

# THE TEN GURUS OF SIKHISM

The founder of Sikhism was Guru Nanak.

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 at Talwand (now called Nanakana Sahib) in what is now Pakistan. **Guru** means religious teacher (**Sikh** means disciple) and was a title given in later life. He was born a Hindu. Stories of Nanak's early life show him to be a generous and pious man, unhappy about the religious practices around him. He received his call from God when he was aged thirty, when he received the knowledge that it was neither the Hindu nor the Muslim practices which were right, but knowing and serving God and living honestly. He began to teach the equality of everyone man/woman, black/white, rich/poor in the eyes of God.

## GURU NANAK



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Guru Nanak travelled widely to spread the message of God, even as far as Mecca. He was accompanied by the musician,

Mardana, and most of his teaching appears to have been in the form of hymns/poetry. In his old age Guru Nanak settled at Kartarpur which became a centre for his disciples. One of these disciples, Lehna, was appointed by Nanak as his

People should be respected for the light which illumines them, not caste or birth.

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successor, he was given the name Guru Angad Dev. Guru Nanak died in 1539.

Guru Nanak's teachings are recorded in the holy book known as the Guru Granth Sahib, and many versions of his biography are available. You will also see numerous pictures of Guru Nanak in gurdwaras or Sikh homes.

In all there were ten Sikh Gurus, the last, Guru Gobind Singh, set up the Khalsa or community of Sikhs as it is today. He handed on his authority to the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib, which is treated as a living guru.

The Guru Granth Sahib contains very little biographical material, but nevertheless many stories about the different Gurus are known. Some of these are linked

particularly to gurburbs (festivals) e.g. Diwali. Apart from those already mentioned above note:

- Guru Amar Das (third Guru) set up the free kitchens (langar). Even the great Emperor Akbar had to eat in the langar with the poor before the Guru would see him.
- Guru Arjan Dev (fifth Guru) martyred in 1606.
- Guru Harkrishnan (eighth Guru) died in a smallpox epidemic helping the sick – aged eight.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur (ninth Guru) executed for advocating freedom of worship.

The lives of the Gurus are seen as examples for all good Sikhs to follow.

*See the website pages for Sikh sites – all of them have details of the lives of the Gurus.*

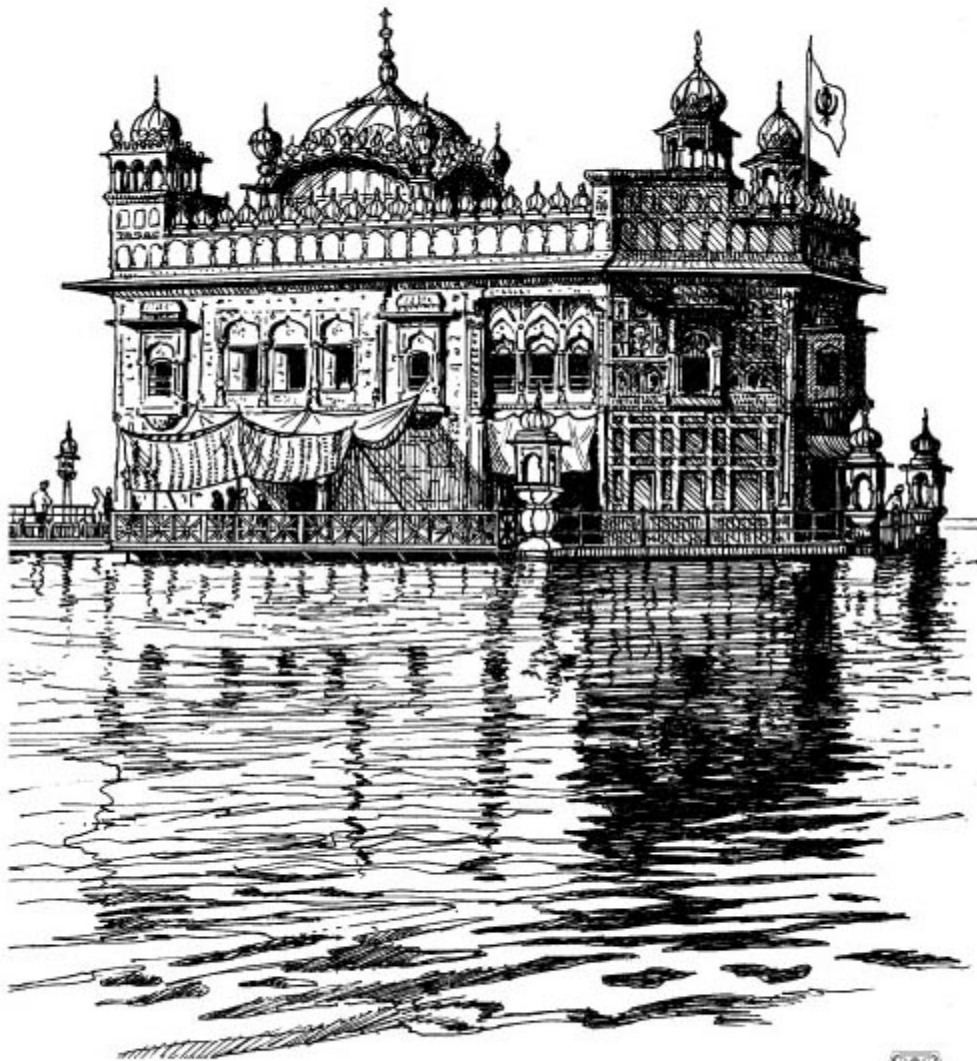
A simplified form of the teachings of Guru Nanak:

1. There is only one God. Worship and pray to the one God and to none other.
2. Remember God, work hard and help others
3. God is pleased with honest work and true living
4. There is no rich, no poor, no black and no white, before God. It is your actions that make you good or bad.
5. Men and Women are all Equal before God
6. Love everyone and pray for the good of all
7. Be kind to people, animals and birds
8. Fear not, Frighten not.
9. Always speak the truth.
10. Be simple in your food, dress and habits.

## **AMRITSAR & THE PUNJAB**

The Sikh homeland is the **Punjab**, an area of north-west India which straddles the India/Pakistan border. With the independence of India there was a significant Sikh immigration into India from West Pakistan. Many Sikhs still wish for the Punjab to become an independent state (they call this state Khalistan) as their separate faith and identity is not recognised by the majority governments. The Punjab is an important farming area and produces three-quarters of India's wheat.

# Golden Temple in Amritsar



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The capital of Punjab is Chandigarh, but its most important religious centre is **Amritsar**.

The town of Amritsar was built by Guru Ram Das and here his son, Guru Arjan, built the **Harmandir Sahib** in 1588. The name “Amritsar” means “pool of nectar”, referring to the pool surrounding the Harmandir (“house of God”). In 1803 Maharaja Ranjit Singh covered the top half of the building with gold leaf and it is now commonly known as the **Golden Temple**. The original written version of the Guru Granth Sahib, known as the Adi Granth, is kept at the Golden Temple. This building has four doors to show that it is open to people from all four points of the compass. Believers bathe in the rectangular artificial lake known as the “pool of nectar” before

entering the Haramandir Sahib. The Guru Granth Sahib is read continuously in the temple.

In the Golden Temple complex is a second gurdwara, the **Akal Takhat**, where meetings of the Sikh community (Panth) are held to decide major issues affecting Sikhs.

The other four places which are especially important for Sikhs are:

- Anandpur - a valley at the foot of the Himalayas . The head of the martyred Guru Tegh Badur is buried here. It is here Guru Gobind Singh instituted the Khalsa.
- Takht Sri Hazur in South India – the place of Guru Gobind Singh’s death
- Takht Nankana Sahib - birthplace of Guru Nanak
- Takht Sri Patna Sahib near Lahore – birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh

## BELIEFS

The basic and most important beliefs of Sikhism are:

You, our mother and father, we your children, O Lord Guru Granth Sahib 268
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- There is only one God
- All human beings are equal
- All religions should be accepted as paths to God
- All men and women are equal
- It is good to serve others.

Sikhs believe that God is one, without partner or agent. God is neither male nor female but encompasses both. God is present in all things ( note: this is **not** pantheism and Sikhs are against the use of images). God is beyond human discernment but God is also self-disclosing. Humankind only knows God because God wills it. Sikhs use many names to refer to God, including those from other faiths such as Rama or Allah. A commonly used name is **Waheguru** which means “wonderful Lord”, God is without form, the ultimate creator but beyond creation:

*“O wise and all-knowing God, you are the river. How can I, the fish within you, measure your limits?”*

Sikhism is a family centred religion; all Sikhs are encouraged to marry, and celibacy and asceticism are discouraged. Ideally, Sikhs would also describe themselves as a large extended family, despite internal disagreements within the community. The Gurus taught that every Sikh should be a householder (**grihastha**). The extended family or joint family is the norm in India; in Britain housing will often force Sikhs to live in smaller family units within easy reach of their relatives.

# THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The Sikh scriptures are central to Sikh life and practice from birth to death. All significant community activities take place in the presence of the scriptures.

## GRANTHI reading GRANTH



The contents of the Guru Granth Sahib were developed over 200 years, beginning with Guru Nanak's message which he preached in poetic form (947 of his hymns are contained in the scriptures). Guru Angad is usually credited with taking the decision to write down the hymns of his predecessor and for finally determining the form of the 35 letter **Gurmurkhi** alphabet in which they were written. ("Gurmurkhi" means "from the mouth of the Guru"). Guru Arjan decided to assemble an authoritative collection of authentic hymns of the (first five and ninth) Gurus and install them at Amritsar. This copy is known as the **Adi Granth** and still exists at Kartarpur. The Adi Granth contains hymns by the first five Gurus, and the hymns of the ninth Guru, which were added later by Guru Gobind Singh.

Of the 1430 pages of the Guru Granth Sahib:

- Pages 1-13 contain the hymns used in everyday devotions
- Pages 14-1352 are divided into 31 sections according to the tune (**rag**) to which the hymn should be sung.
- Pages 1353-1430 are short sayings of one or two lines.

The Guru Granth Sahib was installed by Guru Gobind Singh as his successor and living Guru. Guru Gobind Singh's own writings are collected in the **Dasan Granth** which may be read in the gurdwara, although it does not have the same authority as the Guru Granth Sahib.

The Sikh scriptures are unusual in that they contain the writings of men who were not Sikhs, but Hindus or Muslims. These are known as the bhagat bani. These hymns were collected by Guru Nanak, their presence in the holy book demonstrate that Sikhs believe that God has sent other messengers to the world who are not of the Sikh faith.

Sikh theology teaches the Guru Granth Sahib is **inspired** scripture, like the Bible. When Sikhs enter the presence of the holy book they prostrate before it as the sacred repository of God's word.

When the tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, died in 1708 he told the Sikhs that henceforth they were to be guided by the words of the Scriptures as if they were a living Guru. The scriptures are known as the Guru ("teacher") Granth ("large book") Sahib ("Sir" - a sign of respect). The scriptures are treated with the utmost respect, as if they were a living person. Any room in which the holy book is kept is regarded as holy and at night it is laid to rest in a bed in a room known as **Sachkand**. Once the Ardas congregational prayer has been offered the scripture is opened at random and the first verse on the left hand page is the word of guidance for the day (the **Vak**).

Normally you only find Guru Granth Sahibs in gurdwaras as it is costly and time consuming to keep one in its own room in a home.

The Scriptures are written in **Gurmurkhi**, a script devised by Guru Angad Dev (second Guru) specifically to write down the scriptures. All copies of the Guru Granth Sahib nowadays have 1430 pages. The scriptures consist of 4956 hymns written by six of the ten Gurus. They also contain 938 hymns by non-Sikhs, both Muslim and Hindu, which are known as the bhagat bani. It is assumed that the Gurus collected these materials in an anthology as a practical affirmation of the basic Sikh belief that it is wrong to confine God to any particular religion.

When the Guru Granth Sahib is open in the gurdwara it rests on a small stool or bed made up of three cushions and a special quilt which are together called the **Manji Sahib**. This is tilted to make the angle easier for the reader. There is a canopy over the Manji Sahib which also helps signify the importance of the Guru Granth Sahib. This is known as the **channani**. When the Guru Granth Sahib is closed on the Manji Sahib it is covered by an embroidered cloth called a **rumala**. The scriptures will also

be wrapped in rumalas when they are moved around the gurdwara. The **chauri** is a fan. The handle is normally made of precious metals or wood. The fan itself is traditionally made of yak hairs or peacock feathers, but you will find that natural fibres such as cotton or silk are common and modern versions use nylon. It is waved by the person reading the Guru Granth Sahib in order to show respect for the holy book. The origins of this custom lie in the service given to important personages by their attendants in India. The holy book is being treated with the same respect as would be given to a living guru or leader.

The person who reads the holy book aloud in the service is known as a **granthi** (meaning one who reads the holy Granth). The granthi is not a priest, as there are no priests in Sikhism, rather anyone, male or female can take on this role. The readers are trained in reading the gurmurkhi text in which the scriptures are written.

There is one God  
Eternal Truth is his Name  
Maker of all things  
Fearing nothing and hating nothing  
Immortal, unborn, self-existent  
By the grace of the Guru,  
Made known to men.



At the end of a service the Guru Granth Sahib is taken from the dais and is carried on the head to signify that it is above all. It is laid to rest on a canopied bed.

The Guru Granth Sahib begins with the **Mool Mantar** which sets out the Sikh belief that there is only one God, the creator of humankind. Tradition affirms that this was Guru Nanak's first poetic utterance. "Mool" means "essence" and this is the nearest thing there is to a Sikh creed. The Mool Mantar also begins the **Japji** hymn, a thirty eight verse hymn which Sikhs use daily as part of morning prayer.

It is not normal for Sikhs to have copies of the Guru Granth Sahib at home. If they do, it must be given its own room and treated with the same respect and attention as is the holy book in the gurdwara. The Guru Granth Sahib's special room in the house thus also becomes a gurdwara. Sikhs who cannot give the Guru Granth Sahib this kind of personal care will probably keep a **gutka** instead. This is a small book which contains the verses Sikhs read or recite daily. Sikhs will wash their hands before opening it and when the book is not in use it will be wrapped in cloth and kept in a special place such as a top bookshelf.

All over the world Sikhs read and / or recite from the Guru Granth Sahib on a daily basis. It guides and helps them in all aspects of their daily lives.

You can find copies of the Guru Granth Sahib on-line, including in English translation (see *website pages*).

## THE GURDWARA AND WORSHIP

The **Gurdwara** (literally “the door of the Guru”) is the Sikh place of worship and also a community centre. It always has at least two main halls; the **prayer hall** and the **langar**. There will also be another room in which the Guru Granth Sahib is kept when it is not in the prayer hall.



The saffron and blue Nishan Sahib flies outside the gurdwara to show that hospitality can be obtained here.

No one is allowed to bring tobacco, alcohol or intoxicating drugs into the gurdwara. Worshippers leave their shoes outside the prayer hall and cover their head as a sign of respect when they enter. Within the hall the Guru Granth Sahib will be resting on a

Manji Sahib under a Channani (see above). The worshippers will pay their respects to the holy book by bowing to the ground before it and making a token offering of money or food. Usually men and women sit separately, but this is a custom, not a religious ruling. As a sign of respect worshippers will not sit with the soles of their feet pointing towards the Guru Granth Sahib as the soles are regarded as unclean. Sikhs sit on the ground to sing hymns – this symbolises how they sit at the feet of their teacher – it also shows they are all equal. An important feature of the service is the distribution and sharing of the blessed food (**Kara parshad**: A mixture of semolina, sugar and ghee (unsalted liquid butter) in equal quantities with a little water. The mixture is blessed during the singing of the Ardas hymn at the close of a

service by being stirred with a Kirpan (short sword). This food is shared by all present and is a strong symbol of the equality of all people before God. In large gurdwaras, where worship continues throughout the day, Kara prashad will be distributed to people as they either enter or leave the prayer hall.) A Sikh gathering for worship is called a **diwan**.



The **langar** is the name both of the common kitchen of the gurdwara and the food shared there. A community meal is an important way of affirming the equality of all people before God (an important distinction in India's caste-bound society) and all members of the community will take turns in providing, preparing and serving the food. The food is always vegetarian so that everyone may eat, and frequently consists of dal (lentils), vegetable curry, raita (yoghurt), rice and chapattis. Sikhs are

under a obligation to give hospitality to anyone who asks for it and this means not only food, but also accommodation for up to three nights.

Sikh worship includes prayer, meditation, readings from the Guru Granth Sahib and Hymn (kirtan) singing. Congregational worship may also include sermons or talks. Communal services end with a communal meal. There is no tightly defined order of service, and no set times or days to worship together – although in this country Sikhs worship on Sundays for convenience. On Sundays and special days the worship will probably last from about 8.00 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. and worshippers will come and go as a service is taking place. The service ends formally with the ardas prayer. The Guru Granth Sahib is then opened at random and the granthi reads out the verses found – this is known as the **hukam** or **vak**, and is God's guidance for the day. It will be posted on the gurdwara's noticeboard for people to check. The hukam from the Golden Temple in Amritsar is available on-line on several Sikh websites, but, of course, the hukam is likely to be different for each gurdwara.

Much of the scripture is poetry which has been set to music and will be sung in worship. The hymns are known as **shabads** and the devotional musical accompaniment is called Kirtan. Gurdwaras may employ professional singers (**ragees**) to sing the Shabads during worship and many Sikh children learn to play to accompany the singing. The traditional instruments are tabla (drums), baja (harmonium) and the sitar.

Both individual and community worship is important to Sikhs. In the Sikh code of conduct it is stated Sikhs are to "rise early in the morning, take a bath and contemplate God's name; at sunrise sing the gurbani hymns; through the busy day remembering God's name". Most Sikhs will recite the Mool Mantar at the beginning of the day and follow a set series of passages from the Guru Granth Sahib. Many Sikhs will visit the gurdwara daily. All members of the congregation (**sangat**) may take turns in leading the worship, although gurdwaras also employ a **granthi** as reader of the scriptures and caretaker of the gurdwara. In Britain, Sunday is the most convenient day for congregational worship, but the Sikhs do not have a holy day.

The purpose of worship is to praise God for all that is given us. God does not need our praise, but to worship develops and nourishes the believer in their faith.

When I come into your presence I feel love. My hopes are fulfilled by your grace. Hear my request for the gift of being able to meditate on you and be your disciple.

Guru Granth Sahib 741

The **Akhand Path** is a special form of worship which involves the continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib over forty eight hours. It is usually done at the request of a family or individual at a time of great blessing, thanksgiving or distress. Those who request the reading will organise the readers ( a team of readers will take turns to read for two hours at a time) and make a donation to the gurdwara. They will try to be present for as much of the forty eight hours as possible.

## FESTIVALS AND THE KHALSA

The **Birthday of Guru Nanak** (October/November), the birthday of Guru Arjan Singh (December), the martyrdom of Guru Arjan (May/June) and the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (November/December) are the main **Sikh gurburbs**. Gurburb is the name of a festival which celebrates something to do with one of the Gurus. Other Sikh festivals are known as **melas**. Melas are Hindu festivals which the Sikhs have taken over and reinterpreted. **Baisakhi** (13th April) commemorates the founding of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh (see above). **Diwali** (October/November) celebrates the release of Guru Hargobind from prison in 1619. He asked for 52 imprisoned Hindu rajahs to be freed with him and was told he could take as many as could hold onto his cloak as he left – he added long tassels to his cloak and all 52 were able to escape.

Each Sikh festival, whether it is a mela or a gurburb, is centred upon the Guru Granth Sahib as the focal point of Sikh life. The holy book is often carried in procession through the streets as part of the festival. An **Akhand Path** (a continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib, taking about forty-eight hours) is frequently part of the celebrations. Baisakhi also includes amrit ceremonies and the renewal of the flag (nishan sahib) which is flown outside the gurdwara. With the exception of Baisakhi, Sikh festivals are based on a lunar calendar, therefore the date changes against the Gregorian calendar.

The **Khalsa**. At the **Baisakhi** celebrations of 1699 Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa, the community of baptised Sikhs. The Guru dramatically used the occasion to emphasise that Sikhs should be willing to die for their faith. Those who offered their lives were initiated into the Khalsa by drinking and being sprinkled with **amrit** (sweetened water stirred with a two-edged sword). The initiates were told they were now members of a family. The word “Khalsa” itself means both “pure ones” and the “Guru’s own”. The amrit ceremony is still used as the means of initiation into the Khalsa; it is carried out in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib by any five Khalsa Sikhs (the panj piare). See *Amrit Sanskar* below.

## THE FIVE KS

- **Kesh** The uncut hair (head, face, body). Sikhs do not cut their hair as they consider it to be God given. They keep their hair very clean.
- **Kangha** The small wooden comb which keeps the hair tidy. It is a reminder to Sikhs to keep their lives well-ordered.
- **Kirpan** The Kirpan is a short sword, most Sikhs carry one about 15cms long. It signifies honour, dignity, bravery and the Sikh duty to defend the weak and oppressed and to uphold the truth. It should never be drawn in anger, but once drawn it is not re-sheathed without the shedding of blood.
- **Kara** The Kara is a steel bracelet worn on the right wrist (unless the wearer is left-handed). The circle of the bracelet is a symbol of God and of the unity of the Khalsa. Steel symbolises strength and fighting for right.
- **Kachs** (kaccha, kaachera) Short trousers or underpants tied with a drawstring. They allow freedom of movement in battle (unlike the dhoti). The

Kachs also symbolise purity and modesty, and remind Sikhs to be faithful to their marriage.

The turban (keshki) is often wrongly thought to be one of the 5Ks. It is worn in imitation of the Gurus themselves. The turban cloth may be from 2 to 4.5 metres long and will be starched. Underneath the turban, hair is combed into a bun and secured with a cloth called a **patka**. The turban cloth is then folded lengthways, (this may be held in the teeth when tying). About 15cms of cloth is draped over the left shoulder, the rest is wrapped around the head from left to right and the end tucked in at the forehead and spread to cover the top of the hair. The draped piece tucks in at the back. There is no significance in the colour of the turban, although occasionally this may indicate adherence to a particular political party. A white turban may indicate mourning and a red one will be worn for weddings.

In India the turban was once a sign of authority worn by rulers only. Guru Gobind Singh wore the turban to show that Sikhs are powerful men and unafraid.

Sikh boys usually begin wearing a turban once they can tie it for themselves (about ten years). Younger boys will normally wear just the patka. Women normally cover their hair with a scarf known as a **chunni** or **dupatta** although some baptised Sikh women choose to wear a turban.

It is well known that there have been special difficulties for turban wearing Sikhs in this country e.g. in jobs which require certain uniforms and the motor cycle crash helmet law.

## rites of passage

Dear son, this is your mother's blessing. May God never be out of your mind, even for a moment. Meditation on God should be your constant concern. It purges people from all faults. May God, the Guru, be kind to you. May you love the company of God's people. May God robe you with honour and may your food be the singing of God's praises.

Guru Granth Sahib 496

Hymn used at baby namina ceremony

A Sikh **baby** is a gift from God. When a child is born, the opening words of the Guru Granth Sahib are whispered in their ear and amrit placed on their tongue. Gifts will be both given and received to celebrate the birth. The **naming** of the child takes place in a ceremony at the gurdwara, following on from the main worship.

The Guru Granth Sahib is opened at random and the first letter on the left-hand page will be the initial letter of the child's name. Most Sikh names can be used for both boys and girls and usually have a particular meaning, e.g. Bishram is "peace". The name is announced to the congregation who respond with "Sat sri akal" ("God is truth"). It will be the decision of the child itself in later life whether to become a full khalsa Sikh (see under Khalsa).

**Amrit Sanskar.** Initiation into the Khalsa usually takes place between the ages of 16 –18, although many Sikhs leave it much later in life. The ceremony is conducted by five Sikhs who represent the panj piare. They prepare the amrit by stirring water with sugar in an iron bowl and the initiate (kneeling on their left knee in the warrior position) has amrit poured five times into their hands to drink, five times sprinkled in the eyes, and five times on the head. Baptised Khalsa Sikhs make five promises: to wear the 5Ks; to follow the teaching of the Gurus and the Guru Granth Sahib ; to accept responsibility for service to the brotherhood; to not commit adultery, nor use tobacco or drugs; to work hard and give to charity. Men take the surname Singh (lion), women are Kaur (princess); this reasserts that all are members of one family. Khalsa Sikhs should pray daily, tithe themselves, never remove hair, not eat Muslim halal meat. Breaking any of these rules (kurahts) makes one an apostate (patit) and the Sikh would have to repeat and go through the amrit ceremony once more to return to the Khalsa. Breaking lesser prohibitions (tankhas) (e.g. drinking alcohol, dying the hair) will result in a practical penance e.g. cleaning the shoes of worshippers in the gurdwara.

The Sikh marriage ceremony is called **Anand Karaj** which means “ceremony of joy”. The marriage is not just a social contract, but also a spiritual union which echoes the union of the soul with God. The presence of the Guru Granth Sahib is necessary for the ceremony but any Sikh can officiate at the wedding. The service begins with prayers and scripture reading and a lecture on the duties of marriage. The couple indicate their assent to the union and are linked by both holding the ends of a pala or scarf which is a symbol of the bond between them. The lavan, or wedding hymn, was written especially for weddings by Guru Ram Das. During the singing of the four stanzas of the **Lavan** the couple circle the Guru Granth Sahib four times holding the pala. At the end of the circling the couple are considered married. Lavan describes both the spiritual life and the marital relationship; its four key steps are awe, love, restraint and harmony. After the prayer Ardas come gifts of coconut and money. The bride usually wears red and the groom is garlanded or wears a wedding turban.

Many marriages are arranged – but usually with the consent of both parties.

As a Sikh **dies** the family will gather at the bedside to read them the scriptures, particularly Sukhmani, the psalm of peace. Sikhs are told to avoid shows of grief because death marks the transition from a life of worldly distraction to the eternal presence of God. The body will be **cremated** as soon as possible. It will first be washed and dressed in the 5Ks. At the funeral, Ardas prayers and the evening prayer, Kirtan Sohila, will be said. Over several days there will probably be a complete reading of the Guru Granth Sahib (the Sehaj Path) which will be ended with a **Bhog** ceremony. The ashes will usually be scattered on water and there will not be a memorial set up.

The dead keep their link with the living through the memory of their good deeds.

Guru Granth Sahib 143

Sikhs believe in the transmigration of souls, one’s human life is the opportunity to be united with God; it is possible to live a liberated God-centred life. Guru Nanak described five **Khands** through which the personality passes in its way to oneness with God; only those who do so in this life will pass into eternal bliss upon death. If

you choose to make bad choices in this life and miss your opportunities then the soul will be born again into another body. The family into which you are reborn will be decided by your actions in your previous life.

## LIVING A SIKH LIFE

Khalsa Sikhs should live as warriors for God. This means they should not use tobacco, alcohol or drugs (other than medication) as these things are harmful, slow down the mind and body, and make one more vulnerable to disease and illness.

It is a basic Sikh belief that all human beings are equal (including the equality of men and women). In setting up the Khalsa, Sikhs deliberately rejected the Hindu caste system in which they lived and associated ideas of purity and pollution. This is seen particularly in the sharing of Kara prashad and the langar. Women have always been the spiritual equals of men in the Sikh faith and may undertake all the same duties, including reading the Scriptures publicly and being one of the **panj piare**. However, social attitudes may often lag behind religious beliefs.

For Sikhs, life is a spiritual journey in which there are three important dimensions:

- **Nam Japna.** Remembering God throughout the day in worship, prayer, praise and reading the scriptures. Such prayer and meditation should be a constant attitude of heart so that one is always concentrating on God, although this may be at a subconscious level.
- **Kirat karni.** Earning one's living by honest means and hard work is a duty to God. Sikhs should work for their living and not beg. Work should provide for one's basic needs and help support the needy. Wealth should not be pursued for its own sake. Earning an honest living and supporting one's family are considered superior to a life of asceticism.
- **Vand Chhakna.** One should share one's earnings with others. Sikhs normally voluntarily put aside at least one tenth of their income for this purpose.

The focus of life is thus **Sewa**, which is service to God and service to others. This service is threefold:

- **Tan** (physical). Service to the community e.g. in the langar
- **Man** (mental). Service to the Guru e.g. studying the Guru Granth Sahib, talking to people about God
- **Dhan** (material). Service to humanity e.g. charitable giving, working in a day-care centre.

There is nothing in me that is mine, everything is yours. Offering you what is already yours costs me nothing.

Sewa should be selfless, God-centred, service, given with no thought of reward or even of personal satisfaction. It is part of the right relationship with God.

Hierarchy in Indian families is very important; there are at least 50 Punjabi words to demonstrate different forms of kinship. Children will learn very early the degrees of relationship and the respect and responsibility that families feel for each other.

Asian cultures prescribe certain conduct for children which will be found also in western Sikh communities. This includes:

- children should not offer their own opinions in the presence of elders or contradict them.
- eye contact is rude
- honour your parent. This includes bowing in front of senior members of the family and touching their feet as a sign of respect (**hutta tekna**).

**Nam japo, kirt karo, vand chako**

*Keep God in mind always, work honestly, give to charity.*