually has a plume pinned to his turban and wears a specially woven set of garlands around his turban. In old times, he would be riding on a horse with his 'baraat' (party of friends and relations) following him.

The baraat is formally received by the relatives and friends of the bride. This is the 'milni' ceremony. The parents and close relatives of the couple garland each other in a spirit of mutual goodwill. After light refreshments, they all move to the gurdwara hall and sit, after showing usual respects to Guru Granth Sahib. The ragees would be singing the joyful hymns of the occasion.

The bride sits alongside the bridegroom facing the Guru Granth Sahib. A short prayer is said in which only the couple and their parents take part. The wedding ceremony begins when the ragees sing the hymn of 'Palla'. Palla is the bridegroom's scarf. The bride's father gives the palla into the bride's hand to hold it firmly. This is symbolic of the link between the couple.

This is followed by 'lavan', the wedding hymn. It consists of four verses. The first verse is recited by the granthi while the couple sits. Then the ragees sing the same verse with music while the couple walk gracefully, clockwise around the Guru Granth Sahib, the bride following the bridegroom. Similarly the remaining three verses are recited.

Six verses of 'Anand sahib' (the hymns of joy) are then sung followed by ardas and distribution of karah parshad. Arrangements for lunch are traditionally made by the bride's parents.



*The couple walking around Guru Granth Sahib (LAVAN)*



## DEATH CEREMONY

Death is an occasion of grief in any society. According to Sikh teachings, we should bear the loss with courage and accept it as the will of God.

The Sikhs cremate their dead. In India the weather is too hot and arrangements for freezing are not common. Therefore, the body is cremated within hours of death. In Great Britain, it takes longer because a crematorium has to be booked. On the day of cremation, the body is washed and dressed in clean clothes. It is brought home for the family and friends to pay their last respects. Then they go to the crematorium in a procession or motorcade.

At the crematorium, the giani and the people present recite 'Kirtan Sohila'. This is followed by an ardas to seek peace for the soul. The next day, the ashes are collected and scattered into a river or sea.

The final religious ceremony is called the 'bhog' i.e. the completion of the journey of life. Usually the complete reading of Guru Granth Sahib would have been organised. The last five pages are read at the bhog. The ragees sing kirtan. This is followed by an ardas to seek Lord's forgiveness for any sins committed during this life and for the soul's salvation from the cycle of birth and death.

If it is the father who has died, it is common practice to offer a turban to the eldest male child of the family. He accepts it as a mark of responsibility to be the head of the family. The relatives of the departed person give donations to charities on this occasion.

## TASKS

1. How is a Sikh child named?
2. Other than the religious ceremony, what is the important difference in the method of naming a child born in Sikh or Christian family?
3. Describe a Sikh marriage?
4. Do the Sikhs cremate or bury their dead?
5. How many times do the couple go round the Guru Granth Sahib to complete the wedding ceremony?
6. What is the name of the Sikh marriage hymn which is sung when the couple go round Guru Granth Sahib?
7. What is dustar bandi?



*Celebrated Anniversary of Parkash of Guru Granth Sahib*

# CHAPTER 10

## THE SIKH HOME LAND

Punjab literally means the land of five rivers namely Jehlum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Satluj. In 1947 when Pakistan was formed, the Punjab was divided into two parts one of which lies in present day India and the other in Pakistan. It is the Indian half that is generally referred to as the Sikh homeland. About 60 percent of the present population of Punjab is Sikh. The Punjab is often referred to as the granary or bread basket of India. This is mainly due to the honest and hard working Sikh farmers. It is the most prosperous Indian state and stands as a symbol to Sikh achievements. Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been a decline in that prosperity due to various political reasons.

Sikhs are a hardworking and tough people and are well known for their courage and loyalty. Traditionally, they love been exemplary farmers and soldiers but many young Sikhs are turning to professions such as medicine, engineering or teaching to name but a few. Their favourite traditional sports are hockey, cricket and wrestling.

Sikhs love to celebrate. Therefore it is, not a surprise that they are fond of music and dancing. 'bhangra' which is becoming increasingly popular in the West originated in the Punjab. 'Gidha' is the traditional folk dance for women.



Map of Punjab (India)



BHANGRA (Traditional folk dance of Punjab)



Gidha: Panjabi women's folk dance

### TASKS

1. What is the name of the area which may be called the Sikh homeland?
2. What is the common occupation of the Sikhs?
3. Name the favorite sports of the Sikhs.
4. What are the popular dances of the Sikh youth?
5. Why is Punjab referred to as 'bread basket' of India?
6. What does the word 'Punjab' mean?



# CHAPTER 11

## SIKH SYMBOLS

The Sikh men and women wear five symbols which can be called uniform of their faith. The names of these symbols begin with the letter K, so they are commonly called 5 K's.

1. KESH (hair) Sikhs do not cut hair. A Sikh male ties his long hair neatly in a bun at the top of the head (Joora) and covers it with a turban, which is called 'dustar' or 'pug'. The Sikh female may keep her hair loose, plaited or tie in a bun at the back of her neck and cover it with a scarf. Some women also tie their hair like men and cover it with a small 'dustar'. Uncut hair is the natural order of God.

The British Parliament passed an Act to exempt turban-wearing followers of the Sikh religion from the requirement to wear a crash-helmet when riding a motor-cycle.



Sikh symbols

✧ ✧ ✧ ✧

1. In section 32 of the Road Traffic Act 1972 there shall be inserted after subsection (2) the following new subsection.  
 "(2A) A requirement imposed under this section (where ever made) shall not apply to any follower of the Sikh religion while he is wearing a turban."  
 ✧ ✧ ✧ ✧  
 Extract from Moror-Cycle Crash Helmets (Religious Exemption) Act, 1976

2. KANGHA (comb). A small wooden comb is worn in the hair. The Sikhs are asked to clean the hair both in the morning and at bed time. It represents cleanliness.

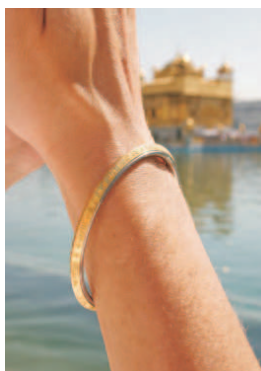
2. KARA, an iron or steel bracelet that binds the Sikh to God and reminds him/her duty to do the right deeds.

4. KACHH (shorts) ensure agility and freedom of movement and reminds Sikhs of sexual purity. The Sikhs are forbidden sex outside marriage.

5. KIRPAN (sword). It is symbolic of God's supreme power and also reminds Sikhs of their duty to defend the weak.



A Sikh boy combing his hair with Kangha



The Sikh Bangle

### (EK-ONKAR) ੴ

The Guru Granth Sahib opens with the words (Ek-Onkar). In simple words it means "One God". See page 10.

Throughout the world, the gurdwaras and Sikh organizations use this symbol on their letter heads and other documents. Quite often the greeting and invitation cards also bear this symbol.

This has become very popular sign and the Sikhs wear it in front of their turbans or jackets. It is a very artistic sikh artefact.

## THE KHANDA

The 'Khanda ' is a symbol which stands for God's Universal and Creative power. In it's centre is a double-edged sword, symbol of the primal and almighty power of the Creator. The 'chakra' or the circle is a symbol of continuity. The two swords on the outside are symbols of the spiritual (piri) and political (miri) balance in the universe.



*Khanda*

## TASKS

1. Draw the five K's and name them.
2. Why must a Sikh not cut or trim his hair?
3. Turban is not mentioned as one of the five K's. Why must Sikh men wear a turban?
4. By law, the Sikhs while wearing turban are allowed to ride a motor cycle without a crash helmet. Why do you think this exemption was given?
5. What problems a Sikh might face if he keeps all symbols of his faith?





# CHAPTER 12

## SIKH IN UNITED KINGDOM

Sikhs came to Britain in their thousands in the early sixties. They are a tough and hard working community and they accepted very demanding jobs to begin with. Later on more qualified Sikhs followed. These were professionals i.e. teachers, engineers, doctors etc. Then many more arrived when Idi Amin, the dictator of Uganda forced the Asians to leave that country in 1972.

The Sikhs are now seen in all walks of British life. Many of them are engineers, craftsmen, teachers. They are in civil service and legal professions. Many are self employed in small businesses. Some of the Sikhs have joined police ranks and thousands of them are in construction industries.

They keep their Punjabi culture in the forefront. Punjabi folk songs and 'bhangra' and 'gidha' dances are very popular in Britain. There are many music bands and Bhangra groups who are always in demand at joyous and festive occasions.



*Dr Indarjit Singh welcoming Prince Charles in the Albert Hall for the celebrations of the 300th birth of the Khalsa in 1999.*

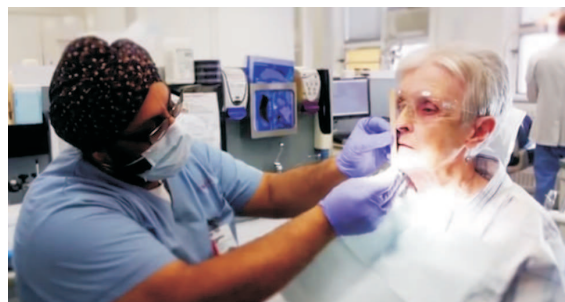


*Lord (Indarjit) Singh of Wimbledon CBE. Enters the House of Lords as the first turbaned Sikh to sit in the UK parliament (2011).*

There are now well over two hundred gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship) in the United Kingdom. Besides the religious services, the gurdwaras also make arrangements for the teaching of the Panjabi language. In many towns there are one or more Sikh community centres. There is a large concentration of Sikhs in West London, particularly in Southall which is known as the little

Punjab. Also there are large numbers (of Sikhs) in Birmingham, Coventry, Walsall, Wolverhampton, Slough and Gravesend.

Sikhs engage themselves in many youth activities. They are fond of hockey and 'kabbadi' (a Punjabi team game). Gurdwaras in various towns organise sports tournaments every year. They also hold Sikh youth camps where they learn about their religion, history and culture and discuss their social and educational needs.



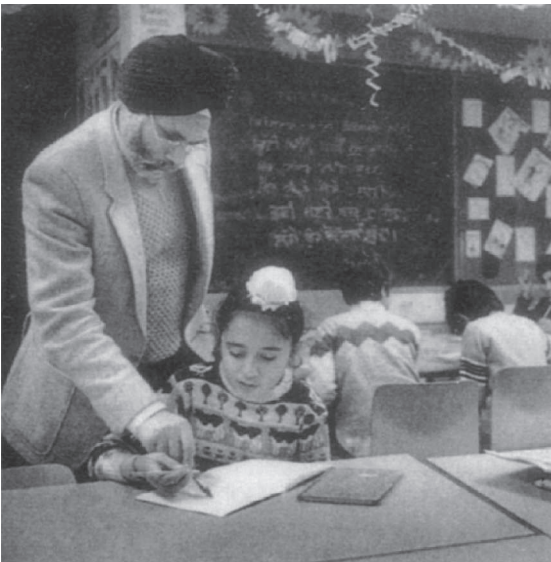
*A Sikh dentist in his surgery*



*Sikh policeman in U.K.*



*A Sikh cloth merchant conducting his business*



*A Sikh teacher taking class*



*His Worship Harcharan Singh Wadhwa, Mayor of Brent (1989)*



*A Khalsa Hockey team (picture: courtesy of Singh Sabha, London E. Barking)*



*Hon. Joe Richard M.P., awarding prizes to the winners at Shaheedi Sports Tournament organised annually by Singh Sabha, London E., Barking*





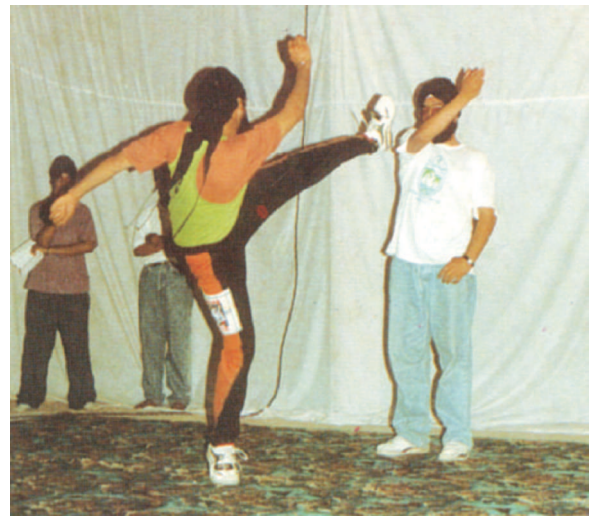
Youngest camper attending Sikh Missionary Society camp, receiving prize from the Mayor of Bradford (1981)



Sikh youth enjoying Bhangra



Prabhjit Singh Bahra won a trophy in May 1990 as Champion of Feng Shou Boxing Art in South-East England



Display of Defensive arts



Limbering up exercise at a Youth Camp

### TASKS

1. How do Sikhs manage to maintain their culture in Britain?
2. What are the youth activities of the Sikhs?
3. Name the towns where most Sikhs live.
4. How do the Sikh gurdwaras serve the Sikh community besides providing religious services?
5. How do the Sikh youth camps help the Sikh youth?



# CHAPTER 13

## FAMILY LIFE

Sikh religion lays great emphasis on family life. There is no place in Sikhism for those who give up family life, and live in jungles, monasteries or nunneries. The Guru says:

'Living within the family life,  
one realizes God'

A Sikh home is a training ground for the Sikh way of life. After taking a bath, a Sikh would remember Waheguru (Wonderful Lord) and recite the Name, thinking of the attributes of God. Then he/she recites the morning prayers before starting the daily routine. If time is short, verses from the scripture are recited while going about the usual tasks. Very young children are encouraged to recite 'Waheguru'.



*Family Prayer Room*



*Boy and girl wear Punjabi dress*

Some Sikh homes have a proper prayer room where Guru Granth Sahib is kept. It is opened daily in the morning and brought to the place of rest in the evening, with respect. The family offers prayers in the morning and evening in the presence of holy Guru Granth Sahib. Some homes are decorated with pictures of the Golden Temple and the Gurus but these pictures are not worshipped as Sikhs are forbidden idol worship.

Both Sikh males and females wear western and traditional Punjabi dress.

The Sikhs are very fond of sports and are good at athletics, cricket and hockey.



*Family going to Gurdwara*



Sikh families are very closely knit. The children accompany their parents to visit friends, relatives, the gurdwara and attend all special functions.

## QUESTIONS

1. Write a few lines about what a Sikh boy would do before going to school?
2. Describe male and female Punjabi dress.
3. Describe the ceremony of dustar bandi
4. What would the Sikh family do in the prayer room?
5. Why don't Sikhs worship Guru's pictures



*Tying turban*



A young Sikh boy tying his turban

# CHAPTER 14

## SIKH BELIEFS

The Sikh Gurus practised what they preached for well over two hundred years. The Sikh beliefs are born out of their examples and sacred writings.

### ONE GOD

They believe in one God who is the Creator of this Universe. God is not born and shall never die, has no human form and is present every where.

### EQUALITY

The Sikhs believes in the equality of all human beings. Therefore people of all religions and races are welcome in Sikh gurdwaras. Sikh women enjoy equal status with men in religious services and ceremonies.

### BIRTH AND DEATH

The Sikhs believes in the transmigration of soul or re-incarnation i.e. when a person dies, the soul is born again in another body, either human or any other life form. One's next life depends upon one's deeds in the past life whether good or bad. Human life is supreme. It is through this life that we can achieve oneness with God. This stops us from being born and dying again.



*A girl offering prayer (ardas) at the Sikh Missionary Society Youth Camp in Walsall*



*A Sikh engaged in Simran*

There are four basic principles for living a good life. These are:

#### **(A) SIMRAN (meditation)**

You choose a quiet place and sit in a comfortable position on a carpet or floor. Then you think of God and repeat the Holy Name, "Waheguru, Waheguru,....." for sometime. Simran helps you to get closer to God and brings you peace of mind.

#### **(B) KIRAT (Work)**

The Sikh faith teaches that we should accept only what we earn honestly and by hard work. We should not take away what rightfully belongs to others. Guru Nanak says,

"Taking away other's, right is as sinful as pork to a Muslim and beef to a Hindu"



### (C) WAND CHHAKNA

Sharing with others, mainly giving to the poor and needy in charity.

### (D) SEWA

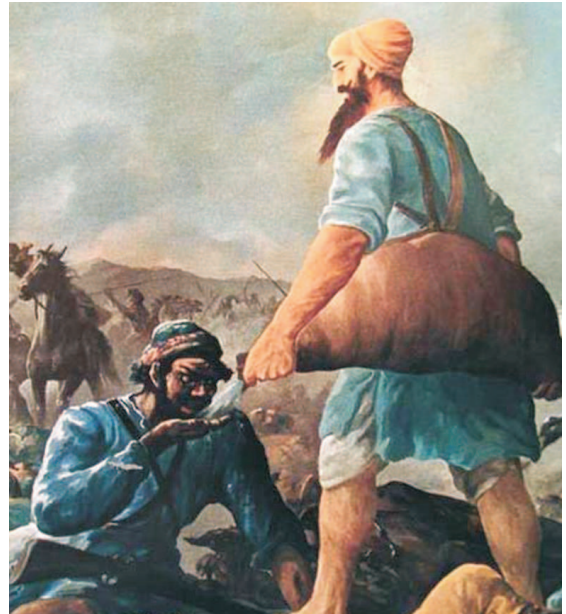
Service to humanity, God and Guru.

During a battle between the Emperor's forces and Sikhs, Bhai Kanahya was on duty to provide drinking water to the wounded. Some Sikh soldiers complained that he was giving water to the enemy and brought before Guru Gobind Singh.

He explained to the Guru, "I do not see a friend or foe, I only see you amongst the wounded".

The Guru was very pleased with Bhai Kanahya and blessed him for his true spirit of service to humanity.

Guru Gobind Singh said,  
"Realize that human race is one."



*Bhai Kanayha*



### NON-VIOLENCE

The Sikhs are peace-loving people and stand for truth and justice. Guru Gobind Singh said, "It is right to use force as a last resort when all other peaceful means fail". (writing around sword).

### TASKS

1. What are the Sikh views on racism?
2. Do the Sikhs believe in gender equality? Give examples.
3. What is the purpose of human life according to Sikhism?
4. Why was Bhai Kanahya supplying drinking water to the injured enemy soldiers?
5. Describe how a Sikh would meditate.
6. According to Guru Gobind Singh when is it justified to use force.
7. Read the story of Bhai Kanahya and write it out as a play.
8. Draw a picture of a Sikh in meditation.



*Sikh Sewa in India*

# GLOSSARY

Adi Granth	The Sikh scripture. Also see Guru Granth Sahib
Akal Takhat	Throne of Timeless Lord: Seat of Sikh Authority
Akhand Path	Continuous complete reading of Guru Granth Sahib
Amrit	Nectar: The Sikh initiation ceremony
Anand Karj	Marriage ceremony
Ardas	Prayer
Baisakhi (Vaisakhi)	Sikh Festival (birthday of Khalsa)
Bandi Chhor	Liberator
Bani	Sacred writing
Bhagat	Devotee
Bhangra	Punjabi men's folk dance
Bhog	Ceremony of completion of Akhand Path
Chandni	Decorated canopy above the Guru Granth Sahib
Chola	The cover cloth for the Sikh National Flag
Dahl	Lentil preparation in Indian meal
Diwali	The festival of lights
Dustar	Turban (a five yard piece of muslin cloth)
Gidha	Punjabi females folk dance
Granthi	Professional reader of Guru Granth Sahib
Gurdwara	The Sikh place of worship
Gurmukhi	Script for writing Panjabi language
Gurpurab	Important event connected with Guru's life
Guru	The Enlightener: Spiritual guide
Guru Granth Sahib	The supreme scripture of the Sikhs
Halal	Meat of animal killed ritually for Muslims
Hari Mandar	God's House: (commonly called The Golden Temple)
Hukam	Command: random reading of Guru Granth Sahib after Ardas (prayer)
Japji Sahib	A morning prayer
Kachh	The Sikh underwear or shorts (one of 5 K's)
Kangha	Comb (one of 5 K's)
Kara	Steel bangle (one of 5 K's)
Karah Parshad	Sweet pudding made of flour, clarified butter and sugar
Kaur	Princess (title given to every Sikh female)
Keertan	Singing of sacred hymns
Kesh	Un-cut hair (one of 5 K's)
Khalsa	The community of Sikhs who have taken Amrit
Khanda	Double edged sword, one of the emblems of Sikhism
Kirat	Earning livelihood by honest means
Kirpan	Sword (one of 5 K's)
Langar	Kitchen at the Gurdwara where food is served free to everyone.
Mool-Mantra	The Basic Creed
Naam	The Holy Name, Word of God
Nawab	A provincial governor
Nishan Sahib	Sikh Flag
Pagri	Turban (see Pug or Dustar)
Palki	Decorated seat for Guru Granth Sahib
Panj Piaray	The five beloved ones
Panjab/Punjab	The land of five rivers (either spelling can be used)
Parkash	The morning ceremony of installing Guru Granth Sahib for reading
Patasha	Puffed sugar cakes
Pug	Turban (see Dustar)
Ragees	Professional singers of sacred hymns
Roti	Unleaven bread, chappati
Sangat	Congregation
Sat Sri Akal	Sikh greeting meaning 'God is eternal'
Satnam	God is eternal truth
Sewa	Free service
Shabad	Sacred hymns
Sikh	A disciple of the ten Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib
Simran	Meditation on the attributes of God
Singh	Lion, title for all Sikh males
Sukh-asan	The ceremony of closing Guru Granth Sahib for rest at night
Sukhmani	The psalm of peace, Guru Arjan Dev's famous long composition
Takhat	Throne, Sikh seat of authority
Waheguru	God, Wonderful Enlightener



## QUOTATIONS FROM THE GURUS' WRITINGS

1. "Truth is high, higher still is truthful living"
2. "Real learning is serving others"
3. "Recognise all human beings are of one race"
4. "Blessed is the woman, who creates life"
5. "Only those know the truth path  
who earn their living by honest means,  
and share it with others."



# SUGGESTED BOOK LIST FOR YOUNGER READERS

1. Stories from the Sikh World by Rani and Jugnu Singh  
published 1987 by Mcdonald & Co. Ltd.  
Greater London House, Hampstead Road, London NW1 7QX  
ISBN 0-356-13165-3
2. I am a Sikh - Manju Aggarwal meets Harjit Singh Lal  
published 1984 by Franklin Watts Ltd.  
12a Godlen Square, London W1  
ISBN 0-86313-147-6
3. The Story of Guru Nanak by Mala Singh  
published 1982 by Hemkunt Press, New Delhi  
(available from Sikh Missionary Society U.K. - 081-574 1902)
4. Stories from Sikh History - Volumes I-X  
published 1971 by Hemkunt Press, New Delhi  
(available from Sikh Missionary Society U.K. - 081-574 1902)
5. Introduction to Sikhism by Dr. G. S. Mansukhani  
published 1977 by Hemkunt Press, New Delhi  
(available from Sikh Missionary Society U.K. - 081-574 1902)
6. The Sikhs and Their Way of Life by G. S. Sacha  
published by Sikh Missionary Society U.K.
7. A Popular Dictionary of Sikhism by P. S Sambhi & W. D. Cole  
published 1990 by Curzon Press Ltd.  
7 Caledonian Road, London N1  
ISBN 0-7007-0202-4







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