



## Sikhism key facts

You are expected to know all of the information in this booklet.  
You will be assessed on this knowledge.

### Sikhism

- People who follow Sikhism are called **Sikhs**.
- The Sikh place of worship is called a **Gurdwara**. Gurdwara means doorway to the Guru.
- Sikhs are **monotheists** – they believe that there is only one God. The words **Ik Onkar**, which mean there is only one God, are often displayed inside gurdwaras or in people's homes.
- Sikhs believe that God loves everyone **equally**, no matter how they worship him.
- The Sikh holy book is called the **Guru Granth Sahib**.

### What do Sikhs believe about God?

- The **Mool Mantra** is a summary of the teachings about God. It is repeated more than 100 times in the **Guru Granth Sahib**.
- In the Guru Granth Sahib, there are different names given to the same God. The most commonly used name is **Waheguru**, which means Wonderful Lord or Wonderful Guru.
- Sikhs believe that there is only **one God**.
- Sikhs believe that God is the **creator** of everything.
- Sikhs believe that God is **omnipotent** (all powerful) and **omnipresent** (present everywhere),
- Sikhs believe that God is eternal. He is **immortal** and beyond birth and death.
- Sikhs believe that God is without fear and without hate.
- Most Sikhs believe that God is **beyond human comprehension** so humans cannot describe him in words.
- Sikhs believe that the best way to understand God is through the lives of the Gurus and the teachings found in the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Sikhs believe that they can get to know God and develop a personal relationship with him through **prayer** and **service to others**.

### The Khanda

The symbol of Sikhism is called the Khanda. The Khanda contains three swords. The left sword reflects worldly authority. The right sword reflects spiritual authority. The sword in the middle reminds Sikhs that it is their duty to fight for justice in the world. The circle in the middle is called a chakkar. It has two meanings. The spiritual meaning is that the circle represents God, who is eternal. The other meaning is a military one. Sikhs used sharp circular weapons called chakrams in battle.



## Guru Nanak – the founder of Sikhism

- Nanak was born in 1469 CE into a Hindu family.
- When Nanak was about 30 years old, he had an experience that changed his life. He went to the Kali Bein river early one morning to wash and pray. He left his clothes on the river bank and waded into the river. Then he vanished. Three days later he reappeared, but he was in a trance and did not speak for a long time. When he finally spoke, he said he had been with God and had been given a special revelation. He said 'There is no Hindu or Muslim, but only man. So whose path shall I follow? I shall follow God's path. God is neither Hindu nor Muslim and the path which I follow is God's.'
- Nanak was given the title 'Guru' after this. Guru means a religious teacher or guide.
- Guru Nanak was convinced that it was his duty to share the revelation he had received so he went on four long journeys to visit holy Buddhist and Hindu sites as well as the Muslim cities of Makkah and Medinah.
- After spending 20 years traveling, Guru Nanak and his followers set up the first permanent Sikh community at a place called Kartapur (this means city of God).
- Every day, Nanak's followers prayed and did community work. They cooked food and welcomed anyone who wished to eat with them, regardless of their caste or religion.

## The Ten Gurus

- Guru Nanak appointed his successor, Angad, just before he died. He tested him to make sure that he was worthy of the honour by making him do lots of menial tasks like carrying bundles of grass and washing dirty clothes. Angad passed the test and his willingness to do the menial tasks teaches Sikhs that service and equality are important.
- For 200 years after Guru Nanak's death, the title of Guru was passed on to nine more men who became leaders of Sikhism.
- Guru Amar Das developed the langar (free kitchen) and insisted that everyone who came to visit him must first go to the langar and eat.
- The fifth guru, Guru Arjan, arranged for the Golden Temple to be built at Amritsar. This is the holiest place in the world for Sikhs.
- As the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, was dying he told his followers that he would be the last human guru. He declared that the Sikh holy scriptures would become a living and eternal Guru for the Sikhs after his death. They are called the Guru Granth Sahib.

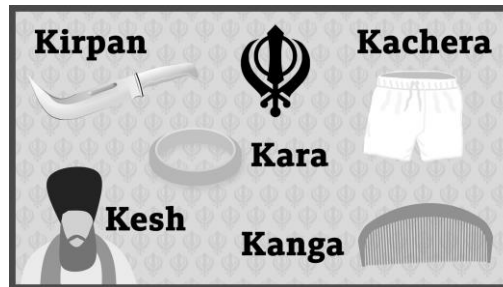
## The Guru Granth Sahib – the final Guru

- Sikhs look to the holy book for guidance and leadership. The Guru Granth Sahib is used during Sikh worship.
- Since the first printed editions, the Guru Granth Sahib has always had 1430 pages. These are known as angas (limbs). All copies of the book are the same.
- Sikhs do not worship the Guru Granth Sahib as it is a book, not a God. However, they do show it the same respect that they would show to a living Guru. The book is given a room of its own in a house or a Gurdwara.
- At some Sikh festivals, the whole of the Guru Granth Sahib will be read from start to finish. This is called an Akhand Path and it takes about 48 hours. People usually read for 2 hours each.



## The Five Ks of Khalsa Sikhs

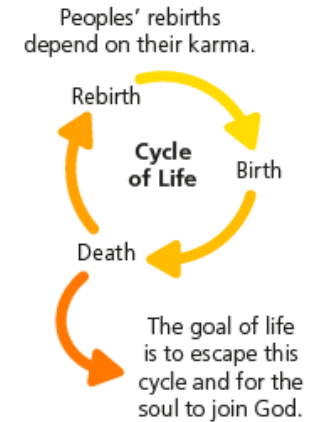
- Guru Gobind Singh taught that Khalsa Sikhs must wear five key items to show their faith.
- **Kesh** means uncut hair. Sikhs believe that their bodies are gifts from God. They do not cut their hair as it is a gift from God and shows acceptance of what God has given them. Most Khalsa Sikhs wear a turban to keep their hair clean and tidy.
- **Kangha** (a wooden comb). The comb is used to keep the hair clean and tidy and it is tucked into the turban when it is not being used. The kangha also reminds Sikhs of the importance of discipline and keeping their lives well ordered.
- **Kara** (a simple steel bracelet). It is worn on the right wrist. Steel is a strong metal so it symbolises the strength required to be a Sikh and defend the religion. The circular shape represents the eternity and oneness of God.
- **Kachera** (special cotton underwear). Guru Gobind Singh told his followers to wear kacheri because they made movement in battle easier. Kachera remind Sikhs that they should be ready to fight when others need help.
- **Kirpan** (a short sword). This reminds Sikhs of their duty to defend their religion and fight for justice.



- Guru Gobind Singh gave the Khalsa members some rules to follow. These included giving to those in need, earning an honest living, avoiding drugs, smoking and alcohol and wearing only simple clothes.

## Karma and mukti

- Sikhs believe that everyone is in a cycle of birth, death and rebirth (**reincarnation**). A person's rebirth is decided by God based on the law of **karma**.
- People can create good karma by worshipping God and performing good deeds.
- People who live selfishly and ignore the message of the Gurus will produce bad karma and achieve a lower rebirth.
- For Sikhs, the goal of life is to escape the cycle or birth, death and rebirth by achieving **mukti**. This is the union of the soul (**atma**) with God.



## Sewa

- Service to others (**sewa**) is a very important Sikh belief.
- Sikhs can perform sewa in lots of different ways.
- **Tan** (physical service). This is practical work, for example having a job that helps others like being a nurse or a teacher.
- **Man** (mental service). This is sewa that is performed through thought and words rather than direct actions. eg. reading the Guru Granth Sahib and talking about it to others.
- **Dhan** (material service). This is giving charity to those in need and can be done by offering money, making donations or volunteering time. Serving food in the community kitchen (langar) is an example of tan.