

Sikhi (Sikhism)

The Sikh tradition, known in the Punjabi language as Sikhi (Sikhi is the preferred term over Sikhism among believers), is a relatively young tradition that was founded over 500 years ago in the Punjab region of South Asia. There are more than 25 million Sikhs around the world, which makes Sikhism the world's fifth largest religion.

More Info: <https://discovergurunanak.com/basics-of-sikhism/>

Core Beliefs: The Sikh tradition is built upon doctrinal idea of oneness. Sikhs believe that people of all faiths worship one Divine Being who created this world and lives within it. This divine presence is intimately connected to every living person and creature. All people are therefore equal and there is no room to discriminate against anyone. The ultimate goal of Sikhism is develop divine love within oneself through acts of worship to the divine and service to the community.

More Info: <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/about-sikhs/>

Practices and Rituals:

Amritdhari and the 5 K's - Sikhs who desire to solidify their commitment participate in an initiation ceremony after which they become "Amritdhari" Sikhs. The Amritdhari initiation can take place at any age and is done when the individual feels ready to make that commitment. Amritdhari Sikhs wear the 5 Ks to symbolize their commitment:

1. *Kesh* — Uncut hair symbolizing the importance of living in harmony with nature
2. *Kangha* — A comb to manage one's hair and to symbolize the importance of controlling one's thoughts
3. *Kara* — An iron/steel bracelet to act as a reminder to do good deeds
4. *Kaccha* — Undergarment to maintain modesty in all situations
5. *Kirpan* — A sword acting as a reminder to fight injustice

Sikh worship services consist of reading, interpreting, and singing sacred hymns that were collected by Gurus seen as divine vehicles of the word of God. The services end with divine supplication and a remembrance of the shared history of Sikhi. As part of their worship services and caring for the poor and needy Sikh's hold a meal called "Langar" that is open to all. Everyone eats sitting down on the same level representing the equality that should exist among humanity.

More Info: <https://pluralism.org/sikhism>

Places of Worship: Sikh's worship in building's called Gurdwara's which translated means "place or gateway of the Guru". These buildings are used for worship services and the traditional Langar meals mentioned above. There are certain Gurdwara's that are important places of pilgrimage in India that are associated with founding Guru's. The most iconic and important of these is Harmandir Sahib, or the "Golden Temple". Thousands of visitors and pilgrims eat the Langar meal there every day!

More Info: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/gurdwara>

Leadership and Organization: Sikh's look to the wisdom of a group of Guru's (spiritual teachers) often referred to as the "Ten Guru's, the founder being Guru Nanak. The collections of sacred hymns and writings compiled by these Guru's is authoritative scripture. There are no formal clergy in Sikhism but here are descriptions of lay leaders you can expect to find at your local Gurdwara today:

- A scholar of Sikhism (gyani or giani) leads the congregation in prayer.
- Another worship leader is called the granthi (the one who tends and reads the sacred scripture). Granthi may also mean someone with deep knowledge of the scriptures, who is able to teach others about it.
- A musician may be called a ragi (one who knows the ragas/melodies).

More Info: https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-03/fema_faith-communities_sikh-leaders_1.pdf
<https://study.com/learn/lesson/10-sikh-gurus-names-teachings-timeline.html>

Holy Days and Observances: Arguably the most important day on the Sikh calendar is Vaisakhi (also spelled Baisakhi), a major harvest festival and religious observance. This is the day the warrior community was founded and celebrates the "5 beloved ones" who gave their lives for the faith. It also commemorates the 5 K's or sacred symbols mentioned above. There is a procession led by five men with orange banners and Sikhs visit the gurdwara with offerings, bathe in sacred pools, attend music programs, and perform community service.

More Info: <https://theguibordcenter.org/faiths/sikhism/sikh-festivals-and-observances/>