

# *Sikhism*

## SIKHISM

1. **History:** Sikhism emerged in the Punjab, North India, in the 15th century. At first it was a reform movement within Hinduism in response to the strong monotheism and absolutism of Islam which had conquered and ruled the area for almost five centuries, and which had condemned the idolotry of Hinduism.

1.1 Early pacifist and missionary era. During the first five Gurus, Sikhism was basically a reform movement that sought to change Hinduism to monotheism:

- 1.11 Nanak - founder: Announced, "There is no Hindu, no Muslim". He visited Saudia Arabia and is still highly honored there.
- 1.12 Angad: adopted the Gurmukhi script, introduced the **tangar** or common kitchen to serve the poor and need (not only Sikhs).
- 1.13 Amar Das: sent missionaries throughout India.
- 1.14 Ram Das: laid the foundations for the Golden Temple, instituted the tithe for general funding of relief and religious ministries.
- 1.15 Arjun: finished the Golden Temple, compiled the Granth Sahib, first martyr.

1.2 Late militant era. Due to persecution first by the Mugals, and then by the British, Sikhism was turned into a militant order.

- 1.21 Hargobind: began organizing the Sikhs into a military order.
- 1.22 Har Rai: continued the organization.
- 1.23 Har Kishan: died while serving cholera victims in Delhi - a story still widely told as an example of selfless ministry to others.
- 1.24 Tegh Bahadur: wrote hymns, failed in attempting to establish a Sikh state in Anandpur, executed by Aurangzeb.
- 1.25 Gobind Singh: the Dasam (Tenth) Granth. Instituted the 5 K's and the Khalsa. Declared there would be no more Gurus, and that the Adi Granth would become the Guru or Granth Sahib.

## 2. Community Distinctives:

2.1 The Five K's.

- 2.11 **kesh** - hair and beard unshorn.
- 2.12 **kangha** - a comb in the hair.
- 2.13 **kuchha** - a pair of short.
- 2.14 **kara** - a sharp steel bangle on the right wrist.
- 2.15 **kirpan** - a knife carried on the person.

2.2 The Khalsa - the military order to which Sikhs belong. The term Singh used by most Sikhs means Lion.

2.3 The Gurdwara - the temple where the Granth Sahib is kept. The Golden Temple in Amritsar has four doorways to show that all four varna are welcome. It is a symbolic rejection of the caste system.

## 3. Sikh Theology:

3.1 God is transcendent and one. He is also immanent.

3.2 The Granth Sahib is the last Guru, the source of all authority and theology. It is largely a collection of ragas or hymns.

- 3.3 The essence of Sikhism is to call on the name of God, the Lord.
- 3.4 Caste, pilgrimage, penance, and asceticism are rejected as empty and useless. "Asceticism only makes one thin."
- 3.5 Accepts karma, samsara (into 84 lakhs species).
- 3.6 Prasad (God helps those who make the first move), and xaris (God is gracious and forgiving to those who approach him).
- 3.7 Three major instructions in Adi Granth:
  - remembrance of the Name of the Lord.
  - practice of godly qualities in life.
  - self-surrender to God

#### 4. Sikh Ethics:

- 4.1 Stress strong family ties and loyalties.
- 4.2 Stress work ethics - very successful: make up a high proportion of India's military officers, writers (Kushwant Singh, etc), government officials, taxi drivers, mechanics, and farmers. Punjab produces almost a half of India's agricultural goods.
- 4.3 Five cardinal virtues that overcome five basic vices:
  - self-restraint over lust
  - contentment over greed
  - devotion to duty over worldly attraction
  - modesty over anger
  - toleration over anger
- 4.4 Stress purity - and wear white as a symbol.
- 4.5 Seven major injunctions.
  - remain a householder throughout life.
  - work for the subsistence of the family.
  - help the needy and serve the society according to one's aptitude.
  - imbibe godly qualities and virtues.
  - discard all evil forces and vices.
  - have faith in One and only One God.
  - attain spiritual heights with the grace of the Guru and through the remembrance of the Name.

#### 5. Modern Sikhism.

- 5.1 Current efforts to establish an independent Khalistan in India.
- 5.2 Migration to Canada and Southern California as agriculturalists.

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# THE SIKHI VALUE SYSTEM

