

SIKHISM

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FAITH RESOURCE PACK

SIKHISM

Compiled by Daljeet Kaur
for Suffolk Inter-Faith Resource

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forward insight into the Faiths of those who live in our
community. You are welcome to download any or all of
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MOOL MANTAR

The basic belief, which every Sikh should recite daily.



IK ONKAAR

God is One

SAT NAAM

Truth by name

KARTA PURKH

The primal being

NIR BHAU

Without fear

NIR VAIR

Without rival

AKAAL MOORAT

Timeless

AJOONI SAIBHANG

Unborn, self-existent

GUR PARSAAD

Known through the grace
of the Guru (God)

SIKHISM

Truth is high, but higher still is truthful living

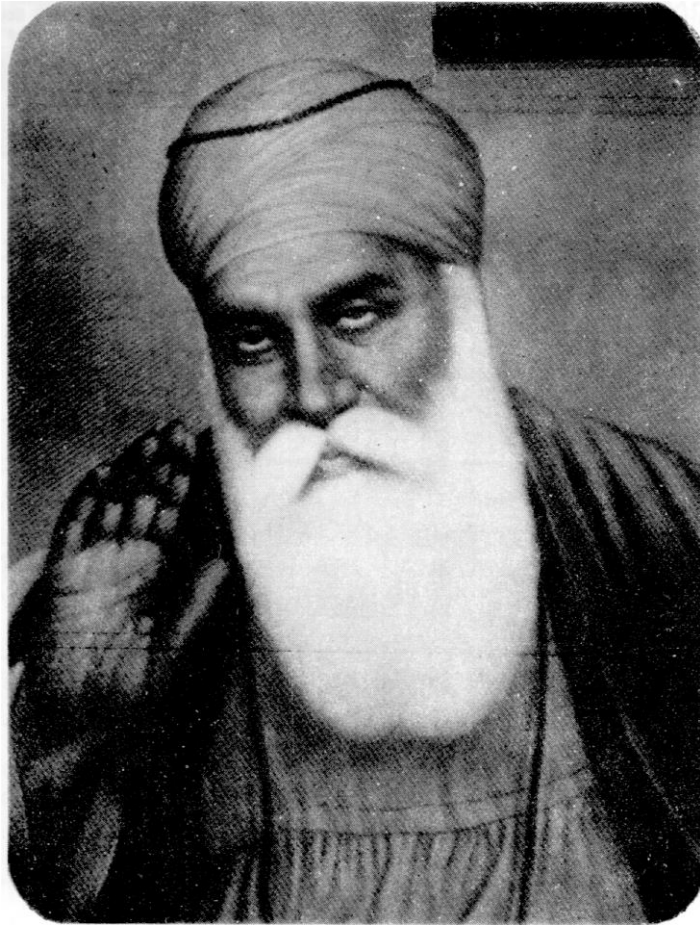
Guru Nanak

GURU NANAK is recognised as the first Sikh Guru.

GURU GRANTH SAHIB is the most holy book of the Sikhs. It begins with the Mool Mantar, Guru Nanak's description of God.

WAHEGURU - God's name. Sikhs are called to say God's name with every breath and eyelid flutter.

GURU NANAK



Guru Nanak was born in 1469 CE in a little village called Talwandi in the Punjab in India; the region is now part of Pakistan. His birthplace has been renamed “Nankana sahib”.

When Guru Nanak was 30, God’s message was revealed to him. He travelled for 20 years preaching God’s message of love and peace and showing

by his own example how to live a life that is pleasing to God.

He made four long journeys on foot. Eventually he settled in Kartarpur and worked as a farmer, while continuing to build a Sikh community.

Although Nanak was a Hindu by birth he declared that he was neither Hindu or Muslim, as he belonged to the whole human race.

Both Hindus and Muslims became his disciples and when he died in 1539, at the age of 70, they divided his shroud in two. One piece was cremated by the Hindus and the other was buried by the Muslims

THE TEN SIKH GURUS



The nine Sikh Gurus who followed Guru Nanak all taught the same basic message, which they believed came directly from God: “There is only One God”, and everyone is equally important to God.”

1 Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the first Sikh Guru, chose his successor, renaming him “Angad” (my limb) to stress the continuity of teaching.

2 Guru Angad (1539-1552) encouraged the writing of their sacred hymns in Punjabi so that ordinary people could read the scriptures. He encouraged them to do sport to keep healthy.

3 Guru Amar Das (1552-1574) introduced the principle of the free kitchen (langar).

4 Guru Ram Das (1574-1581) founded the Holy City of Amritsar. He composed many hymns.

5 Guru Arjan Dev (1581-1606) built the Golden Temple in Amritsar and compiled the “Adi Granth”, the first version of Sikh scriptures. He was the first Sikh Guru to be martyred.

6 Guru Har Gobind (1606-1644) succeeded his father at the age of eleven. He wore two swords - one for spiritual and one for worldly power; he was hailed as Bandi-chor (liberator).

7 Guru Har Rai (1644-1661) opened a large dispensary and distributed free medicines, as many gurdwaras in the Punjab still do today.

8 Guru Har Krishan (1661-1664) was known as “the Child Guru” because he succeeded aged 5 and died aged 8, during a smallpox epidemic. He had courageously ministered to the sick.

9 Guru Tegh Bahadur (1664-1675) was the youngest son of Guru Har Gobind, and had spent many years in meditation. He upheld the rights of Hindus not to convert to Islam, but himself became the second Sikh Guru to be martyred.

10 Guru Gobind Singh (1675-1708) was the founder of the “Khalsa”, the Sikh community.

After Guru Tegh Bahadur’s martyrdom, his son, Gobind Rai, baptised five Sikhs who were prepared to die for their faith.

They then initiated him and his name was changed to Gobind Singh. Many other men and women were also initiated.

Guru Gobind Singh called them the Khalsa (pure souls) and the wearing of the 5 K's became the outward symbols of their membership.

Two of Guru Gobind Singh's sons died in defence of the faith and two other sons were martyred.

Guru Gobind Singh was mortally wounded and the line of human Gurus in the Punjab came to an end.

Each of these Gurus is revered but not worshipped by Sikhs.

The Gurus are messengers of God and God alone is to be worshipped.

THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The Guru Granth Sahib is the Sikh Holy Scripture. Its basis was the “Adi Granth”, the collection made by the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, from the sacred writings of the first five Gurus and also from those of Hindu and Muslim saints. It was completed by the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, when he added the writings of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Each copy consists of 1430 pages, made up of 5894 hymns, written in a Punjabi script, called Gurmukhi, “from the Guru’s mouth”. This signifies that the actual words of their Gurus are contained in it.

Guru Gobind Singh had declared that there would be no more human Gurus after his death, and so Sikhs respect the Guru Granth Sahib as they would a living Guru. They worship and revere the “Word of God” revealed to them through the sacred hymns which it contains.

The Guru Granth Sahib takes the central place in Sikh worship. A continuous reading of it (48 hours) takes place on special occasions like weddings, or on the birthdays of Guru Nanak or of Guru Gobind Singh. This is called an “Akhand Parth”. The Guru Granth is always at the heart of all ceremonies and festivals, and it is often carried on a float in processions.

THE GURDWARA

The word Gurdwara means “the door of the Guru”. It is the Sikh place of worship, the home of the Guru. It can be recognised by the saffron flag, Nishan Sahib, which flies high outside it. There are two halls, the prayer hall and the dining hall.

* Sikh worship can take place anywhere so long as it is in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. A building only becomes a Gurdwara when the Guru Granth Sahib has been installed there.*

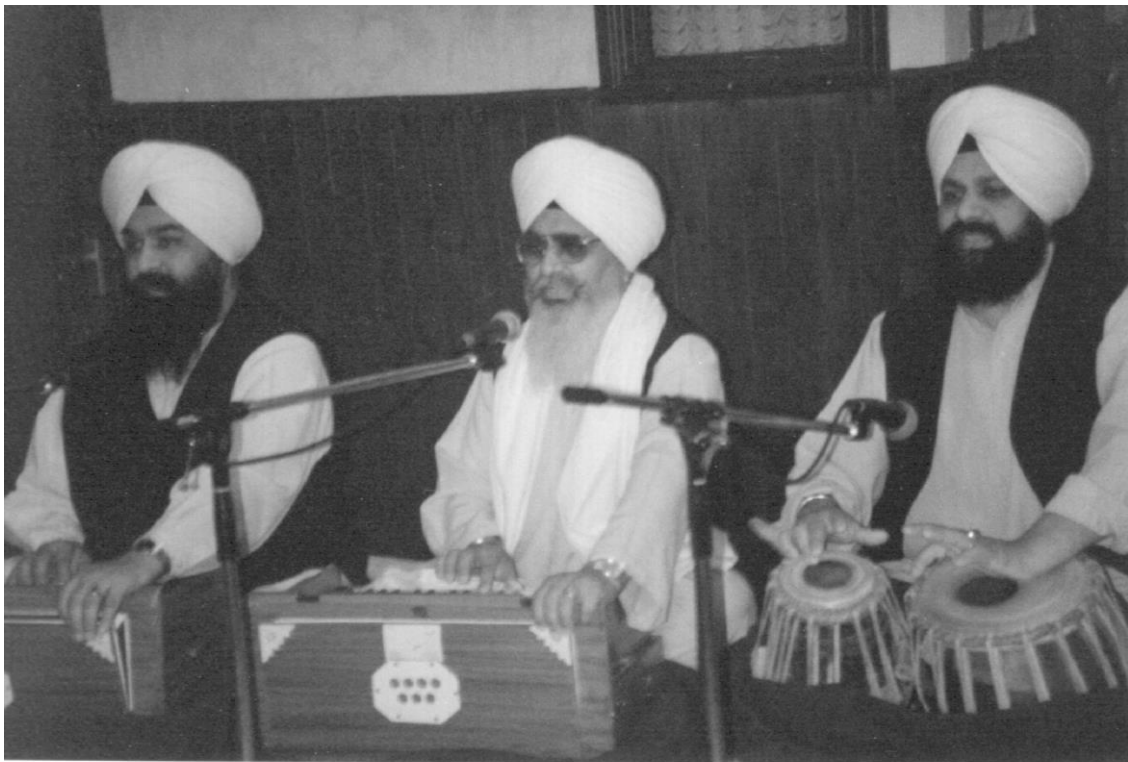


The Guru Granth Sahib is the focal point of the prayer hall. It is covered in richly embroidered clothes and placed in a prominent position on a Takhat (raised platform) under a Chandni (canopy). A Granthi (reader) or Sewadar (volunteer) waves a Chauri (a hair fan) over it as a sign of its

authority.

When entering the prayer hall, worshippers should remove their shoes and cover their heads. As they approach the Holy Granth they make an offering, bow low on their knees and touch the ground with their forehead. They then sit cross-legged on the carpeted floor, facing the Guru Granth. They should not turn their backs towards it, or let their feet point towards it when they are seated. Men and women sit on separate sides. They can enter or leave at any time.

Worship in the Gurdwara consists of the singing of kirtans (hymns) by the Granthi (reader) or Ragis (singers). If they are not available, the service is led by any able member of the congregation. Players on traditional musical instruments accompany the hymns. Services last for about two and a half hours.



They conclude with the passing round of karah prashad (a sweet food made of semolina) which has been blessed during the service.

Each Gurdwara contains a langar (free community kitchen) where vegetarian food is prepared and served by members of the community to all who come. This shared meal is free. It symbolises equality and universal community, and is inseparable from the worship.



A MOST HOLY PLACE

The most important Gurdwara is the human body. It is called the Hari Mandir (Temple of the living God). The Temple in Amritsar, commonly known as the Golden Temple, symbolises 500 years of Sikh history and aspirations. The Temple is surrounded by a pool which is believed to have healing powers and so the pool is called “The Pool of Immortality.” Amritsar means “Pool of Nectar”.



The Golden Temple at Amritsar

SIKHS



Sikh means seeker or disciple; one who follows the teaching of the Gurus. To show their equality, all Sikh men are called Singh and women are called Kaur. Sikhs live in many parts of the world.

It is usually possible to recognise a Sikh by his turban and uncut beard. Sikhs may also be recognised by the wearing of the five K's.

Sikhs should not take part in idol worship; they should not take alcohol, tobacco or drugs. They should not gamble or put their faith in anything other than God.

THE FIVE K'S

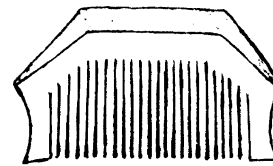
TO TURBAN



KESH Humility and acceptance Uncut hair and beard, frequently washed.

KANGHA Cleanliness to keep one fit to repeat God's Holy Name Wooden comb to keep the hair tidy and clean.

KANGA (usually wood)



KACHHA Continence Shorts to symbolise self-control and moral behaviour.

KARRAH Restraint from bad deeds

Steel bracelet, worn on the right wrist of men, women and children to symbolise the encircling presence of the one, eternal God and the unity of the Khalsa.



The Kara



KIRPAAN
(not to be referred to as a dagger)

KIRPA-AN Kindness and honour.

Sword (usually small and ornamental) to fight if necessary for truth and justice and to protect the weak.

BASIC PRINCIPLES

SIMRAN Repetition (of the Holy Name): You choose a comfortable position on a carpet or floor. Then you think of God and repeat the Holy Name “Waheguru, Waheguru (Wonderful Lord)” for some time. Simran helps you to get closer to God and brings you peace of mind.

KIRAT Work: You should only accept what you have earned honestly and by hard work.

WAND CHAKNA Sharing: You should share what you earn with less fortunate people.

SEWA Service: Your service should be God-centred and not self-centred. Selfless service of God, Guru and humanity is an important part of a right relationship with God. Sewa should be done with the Tan (body), Mun (mind) and Dhan (wealth)



SIKH FESTIVALS AND CEREMONIES

GURPURBH A Gurpurbh is a major festival, commemorating the birthdays of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, or the anniversaries of the deaths of the two martyred Gurus. An Akhand Parth (non-stop reading of the Guru Granth) always takes place.

BAISAKHI This festival, around April 13, is the Sikh New Year, and celebration of the birth of the Khalsa (community of the pure), under Guru Gobind Singh. New members are initiated (take Amrit), there is an Akhand Parth, the Nishan Sahib is replaced by a new flag; there is hymn-singing, preaching, various festivities, dancing and competitions.

AUTUMN FESTIVAL When Hindus celebrate Diwali (festival of lights), Sikhs commemorate the release of the ninth Guru from prison and his arrival in Amritsar. He was hailed as a liberator because he insisted on the freedom of 52 Hindu princes who had been imprisoned by the Mogul emperor.

MARRIAGE Sikh marriages are arranged by the families and the festivities last for many days. The wedding must take place in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. While the Granthi reads four marriage verses (composed by Guru Ram Das, 4th Sikh Guru) from the Holy Book, the couple walk round it in a circle four times. The bride walks behind the groom and they rise and make one circuit during each verse. At the end of the ceremony there is a final hymn and the Ardas (prayer) is said standing up. Karah Parshad

(sacred food) is then served



NAMING The mother goes to the Gurdwara with her new baby for the usual service. The Ardas (prayer) is recited and the Granthi (reader) opens the Holy Granth at random, to choose the baby's name. The first letter on the left-hand page will usually be the first letter of the child's name. The Granthi announces the chosen name to the congregation.

DEATH The body is washed, dressed in new clothes and cremated. Sikhs believe in reincarnation until a person eventually reaches oneness with God.

INITIATION Full initiation into the Khalsa is a very serious matter and is only for mature Sikhs. Vows are taken and Amrit (specially prepared holy water) is drunk by the initiate and it is sprinkled on the head.

An initiated Sikh will be strictly vegetarian and will also avoid contact with alcohol and tobacco.

KHANDA

The Khanda is the symbol of God's universal and creative power and is also the emblem of the Khalsa, the community of initiated Sikhs. It can be seen on the Nishan Sahib (flag) which flies on a pole outside the Gurdwara.

Three separate symbols are combined within it:

KHANDA The double-edged sword in the centre, expresses belief in the freedom and justice of the One True God.

CHAKRA A circle with no beginning and no end, expresses belief in the oneness and infiniteness of God, and reminds Sikhs to remain within God's rule and care;

KIRPANS The two swords symbolise the spiritual and worldly balance in the universe, and remind Sikhs to serve God.



“Realise that the human race is one.”

Guru Gobind Singh

