

## Core Sikh Beliefs

- Sikhism recognizes a single Creator who sustains all people of all faiths.
- Everyone has equal status in the eyes of God. All positions of authority in Sikh religious life are open to both men and women.
- Sikhism considers no place, day or time more sacred than another. Only the place and time when God is remembered are sacred.
- Sikhism does not have a clergy. With God's grace, all human beings are capable of understanding and appreciating God.
- Everyone has the sacred duty to make a contribution to the welfare of humanity. The more fortunate have an obligation to help the less fortunate. All Sikhs must donate ten percent of their income and time to some humanitarian cause.
- Sikhism does not believe in seeking rewards during an afterlife. This life is to be lived as our only opportunity to realize the Divine.

## Gurdwara

The Gurdwara is the Sikh house of worship. Historically, it has served as a focal point for Sikh communities. All Gurdwaras across the globe support the Sikh institution called *langar*, which is a free community kitchen open to all. Visitors, irrespective of their religion, can expect shelter, comfort and food at all Gurdwaras.

Services in a Gurdwara consist of singing hymns from the Sikh scripture as well as exposition of Sikh history. Since Sikhism does not believe in an ordained priestly class, any woman or man from the congregation may lead religious services.

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For more information on Sikhs and Sikhism please visit [www.sikhcoalition.org](http://www.sikhcoalition.org), email [info@sikhcoalition.org](mailto:info@sikhcoalition.org), or write to: The Sikh Coalition, P.O. Box 7132, New York, NY 10150-7132, United States.





**S**ikhs are a people sharing common religious, social and political institutions. Twenty-six million people adhere to Sikhism, the fifth largest religion in the world. Sikhism teaches that all human beings are equal and that they can realize the divine within them through devotion to God, truthful living, pursuit of justice and service to humanity. The Sikh way was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and shaped by his nine successors in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the Punjab, the Sikh homeland in South Asia.

### **The Sikh Gurus**

For the Sikhs, "Guru" means spiritual enlightener and divine messenger. Guru Nanak based his teachings on divine revelation. In his lifetime, he denounced political tyranny and social injustice. The Gurus who followed him gave a concrete identity to institutions started by Guru Nanak. The last Guru, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) did not appoint a human successor. Instead, he gave



*Clockwise: Kirpan, Kanga and Kara are some of the Sikh articles of faith.*



*Darbar Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple, is located in Amritsar, Punjab. It is the theo-political capital of the Sikhs.*



*A Sikh reading the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scripture. A royal whisk in hand is majestically oscillated over the scripture as a reminder that God's revelation is sovereign.*

the authority of the Sikhs to the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the Sikh scripture) and the *Guru Khalsa Panth* (the committed Sikh believers initiated through a special ceremony).

### **The Sikh Scripture (Guru Granth Sahib)**

The *Guru Granth Sahib* teaches through rich poetry, which is generally sung with Sikh classical music. It contains no rules or laws, but only praises of God. *Guru Granth Sahib* is timeless because its message is as applicable today as it was when it was revealed. The *Guru Granth Sahib* contains the writings of many non-Sikhs along with the Sikh Gurus, making the Sikh scripture truly universal.

### **Order of the Khalsa (Guru Khalsa Panth)**

On March 30, 1699, the last Sikh Guru founded the Order of the Khalsa, which established a society dedicated to the practice of essential Sikh values: truthfulness, trust, loyalty, productive labor, sharing, integrity and spirituality. Sikhs are expected to devote themselves to the service of society. They are famous for defending the oppressed and the downtrodden. All Sikhs initiated into the Order of the Khalsa can be identified by their articles of faith.

### **Articles of Faith (Kakaar)**

Sikhs display their commitment to their beliefs by wearing the Sikh articles of faith. Sikhs do not cut their hair, and cover it with a turban or a scarf. They wear the *Kirpan* suspended near their waist with a strap, the *Kanga* tucked neatly in their hair, the *Kachhera* much like under-shorts and the *Kara* around their wrist like a bracelet (see images above). All of these articles of faith have deep spiritual meaning. What they represent cannot be adequately translated into words because of their profound symbolic and metaphysical significance.