

Year 8 Sikhism



The story of The First Vaisakhi

Guru Gobind Singh asked if anyone was so committed to the religion that they were prepared to give his head to him (i.e. accept death). Eventually a Sikh stood up and approached the Guru and offered his life to him. Guru Singh slowly led him into a tent where he was seen no more. Slowly, one by one, five Sikhs accepted the Guru's request and were all led away into the same tent. Each time the Guru emerged from the tent with his sword dripping with blood, leaving the crowd stunned and silent. Guru Gobind Singh finally emerged from the tent with the same five Sikhs all dressed identically. He explained that it had been a test of their faith and that as a reward they would be the future leader. The Guru then initiated them into the Khalsa which is a special club, through a special ceremony. These five Sikhs were named the Panj Pyaras (the Five Beloved Ones).

The Five Ks

The Five Ks are five items that Guru Gobind Singh commanded Khalsa Sikhs to wear at all times.



Kesh	Uncut long hair and beard in the case of men that shows a sign of spiritual devotion as well as a respect for the perfection of God's creation. Kept neat under a turban.
Kangha	A small wooden comb used twice a day that is worn in the hair at all times and covered by a turban.
Kara	An iron bracelet that is circular to symbolise that God is never ending.
Kachera	A shalwar-undergarment with a tie knot worn by baptised Sikhs. They must not come below the knee and were originally made as part of a Sikh soldier's uniform.
Kirpan	A dagger or sword of any size and shape which symbolises a Sikh's duty to come to the defence of others in peril. It should be worn at all times and is often covered in a sheath. The single cutting edge may be sharp or blunt.

Guru Nanak

When Nanak was born the two main religions were Hinduism and Islam. His family were Hindus who had a Caste System. In this system people were born into a certain 'class' which decided how important they were. For example, the most important were the priests and had a great life. However, at the bottom were the 'untouchables' who had the hardest life. They couldn't marry outside their caste, had no education and were not allowed in public places including the Temple. Nanak thought this was unfair and wanted to create a fairer system.

Nanak in the River

Every morning Nanak would go to the river to bath and pray. One morning his friend realized that he had gone into the river as usual but had not come out. All the villagers searched the banks and trawled the river with nets but with no luck. Eventually they accepted that Nanak must have drowned. Three days later, Nanak came out of the river, acting strange and distant. He didn't speak for some time until he eventually explained that he had a spiritual experience with God in the river. As a result the new religion was born.

Gurdwara and the Langar

In a Gurdwara men and women sit separately to ensure they do not get distracted. They leave the shoes at the door and sit on the floor so they are not higher than their holy book. There will be music and readings from the Guru Grath Sahib. Afterwards every one shares in a meal from the Langar. This is a kitchen where large amounts of food are prepared. Everyone is invited to eat for free, even if you are not a Sikh. The food is vegetarian to ensure no one is excluded. Sikhs are happy to cook and donate the food because Guru Nanak taught that generosity and feeding the community are central to making God happy.

How is the Guru Granth Sahib treated by Sikhs?

The room it's kept in must be...

Given fresh offerings of food and drink every day
Kept clean, kept warm in winter and cool in summer
In the day it must be kept on a throne with a canopy
Every morning it is dressed in nice new clothes
Every night it is put to bed in its own 'bedroom'

If in the same room they must...

Be clean, remove shoes and socks, not drink or eat,
remain silent, cover their head
No one is allowed to be higher than it
It must be fanned with a special fan
Don't point your feet at it

Key Terms

Khanda - This is the symbol of the Sikh faith.

Guru Granth Sahib - The Guru Granth Sahib is the holy scripture for Sikhs and is regarded as the living Guru.

Gurdwara - A place of assembly and worship for Sikhs where they believe God dwells. It allows them to learn more about their religion and to feel part of a community.

Khalsa - The name of the group of committed Sikhs started by Gobin Singh. Upon initiation, male Khalsa Sikhs are given the title Singh and females Kaur.