

Sikhism revision notes.

Sikhism is a religion which **started around 500 years ago**. We know that it **started in India**, where it is still strong. However, Sikhs have also now moved around the world and taken their religious traditions with them, so there is a fairly large Sikh population in Britain.

Sikhism was started by **Nanak**, who lived from 1469 – 1539. He lived in the Punjab area of India, where the religion of the time would have been Hinduism. Nanak, even as a child, was always on the side of the poor and he would often give whatever he had away to help others. He also did not like the idea which was around at that time that people were higher or lower than each other depending on what caste they were born into. He **wanted to show that everyone was equal** and always emphasised that in his actions. It seems that Nanak was blessed even from an early age – a cobra sheltered him for the sun instead of attacking him and he survived being under water for three days as an adult.

Sikhs believe in **one main God. They sometimes refer to this God as Ek Onkar**. However, the biggest important idea and object for them is the **Guru Granth Sahib, which is the holy book of Sikhism and the main source of authority in the religion**. It is very prominently displayed in the Gurdwara – it takes pride of place in the main prayer hall and the first thing which a Sikh will do when entering the prayer hall is bow to the Guru Granth Sahib and make an offering of food or money which will then be used in the Gurdwara. The Guru Granth Sahib is often fanned during the day by a team of volunteers to show it respect and it will be removed every evening and put in a separate room called the Sach Khand as its resting place before being brought back to the prayer hall in the morning.

For a Sikh, the Gurdwara is a very important building. They remove shoes and wash hands before entering the main prayer hall and always show great respect during the services. Men and women are in the same room but sit single gender. Services are often held on a Sunday but there is no real set day for worship and the Gurdwara is generally busy with people even on weekdays. At times, there are continuous readings of the Guru Granth Sahib, which would take several days. The other very important aspect of the Gurdwara is the **Langar, which is the name given both to the kitchen area and the food prepared there. Food is on offer every day in the Gurdwara, provided and prepared by the Sikh community which is called sewa (service to others). It was part of Guru Nanak's life to help others and he said that Sikhs had to do the same**. This food will be **always vegetarian** so it is acceptable for all

people to eat and is provided **free of charge** to anyone. There have also been occasions when Sikhs have prepared food and taken it out onto the streets to serve the homeless. These actions are based on teachings such as

“Let all share equally – let no one be seen as an outsider” (Guru Arjan)

One of the most obvious signs of being a Sikh is the wearing of the **5K's**. **These are 5 objects which mark out a person to be a Sikh and part of the Khalsa** – the group of baptised Sikhs. These people, by joining the Khalsa, promise to keep to the rules of Sikhism and to show this in how they dress. The 5 K's are:-

Kesh – uncut hair

Kanga – comb to keep hair in place

Kaccha – shorts worn as an undergarment

Kara – steel bangle

Kirpan – short sword (often now a necklace to meet the rules of many countries)