




Ealing Agreed Syllabus: guidance for teachers

KS2.5: Beliefs and practices, Sikh

Overall aim: to introduce and explore some of the key Sikh beliefs and practices.

<i>A thoughtful child: Guru Nanak</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	learn that the first Sikh teacher was a man called Guru Nanak who started questioning his beliefs at a young age; they will begin to understand the importance of thinking and asking questions.
<i>Aim:</i> to learn about the origins of the Sikh faith.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
Note: there has been a request by the local Sikh community to refer to “the Sikh faith” rather than “Sikhism”. Also, if you are performing an assessment during this unit, tell class that they will be expected to write a paragraph about something they found interesting in the lesson.		
Starter: Show a picture of Guru Nanak. Ask if anyone in the class recognises who it is, and let them tell what they know about him. What is a guru? How is a guru different from a teacher? Is there a difference?		
Activity 1: Tell class the story of Guru Nanak refusing the sacred thread (i.e. the Hindu rite of passage ceremony, see background information, p15). What does the class think he meant when he said: “Let mercy be the cotton, contentment the thread, continence the knot and truth the twist. O priest! If you have such a thread, give it to me. It’ll not wear out, nor get soiled, nor burnt, nor lost.”		
Activity 2: Discuss with class how Nanak’s parents might have felt, and also how the Hindu priest might have felt. Compare this story with the story of Jesus talking to the temple priests when he was twelve (Luke 2: 39-52). Point out that both Jesus and Guru Nanak thought about things deeply, and that they questioned the things they were taught as a young age. Add that the prophet Muhammad also thought about things deeply, and that he, too, was affected by being exposed to different faiths, i.e. Judaism and Christianity. Ask class to volunteer any examples of things that have made them stop and think.		

<p>Activity 3: Talk about the effects of growing up in a community of people who believe different things. How many of the class have friends or neighbours who believe different things than they do? Do they talk about these differences? Point out that in many pictures of the adult Guru Nanak he is wearing the yellow robes of a Hindu saint and the turban and prayer beads of a Muslim. Ask class to share some of their experiences of having friends from a different religion or belief.</p>	
<p>Activity 4: Discuss with the class how we can learn through asking questions, and how sometimes difficult questions lead to new ideas. Point out that the word 'Sikh' comes from a verb meaning 'to learn', again stressing the importance of asking questions.</p>	
<p>Plenary: Class offers examples of 'difficult questions' they might like to ask a teacher or religious leader. What do they imagine the response might be? How easy or difficult would they find it to challenge something a grown-up tells them?</p>	

<i>Ek Onkar: God is One</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	learn that Sikhs believe in one God who made everything; they begin to think about how people can have different beliefs yet still belong to a common humanity.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore the Sikh conception of God.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Going back to the last lesson, point out that one of Guru Nanak's first teachings is found in a prayer known as the Mool Mantar, which appears at the very beginning of the Sikh holy book. Show class a picture of the Ek Onkar symbol, and play an audio version of the Mool Mantar (several are available on YouTube). Explain what 'Ek Onkar' means, and tell class that for Sikhs the Mool Mantar is probably the most important prayer.</p>		 <p>Ek Onkar</p>
<p>Activity 1: Discuss in simplified form the ideas about God (e.g. only one God, creator, immortal, beyond birth and death) that are found in the Mool Mantar (see background information).</p>		<p>Key beliefs and values inherent in the Mool Mantar:</p> <p>http://www.reonline.org.uk/specials/ks4_sikhism/mool_mantar.php</p>
<p>Activity 2: Look at the Sikh symbol of the <i>khanda</i>, perhaps on a picture of the <i>Nisan Sahib</i>, the flag flying in front of most gurdwaras. Talk about the various elements that make up the khanda, and how these various features reflect Sikh beliefs. Explain the concept of <i>miri-piri</i> (i.e. temporal and spiritual authority), putting it in the historical context (i.e. of the Sikhs' need to defend themselves—and their Hindu neighbours—against persecution by the Mughals).</p>		<p>http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php?title=Nishan_Sahib</p>
<p>Activity 3: Look at the symbol of an unbroken circle, and consider the different meanings that are applied to it. Relate it to the image of Earth and the idea of 'one world'. Again, returning to Sikh beliefs, discuss how the belief in one God can lead to the belief in a common humanity without divisions, a belief which motivates Sikhs to treat all people with the same respect.</p>		

<p>Activity 4: As a class, create a logo and phrase that, for the group, sums up the idea that everyone should be treated equally.</p>	
<p>Plenary: Tell the story of Guru Nank and Dunni Chand (see background information, p18). How does this story fit into the idea that all people are equal?</p>	

Founding of the khalsa: Guru Gobind Singh	Pupils will	understand that the Sikh religion and community was shaped by ten human gurus over several generations; they will think about people in their lives that have served as role models.	
Aim: To explore the development of the Sikh religion and community.	SEN		
	Gifted		
Possible activities		Suggested resources	
Starter: Look at a poster/picture(s) of the ten Sikh gurus. Remind the class that the Sikh religion was shaped by the wisdom and actions of these ten teachers over the course of nearly 240 years. Starting with Guru Nanak, make a timeline of the ten gurus, and briefly discuss one item of significance for which each guru is remembered. Note: it is important to point out that although most Sikhs believe that there were only ten human gurus, some Sikhs (e.g. the Namdhari tradition) believe in an unbroken succession of human gurus that extends down to the present day.		Poster of the ten Sikh gurus Picture of Baisakhi parade showing five Sikhs at the head of the procession symbolising the panj piara, e.g:	
Activity 1: Briefly discuss the historical context leading up to the founding of the khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, i.e. Gobind Singh’s need to turn a group of Punjabi farmers into warriors capable of defending themselves against persecution by the Mughal rulers.		http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php?title=Nishan_Sahib	
Activity 2: Tell the story of the founding of the khalsa on the occasion of the festival of Vaisakhi in 1699, including the stirring of sugar into water to create amrit, Gobind Singh’s asking for volunteers to ‘offer up their heads’ and taking the volunteers out of sight of the crowd, allegedly to take off their heads. Discuss what the individual panj piara, Guru Gobind Singh, and the observers in the crowd might have felt.		It is important to note that not all Sikhs look the same, e.g. wear turbans and keep their hair long. This lesson is a chance to illustrate religious diversity within a single tradition through the diversity of the Sikh pupils in the class/school.	
Activity 3: Point out that even today Sikhs become members of the congregation of believers (i.e. the <i>khalsa</i>) during an initiation ceremony called the <i>amrit sanskar</i> (see background information, p23).			
Activity 4: Get class to share experiences of ‘joining’ ceremonies that they might have participated in, e.g. boy scouts or girl guides, a sports team, Christian baptism etc. What was the atmosphere of the ceremony? Were the participants given any signs, e.g. special pins or insignia? How does it feel to belong to a special community?		Some information about the Namdhari Sikh community in Southall can be found here: http://kukasikhs.com/kukasikhs-wp/	

<p>Activity 5: Ask class about the 5Ks, the five signs of Sikhism, showing examples if possible. (Note: it is most likely that the 5Ks will have come up in a previous lesson, and this then becomes a chance to link the historical founding of the khalsa with the wearing of the 5Ks.)</p>	
<p>Conclusion: Remind the class that Sikhs join the khalsa today in a ceremony that is based on the events of Vaisakhi 1699. Compare this to the Christian rite of communion, i.e. that it, too, is based on a past event, the Last Supper. Can the class think of other examples of rituals or festivals that have their roots in past occurrences (e.g. Jewish Passover)?</p>	

<i>Guru Granth Sahib</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	know that the Guru Granth Sahib is considered by most Sikhs to be the living Guru, and that it is treated with great respect by all Sikhs; they will think about people, objects, books etc. that they respect, and to which they give special treatment.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore rituals and beliefs around the Sikh sacred text.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
<p>Starter: Brainstorm with class the idea of authority: e.g. who is the head of the school? Who is the authority in the class? Let children from the various religious/philosophical traditions represented in the class volunteer who they think is the authority in their tradition? Look at the difference between a local authority (e.g. local imam or priest) and more senior authorities such as the Pope. If there are children from atheist households in the class, ask them about people whose opinions and ideas they respect for their ideas or humanitarian actions.</p>		
<p>Activity 1: Looking at the poster of the ten gurus from the previous lesson, tell class how the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, passed the religious authority of the Sikhs to their holy book. And that most Sikhs believe that the Guru Granth Sahib is the 'living guru'. However be sure and point out that there are groups of Sikhs (e.g. Namdhari Sikhs) who believe that there is an unbroken succession of human gurus down to the present.</p>		en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Namdhari
<p>Activity2: Discuss how you might treat a very special guest that was coming to visit. What special arrangements might be made, e.g. cleaning the house, giving the guest the most comfortable chair, perhaps giving up your bedroom for the guest?</p>		

Activity3: Tell class about the fifth guru, Guru Arjan, who made the first collection of hymns that would become the Sikh sacred book. Mention that he would put the book to rest in his own bed and sleep on the floor—that is how much he respected it. Point out that most Sikh homes have a special place to keep the Guru Granth Sahib, e.g. a special closet or in larger homes a separate prayer room.

Activity 4: Show class a video of rituals surrounding the Guru Granth Sahib (e.g. from the Cleo website—the link at left takes you to an index page on which you can find two items, one illustrating the morning parkash ceremony, and another the evening ceremony where the book is put away—or the Espresso site on the LGfL, which shows the Guru Granth Sahib in situ in the gurdwara). Point out that these ceremonies show the great respect that Sikhs show to their scripture. Read excerpts from the quote (see background info, p 25), which shows the relationship of these rituals to those granted to a king. Explain that the first Sikhs lived at a time when the Mughal Emperors lived in palaces of great splendour. That these rituals developed to show that the Sikhs indicated their allegiance to the spiritual authority of the Guru Granth Sahib rather than to the ruling Mughals.

Plenary: Get class to volunteer stories about anything in their home—e.g. a special toy, stuffed doll, book they love—that they treat in a special way. Be sure to do this activity in a way the doesn't allow for fun-poking; the aim is to get children to see how it is a natural human response to give certain objects, books or films special treatment. Why are these objects treated with respect? Look at some of the feelings they elicit (e.g. a film or book that is inspiring).

Cleo site: morning parkash ceremony and evening ceremony:

<http://www.cleo.net.uk/resources/index.php?ks=3&cur=15>

Espresso site:

Guru Granth Sahib video:

http://content.lgfl.org.uk/secure/faiths/t2_faiths/sikhism/video_holy_book.html#

<i>Sikh Panth</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	learn about some aspects of Sikh worship; they will think about some ceremonies of initiation that they have undergone or witnessed.
<i>Aim:</i> to explore Sikh rituals and rites of passage.	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
Starter: Review a word list of important terms discussed so far, e.g. guru, Guru Granth Sahib, amrit, Mool Mantar, Ek Onkar. Introduce the term <i>panth</i> , meaning ‘path’, and point out that the word refers to both the Sikh community and the Sikh way of life.		Mp3 of the Kirtan Sohila and other Sikh prayers: http://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Bani
Activity 1: Ask Sikh pupils or a Sikh member of staff to tell class what aspects of Sikh worship are important to them. For example, saying the daily prayers, receiving karah parshad, singing or listening to hymns (<i>kirtan</i>).		Mp3 of Ardas: http://www.sachosatram.com/aartisahib.htm
Activity 2: Go back to the first guru, Guru Nanak, and remind class that Nanak lived in a village where there were both Muslims and Hindus, and that he was influenced by both. Point out that, like Islam, there are five important prayers that Sikhs are meant to say daily. If there are Sikh pupils in the class, ask them if they know the names of these prayers. (The morning prayers are Jap Ji, Jaap Sahib and Swayyas, the evening prayers are called Raheras, and the bedtime prayer is the Kirtan Sohila.)		For an illustrated account of a Sikh wedding ceremony: http://www.sikhs.org/wedding/
Activity 3: Play a recording of a Sikh prayer, e.g. Ardas, the prayer said before any important activity or the Kirtan Sohila, the prayer said before going to bed.		For information about all the Sikh ceremonies: http://www.thaisikh.org/sikhism/sikhceremony_th.php
Activity 4: Remind class about the ceremony of initiation (<i>amrit sanskar</i>) and speak briefly about the Sikh ceremonies of naming, first turban (<i>dandar basti</i>), marriage (<i>anand karaj</i>) and death. If you have any Sikh boys in the class who wear the turban, perhaps they can talk about the first time they wore the turban. Explain the importance of the names Singh (‘lion’) and Kaur (‘princess’) given to all Sikh children, i.e. at the time the initiation ceremony came into being, Sikh men were prepared to fight for their beliefs, and referring to women as ‘princess’ grants them an importance that wasn’t typical for women in those days.		

<p>Plenary: Announce to the class that you are going to mark the end of the lesson in a special way and then give them each a boiled sweet (making sure that they are all allowed to eat such a thing). If the class has visited a gurdwara and have received karah prashad, remind them about that. If not, explain that <i>karah prashad</i> is a ceremonial sweet that is presented during ceremonies and then eaten after the service by those who are present. Although a similar tradition exists in Hinduism (<i>parsad</i>), Guru Nanak used <i>prashad</i> in an attempt to eliminate the class distinctions among his congregation by having everyone served from the same bowl. It is symbolic of the abundance and sustenance that Sikhs attribute to God (<i>Waheguru</i>, 'wonderful guru'), and that everything coming to them in life is God's gift (<i>prashad</i>) and is therefore sweet. Sikhs believe that to receive prashad is to show that you are not distancing yourself by rank or caste, but are willing to share what God's community is offering you.</p> <p>In a similar manner, point out that what you are doing in this activity (i.e. the distribution of sweets) is symbolic of the class sharing learning and understanding.</p>	<p>Bag of boiled sweets</p>
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<i>Sikh beliefs, values and ethics</i>	<i>Pupils will</i>	learn how Sikhs value the process of remembering God in everything they do, earning an honest living and sharing with others; they will think about what values are important to them, and ways they express these values in their day-to-day lives.
<i>Aim:</i> to learn about <i>nam japna</i> , <i>vand chhakna</i> and <i>kirat karni</i> .	<i>SEN</i>	
	<i>Gifted</i>	
Possible activities		Suggested resources
Starter: Read the <i>shabad</i> by Kabir from the Guru Granth Sahib (see background information, p27) or play a version on YT. Point out that Kabir was a contemporary of Guru Nanak, and that 292 of his hymns are included in the Guru Granth Sahib. This particular shabad expresses the Sikh belief that all humans are equal.		
Activity 1: Starting with the Sikh belief in equality, ask class to volunteer other important values to be added to the list.		
Activity 2: Introduce the following terms: <i>nam Japna</i> , <i>vand chhakna</i> and <i>kirat karni</i> (see background information, p28). Point out that these are values that are important to Sikhs, that they are considered pillars or golden rules of behaviour for Sikhs. Look at ways these values could be expressed in non-religious terms, e.g. being 'mindful' in everything you do, contributing to your school, family or society through work, and a willingness to share.		
Activity 3: Tell the story of Bhago and Lalo (see background information, p28) as an example of the spirit of <i>kirat karni</i> , i.e. working hard to support oneself and one's family without exploiting others. Ask class to give other examples that illustrate this value.		
Activity 4: Tell the story of Bhai Kanhaiya (see background information, p28) as an example of <i>vand chhakna</i> , the need to help others without prejudice.		

<p>Activity 5: If there are any Sikh members in the class, or if the class has visited a gurdwara as part of the lesson on places of worship, discuss the institution of langar. Discuss with the class why langar is the embodiment of the Sikh values of equality and service (<i>sewa</i>). Show the class a picture of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Ask if any of the class have visited it, and to give their impressions. Point out that it serves as a spiritual focus for Sikhs round the world. Then show a picture of Pingalwara, which is a refuge for the poor, helpless and disabled set up by Bhagat Puran Singh in 1947. Point out that this centre is the embodiment of the values of <i>sewa</i> and <i>vand chhakna</i>.</p>	<p>Information about Pingalwara and Bhagat Puran Singh: http://www.pingalwaraonline.org/ http://www.pingalwara.ca/</p>
<p>Plenary: Groups to devise an activity that they could do which would embody the values of <i>sewa</i> (service) and <i>vand chhakna</i> (sharing). Class to discuss these ideas, e.g. how the suggested activities could improve things for the school or the local community. As a class vote to implement the best idea.</p>	

Key words	Mool mantar, khanda, Ek Onkar, khalsa, langar, guru, miri-piri, panj piara, Guru Granth Sahib, Vaisakhi (Baisakhi), amrit sanskar, 5ks, panth, kirtan, karah parshad, Ardas, Kirtan Sohila, dandar basti, anand karaj, sewa, vand chhakna and kirat karni
Points to note	It is important to note that not all Sikhs look the same, e.g. wear turbans and keep their hair long. This lesson is a chance to illustrate religious diversity within a single tradition through the diversity of the pupils in the class.
Sample assessment activities	
<p>Class to write a paragraph about the aspect of this unit that they found most interesting, including something they didn't know about Sikhs, something that they found inspiring/interesting, and how this particular aspect of Sikh history, belief or practice relates to something from their own background or experience.</p> <p>The students are working at the following levels if they can use their writing to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use the right names for things that are important to Sikhs. 2. Talk about something in one of the lessons that made them think. 3. Make links between important values in the Sikh faith and those of other religions or beliefs (e.g. the importance of contributing to the community). 4. Make a connection between something in the history of the Sikhs and things important to their beliefs (e.g. how the amrit ritual relates to the founding of the khalsa, or how the Guru Granth Sahib is treated royally like the Mughal rulers were treated). 5. Clearly articulate how the topic they found interesting was of interest <i>to them</i>, and how it relates to their life. 	

At the end of this unit, most pupils will:

- Understand that the Sikh faith was founded by Guru Nanak and shaped by nine other gurus over several generations.
- Know some of the basic Sikh beliefs.
- Be able to describe several important Sikh values and how these values are expressed in day-to-day life.
- Be able to describe how Sikhs treat their holy book, and how it came to be considered the 'living guru'.

Some pupils will have made less progress and will:

- Understand that the Sikh faith was founded in India by Guru Nanak.
- Be able to name one important Sikh belief.
- Be able to name one important value held by Sikhs.
- Know the name of the Sikh holy book and that it is treated with great respect.

Some pupils will have made more progress and will understand all of the above. In addition they will be able to:

- Describe some of the contributions made to the Sikh faith by the various gurus.
- Describe how the khanda symbol reflects Sikh beliefs.
- Describe the institution of langar and how it reflects sewa and the importance Sikh belief in equality.
- Relate the symbolism of the rituals surrounding the Guru Granth Sahib to the treatment of royalty.

Background information



Guru Nanak's father
takes him to school

www.sikhiwiki.org

The founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak was born into a Hindu family on 15 April 1469 in the Western Punjab village of Talwandi. His father Mehta Kalian Das was an accountant in the employment of the local Muslim authorities. From an early age Guru Nanak made friends with both Hindu and Muslim children and was very inquisitive about the meaning of life. At the age of six he was sent to the village school where he was taught to read and write in Hindi and mathematics, and later he would study Muslim literature and the Persian and Arabic languages.

He was an unusually gifted child, who learned quickly and often questioned his teachers. He wrote a hymn, in which he admonished humans for having forgotten the true giver and creator of the world. He advised his Muslim teacher to be good, honest and truthful, and he urged him to love everyone and to live together like one family. Both his Muslim and his Hindu teachers were impressed by his knowledge.

When he was nine years old, Guru Nanak's father was determined to invest him with the *janeu*, i.e. the sacred thread that is granted to boys during a rite of passage ceremony. When the members of the family and all Nanak's neighbours had assembled and the preliminary rites had been duly performed, the family priest moved to put the sacred thread around Nanak's neck. But he stopped the priest, demanding to know what advantage there was in putting on the thread.

The priest explained that the *janeu* was the basis of the Hindu religion, without which a man would only be a Sudra, i.e. the lowest of the four main castes. He also explained that by putting on the thread Nanak would obtain greatness in this life and happiness in the next.

It is said that on hearing this remark, the young Nanak recited the following: "Let mercy be the cotton, contentment the thread, continence the knot and truth the twist. O priest! If you have such a thread, give it to me. It'll not wear out, nor get soiled, nor burnt, nor lost."



Mool mantar

[wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mool_mantar)

There is One God
Whose name is true
The creator
Without fear
Without hate
Immortal
Beyond the cycle of birth and death
Self-revealing
As grace

The **mool mantar** (aka mul mantra) is said to be the first composition uttered by Guru Nanak upon enlightenment at the age of 30. It is the basis of Sikh belief, encapsulating the entire theology of the faith. It is the first part of the Japji Sahib, the initial set of verses in the *Guru Granth Sahib* which is recited every morning by devout Sikhs. (The word *jap* means to 'recite' or to 'chant'; *ji* is a suffix used to show respect, as is the word *sahib*. It is said that the entire *Guru Granth Sahib* is an attempt to explain that which is contained within the Mool Mantar.)

The mool mantar reflects Guru Nanak's belief in monotheism, the original text reading *Ek Onkar Satnam Karta Purush Nirbhau Virvair Akal Murat, Ajuni Saibhang Gurprasad(i)*. All beginners to the faith have to memorise the mool mantar, repeating it again and again until it becomes an automatic process. After learning this short verse and its full meaning, it is common for believers to awake early in the morning, wash and sit and meditate on the mantar for 10-20 minutes, focussing on the sound and meaning of each word:

There is One God Sikh belief is monotheistic, which means that Sikhs believe that there is only one God. 80% of the 1430 pages of the *Guru Granth Sahib* are praises of God. They believe that the 10 gurus are God's messengers, and that pictures of them are for the educational purposes of showing their life stories (janam sakhis).

Whose name is true The word *naam* refers to the numinous feeling, a sense of awe such as when one sees the stars at night. *SatNam* means that the presence of God is the true reality. *Naam* also means 'names', and indicates that the names of God such as Ram (from Hinduism), Allah and Rahim (from Islam) and Sunnya (from Buddhism) are all true. The most popular Sikh names for God are *WaheGuru* ('wonderful or amazing grace'), *Akal Purukh* ('eternal spirit'), and *SatNam* ('true reality').

The creator This part of the Mool mantar refers to the belief that God has created the universe. Sikhs believe that before creation, God was meditating on the void, *sunnya samadhi*, and that it was God's command that led to the beginning of creation.

Without fear, without hate Sikhs believe that God's presence (*Naam*) fills creation, and that God's light is the inner light of all beings. Since God is with everyone there is no one to fear or to hate.

Immortal, beyond the cycle of birth and death Sikhs believe that God existed before the beginning of creation and will exist after the end of creation, which exists so that we can experience God's name. They also believe in the law of karma, i.e. that people will be rewarded and/or punished according to their actions. Through *simran* (remembrance of God) believers come to recognise God's love for them and for others and turn naturally to *sewa* (selfless service), which is the opposite of *haumai* (selfishness).

Self-revealing as grace The aspect of God reaching out in grace is called *SatGuru* ('the true Guru').



Ek Onkar

www.shunya.net



Khanda

www.sikhiwiki.org

Ek Onkar

Ek Onkar, 'God is One', the first phrase in the mool mantra, is an emblem of the Sikh religion relating to the fundamental Sikh belief in the unity of God and deriving from the Sanskrit OM, as written in the Gurmukhi script. It is a combination of three letters: *Ek*, *Aum* and *Kar*.

The khanda

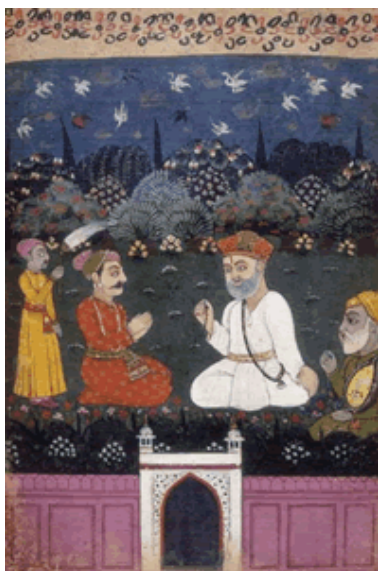
The khanda is the insignia of the Sikh khalsa and one of most important symbols of the faith. Its importance is emphasized by the fact that many Sikh flags, including the Nishan Sahib (temple flag) have the Khanda on them. It can be compared to the symbol of Om in Hinduism. The chakkar is the circle that indicates that God and eternal life is without end and perfect.

The image is comprised of four weapons commonly used by Sikhs at the time of Guru Gobind Singh:

- In the middle, there is a double-edged sword (khanda) which symbolises the knowledge of God.
- Surrounding the khanda is a chakkar, a circular weapon, which symbolises the oneness of God.
- On either side are two single-edged swords, or kirpans, which represent the dual nature/duties of the gurus, miri and piri.

Miri-piri

The term miri-piri represents a basic principle which has influenced Sikh religious and political thought. The word *miri* derives from the Arabic *amir*, 'commander, governor, lord, prince'. The word *piri* comes from Persian *pir*, 'saint, holy man, spiritual guide, head of a religious order.' Taken together they are used to connote the temporal and spiritual components of life, which were embodied in the lives of the gurus.



Guru Nanak in meditation
Ms illumination, 1733

www.britannica.com

Dunni Chand and the needle

Guru Nanak, the first Guru spent much of his life traveling and teaching. During his travels he visited the city of Lahore in what is now known as Pakistan. This is a very famous story of his meeting with one of the city's rich bankers.

Once, long ago, there lived a banker in Lahore called Dunni Chand. He was well known throughout the city for being greedy. Dunni Chand lived in a beautiful palace, which shone with gold, marble and precious jewels.

One day, Dunni Chand learnt that Guru Nanak had arrived in the city. At once he rushed to find the Guru to invite him to a special feast. Guru Nanak accepted the invitation and preparations for the feast began. It was a wonderful occasion. There were tasty dishes for the guests who all agreed that it was a magnificent feast.

When everyone had finished, Dunni Chand turned to Guru Nanak. "I am a wealthy man," he said. "If I can do anything for you, please tell me."

Guru Nanak sat and thought for a moment. He looked around at the wonderful palace, the rich tapestries hanging on the wall and the fine golden dishes. Then, fumbling in his pocket, he drew out a small case that contained a tiny, thin sewing needle. "Yes, there is something you can do for me," he replied, holding up the needle. "I want you to keep this needle very safely and give it back when we meet in the next world."

Dunni Chand felt full of importance. The Guru had given him a special task. He took the needle and showed it to his wife, explaining what the Guru had told him. To his surprise, she burst into peals of laughter. "My poor husband," she laughed, "go back and ask Guru Nanak how you can take it to heaven with you."

Feeling rather confused, Dunni Chand hurried to find the Guru. "Guru Nanak, Guru Nanak," he called. "Please tell me one thing before you go away. How can I take this needle with me when I die?"

The Guru looked at Dunni Chand kindly and said, "If you cannot take a tiny needle with you when you die, how are you going to take all your riches? You will only be remembered for the good things you have done in this world when you go to the next."

Dunni Chand realised the truth in the Guru's words. He felt ashamed of his actions and from that day on, he and his wife used their wealth to help the poor. *(Extracted from Greenwich agreed syllabus)*



Ten Sikh Gurus

www.sikhiwiki.org

ਕਾ	ਕਿ	ਕੀ	ਕੁ	ਕੂ	
kā	ki	kī	ku	kū	
ਕੇ	ਕੈ	ਕੋ	ਕੌ	ਕੰ	ਕਹ
ke	kai	ko	kau	kaṁ	kaḥ

The vowels in Gurmukhi

www.ancientscripts.com

The Sikh religion was established by ten teachers over the period from 1469 to 1708 whose main purpose in life was the spiritual and moral well-being of the people. They set an exceptional example of how to live a worthy life.

Each guru added to, and reinforced, the message taught by the previous guru, resulting eventually in the creation of the religion. Guru Nanak was the first and Guru Gobind Singh the final guru in human form. Before Guru Gobind Singh died, he made the Guru Granth Sahib the ultimate and final guru. The spirit of this final guru is more than a holy book for the Sikhs, who give it the same respect and reverence as a living 'human' guru.

During the span of 239 years, the Sikh gurus laid down—within the sacred scriptures—the rules and regulations that outline the way of living to be followed by all practising disciples.

Guru Nanak was the first of the gurus and the founder of the Sikh religion. He was born at Talwandi (now known as Nankana Sahib in Pakistan) on 20 October 1469.

At an early age he mastered Punjabi, Sanskrit and Persian, and in childhood he revolted against ritualism, caste, prejudices, hypocrisy and idolatry. He regarded Hindus and Muslims as equals and referred to himself as “neither Hindu nor Muslim”, but as a brother to all those who believed in God and truth.

He made four great journeys, travelling to all parts of India, and into Arabia and Persia, visiting, amongst other places, Mecca and Baghdad. He spoke before Hindus, Jains, Buddhists, Parsees, and Muslims. He spoke in the temples and mosques, and at various pilgrimage sites. Wherever he went, Guru Nanak spoke out against empty religious rituals, the caste system, the sacrifice of widows, dependence on books to learn the true religion; he also spoke of other tenets that were to define his teachings. Never did he ask his listeners to follow him. He asked the Muslims to be true Muslims and the Hindus to be true Hindus.

Guru Angad was born in 1504. He invented and introduced the Gurmukhi (literally “from the mouth of the Guru”) script: the Sikh scripture—the Guru Granth Sahib—is written in Gurmukhi. This scripture is also the basis of the Punjabi language. Guru Angad was a model of self-less service and showed others the way to devotional prayers. He took great interest in the education of children by opening many schools.

He wrote the first biography of Guru Nanak, and composed 63 *saloks* (stanzas) that were included in Guru Granth Sahib. He popularized and expanded the institution of guru ka langar (“kitchen of the guru”) started by Guru Nanak.



The Mughal Emperor Akbar (left) coming to meet Guru Amar Das (right, seated) and partake of langar.

www.gurmat.info



The Golden Temple, Amritsar

[wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Temple)

Guru Amar Das was born in 1479. He is known for fighting against caste restrictions and prejudices and the curse of untouchability.

He strengthened the tradition of the free kitchen, *guru ka langar*, and made his disciples—whether rich or poor, whether high born or low born (i.e. according to the Hindu caste system)—have their meals together. He thus established social equality amongst the people. He also introduced the *Anand Karaj* marriage ceremony for Sikhs, replacing the Hindu form.

He completely abolished—amongst the Sikhs—the custom of *sati*, in which a married woman was forced to burn herself to death in the funeral pyre of her husband. The custom of *paradah* (*purda*), in which a woman covered her face with a veil, was also removed.

Guru Ram Das was born in 1534. He founded the city of Amritsar and started the construction of the famous Golden Temple—Harmandir—at Amritsar, the holy city of the Sikhs. The temple remains open on all sides and at all times to everyone, indicating that the Sikhs believe in One God who has no partiality for any particular place, direction or time. When the building of the Harmandir began, Guru Ram Das requested that the Muslim Sufi, Mian Mir, lay the cornerstone.

Guru Arjan Dev was born in 1563, the third son of Guru Ram Das. He was a saint and scholar of the highest quality and repute.

He compiled the *Adi Granth*, the scriptures of the Sikhs, and wrote the *Sukhmani Sahib*. To make it a universal teaching, he included hymns of Muslim saints, as well as those of low-caste Hindu saints who had never been permitted to enter the temples.

Guru Arjan Dev completed construction of the Golden Temple in Amritsar. He became the first great martyr in Sikh history when the Mughal Emperor Jahangir ordered his execution.



Akal Takht Sahib, Amritsar

[wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Akal_Takht)



Guru Tegh Bahadur

www.sikhiwiki.org

Guru Har Gobind was born in 1595. He was the son of Guru Arjan Dev and was known as a “soldier saint.” Guru Hargobind organised a small army, explaining that extreme non-violence and pacifism would only encourage evil and so the principles of Miri-Piri were established. He taught that it was necessary to take up the sword in order to protect the weak and the oppressed, and he was first guru to take up arms to defend the faith.

At that time it was only emperors who were allowed to sit on a raised platform, called a *takht* or throne. At the age of 13, Guru Har Gobind erected the Akal Takht Sahib, adorning it with two swords, Miri and Piri, representing temporal and spiritual power. (Akal Takht Sahib is the seat of religious authority of the Sikhs. *Akal* means ‘the timeless one,’ another term for God. Takht means ‘seat’ in Persian, hence “the seat of the timeless one.”)

Guru Har Rai was born in 1630. He spent most of his life in devotional meditation and preaching the teachings of Guru Nanak.

Although he was a man of peace, he never disbanded the armed Sikh warriors, who earlier were maintained by his grandfather, Guru Har Gobind. He encouraged the military spirit of the Sikhs, but he himself never engaged in any direct political and armed controversy with the Mughal Empire. He avoided conflict with Emperor Aurangzeb and devoted his efforts to missionary work. He also continued the grand task of nation building initiated by Guru Har Gobind.

Guru Har Krishan, born in 1656, was the youngest of the gurus. Installed as guru at the age of five, he astonished the Brahmin pundits with his knowledge and spiritual powers.

To the Sikhs he proved to be the very symbol of service, purity and truth. He gave his life while serving and healing the epidemic-stricken people in Delhi. The young guru attended the sufferers irrespective of cast and creed. In particular, the local Muslim population was impressed with his humanitarian deeds and nicknamed him Bala Pir (‘child prophet’).

Guru Tegh Bahadur was born in 1621 in Amritsar. He established the town of Anandpur, and laid down his life for the protection of the Hindu religion, their *tilak* (devotional forehead markings) and their sacred thread (*janeau*). He was a firm believer in the right of people to the freedom of worship, and it was for this cause that he faced martyrdom. Because of his own refusal to convert to Islam a forced threatened conversion of the Hindus of Kashmir was thwarted, but he himself was tortured and executed by the Mughals.



Gobind Singh initiating the panj piara

www.britannica.com



Guru Gobind Singh

www.mrsikhnet.com

The tenth and final human guru, **Guru Gobind Singh**, was born in 1666; he became guru after the martyrdom of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur.

In 1699, he chose the festival of Vaisakhi as the occasion to pass the mantle of authority from the succession of human gurus to the collection of Sikh scriptures; previously known as the *Adi Granth* ('original collection'), this set of texts would henceforth be known as guru, specifically the *Guru Granth Sahib* ('collection of sacred wisdom').

It was also on this occasion that he would seek a spectacular leap of faith from several of his followers. At the time, the Sikh community was under assault by the Muslim ruler of India. Addressing the assembly gathered for the Vaisakhi celebrations, Gobind Singh highlighted this threat, proclaiming that weakness would have to be replaced with unity and strength if they were to survive.

With uplifted sword, he asked if there were any in the crowd so loyal that they would offer up their heads to him. At first there was no response. And then one man stepped forward and was led into the guru's tent. When Gobind Singh emerged with a bloodied sword, there was hushed silence, and then four more brave souls ventured forward. They followed him into the tent and the crowd waited, expecting that only the guru would emerge. But when he did finally appear, he was not alone; all five volunteers came with him, their heads solidly attached.

He fought many battles against the armies of Aurangzeb and his allies. He had lost his father, his mother and four sons; finally, after a letter to Aurangzeb in which he indicted the Mughal emperor with treachery and godlessness, the attacks against the guru and his Sikhs were called off. Aurangzeb died soon after receiving the letter, and shortly thereafter the rightful heir to the throne sought Gobind's assistance in regaining his kingdom. It was fear of the growing friendship between the new Emperor and the Sikhs that led to an attack against Gobind Singh, the resulting wounds of which were to eventually cause his death.

On 3 October 1708 he appointed the Guru Granth Sahib as eternal guru: "Let all bow before my successor, Guru Granth. The Word is the Guru now."

(Extracted from: www.sikhwiki.org)



Amrit sanskar

www.thaisikh.org

Amrit sanskar is the initiation ceremony for Sikhs, which brings them into the community of believers, or *khalsa*. There is no minimum age for being initiated, however only those mature enough to realize the significance and commitment required should undergo it.

The person wishing to be initiated may be a man or woman of any caste or previous religion. Generally they are encouraged to start following the Sikh way of life before seeking initiation, which takes place in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Those seeking initiation are required to wash their hair, cover their head, wear clean clothes and the 5Ks before presenting themselves before six members of the khalsa; five Sikhs will conduct the ceremony while one reads the Guru Granth Sahib.

During the ceremony the principles of Sikhism are explained, followed by *Ardas* (a Sikh prayer) and taking the *hukam* (i.e. opening the Guru Granth Sahib at random and reading the hymn on that page). Amrit (sweet water) is prepared in a steel bowl and stirred with a kirpan by the five members of the khalsa representing the panj piara while prayers are recited.

This is followed again by *Ardas*, and then the drinking of the amrit in cupped hands five times while exclaiming *Waheguru ji ka khalsa, Waheguru ji ki fateh*, 'the pure belong to God, victory to God.' Amrit is then sprinkled on the hair and eyes of the person and any leftover is drunk by all present.

This is followed by an explanation of the code of conduct and discipline required for a Khalsa, e.g. the requirement to wear the 5Ks and abstain from:

- cutting hair
- eating halal meat,
- cohabiting with a person other than one's spouse.
- using intoxicants such as tobacco.

Afterwards the group eat *karah prasad* (a blessed sweet) from a common bowl. If a person does not have a Sikh name, they take a new name at this time.



The five Ks

- Kes (uncut hair)
- Kangha (comb)
- Kara (steel wristband)
- Kachhehra (shorts)
- Kirpan (sword)

www.gurmat.info

The **Rahit Maryada** is the Sikh Code of Conduct. The approved version was published in 1945 after fourteen years of discussion among the khalsa. It sets out the order of service in the gurdwara, the details of the four life ceremonies, a list of what Sikhs should not do (such as follow caste distinctions), and a list of daily prayers. The Code of Conduct provides unity to Sikh practices. All can agree that it is a starting point or lowest common denominator of Sikh practice, but different individuals and groups will have different attitudes to different parts of it.

Summary:

Instructions

1. There is only one God: worship and pray to Him alone.
2. Always work hard and share with others.
3. Practise truth and lead a truthful life.
4. Remember, women are as good as men.
5. The whole human race is one. Distinctions on caste, colour and class are wrong.
6. Idols, magic, omens, fasts, frontal marks and sacred threads are wrong.
7. Dress yourself in a modest way; gaudy clothes and revealing dress bring no credit.
8. Sikh women should not wear the veil.
9. Live a family life.
10. Put your faith in the Guru Grant Sahib; no other holy book or living person can claim guruship (for Sikhs).

Injunctions (given at the time of initiation)

1. You shall not cut your hair.
2. You shall not use tobacco or any other intoxicants.
3. You shall not eat ritual (i.e. halal) meat.
4. You shall not commit adultery.



Guru Granth Sahib
installed on the throne (*takht*)

[wikipedia](#)



Granthi with chaur
[sikhiwiki](#)

Guru Granth Sahib

The first compilation of the Sikh holy book was done by the fifth guru, Guru Arjan, at which point it was called the Adi Granth. It was the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, who expanded it to include hymns from the later gurus. On 3 October 1708, shortly before his death, he told the Sikhs that they were to treat the Adi Granth as their next guru, at which point it became known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Gobind Singh said, "O Beloved Khalsa, let any who desire to behold me, behold the Guru Granth. Obey the Granth Sahib, for it is the visible body of the Guru. Let any who desire to meet me, diligently search its Bani." (*Bani* is the term used to refer to various sections of the text.)

The focus of attention and the only object of reverence in the main hall of a gurdwara is the Guru Granth Sahib. It is treated with the respect that would be given to a human guru: it is kept in a room of its own during the night and carried in procession to the main hall at the start of the day's worship. It is placed on a raised platform (*takht* or *manji sahib*, 'throne') under a canopy (*chanani* or *palki*), and covered with a *rumilla* (a highly decorated silk cloth) when not being read.

"A chaur is waved over the Guru Granth Sahib: This is to express our regards and our respect for the Holy Scripture, the True King. The king commanded the greatest power, hence also the maximum respect and honour, in the olden days. Guru Nanak said that the true kings are those who love God and help others to do that. They are the rulers of the hearts of the people. The political kings are temporary kings and their authority ends with their death. The Gurus are the true kings; they teach truth and rule our hearts. The Guru Granth Sahib is the embodiment of the spirit of all the Sikh Gurus and many other holy men whose hymns are included in it. We respect them as the true kings. The king sat on throne under a canopy. He used to have a fan like structure to be waved over his head as a symbol of his royalty. The Guru Granth Sahib, being the true emperor, is provided all these regal paraphernalia in the gurdwara. We install the scripture on a throne (called Manji Sahib) with pillows around for supporting it. A canopy (chanani) is provided above the scripture in the same way as it was put over the head of a king while he attended his court. During the session (Diwan), a person, with chaur in his hand, is always in attendance on the scripture installed respectfully in the hall. For maintaining due regards and respect, we carry this holy scripture to another room when the hall is to be cleaned or when the session is over for the day. Before we bring the Guru Granth Sahib in the hall, we set everything in the hall properly. This is the court of the Guru. You will understand the whole ceremony better if you bring into mind the scene of the courtroom where everything is set and made ready before a judge enters his court. The Guru Granth Sahib is the Emperor or Emperors, hence all these ceremonial decorations." (Sikh talking about the comparison of the Guru Granth Sahib to a human Emperor. From: www.sikhmarg.com)



Naam Karam

www.thaisikh.org



Dastar Bhandi

www.thaisikh.org

Naam Karam (naming): When a baby is born a special prayer is read and a drop of *amrit* (holy water) is placed on the baby's tongue. At a ceremony at the gurdwara, the name of the baby is chosen by opening the Guru Granth Sahib at random: the name chosen must begin with the first letter of the first word on the left hand side of the page. Singh ('lion', a reminder to be courageous) is added to boys' names, while Kaur ('princess', to stress dignity) is added to girls' names.

Amrit Sanskar: Young Sikhs may be formally initiated into the khalsa ages 14-16. A special solution of sugar and water, known as *amrit*, is prepared in an iron bowl, while five Sikhs recite the five *Banis* (special prayers) in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib (a reminder of the historical founding the khalsa and the role played by the five companions of Guru Gobind Singh, the *panj piare*). During the ceremony the *amrit* is blessed and sprinkled on the hair and eyes of the initiate, a prayer is said and a meal is eaten together. For boys, the *amrit sanskar* may be combined with *Dastar Bandi* (wearing of the first turban). Alternatively it may be performed separately: the boy is taken to a gurdwara and there—in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib—his first turban is ceremonially tied on by the Granthi or by a Sikh elder. This ceremony designates the respect with which the turban is regarded and is usually attended by many family members and friends.

Anand Karaj, meaning 'blissful union' or 'joyful union', is the Sikh marriage ceremony that was introduced by Guru Amar Das. The four marriage hymns (*lavan*) were composed by his successor, Guru Ram Das. It was originally legalised in India through the passage of the Anand Marriage Act 1909 but is now governed by the Reht Maryada (code of conduct), which dictates that only those who follow the Sikh religion may undertake the ceremony.

The Anand Karaj usually takes place at a gurdwara, although it may also be conducted at the bride's residence or any other place where the Guru Granth Sahib has been installed. Any man or woman who is a strict adherent of Sikhism may perform the marriage ceremony.

Antim sanskar (death ceremony) Sikhs believe that death should be welcomed as opening the door to the complete union with God. The body is washed and clothed by members of the family and attired with the symbols of the faith. The body is then wrapped in a plain white sheet or shroud, and a *rumalla* (embroidered cloth) is placed on top.

The body will be cremated and the ashes will be immersed in running water at a designated area. Sikhs in the UK sometimes take the deceased person's ashes back to India. Both male and female relatives attend the cremation. They then return to the gurdwara or home of the deceased to read the Guru Granth Sahib. At the end of the reading, and after *kirtan*, *Ardas* is said, followed by the sharing of *karah parshad* and *langar*.



Painting of Kabir

[wikipedia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kabir)

God first created Light.
From the Lord's play all living creatures came
and from the Divine Light the whole creation sprang.
Why then should we divide human creatures
Into the high and the low?

Friend, be not in error:
Out of the Creator creation comes.
Everywhere in creation the Creator is.
The Lord's Spirit is all pervading!

The Lord, the Maker, has moulded one mass of clay
Into vessels of diverse shapes.
Free from taint are all the vessels of clay
Since free from taint is the Divine Potter.

The True One pervades all things.
All things come to pass as the Lord ordains.
He who has understood the Divine Will
Recognises only the One Reality –
And he alone is what a person ought to be.

Shabad by Kabir, *Guru Granth Sahib*, p 1349.

Kabir (1441-1518) was a bhagat (person living a life devoted to spirituality). He was born in Bharat (present day India and Pakistan). Five hundred of his verses are included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs value his teaching. Kabir was a weaver by trade. It is generally accepted that the year of his birth is about 1398 but the year he died is disputed; also under dispute is whether he ever actually met Guru Nanak.



Maha Khivi serving langar

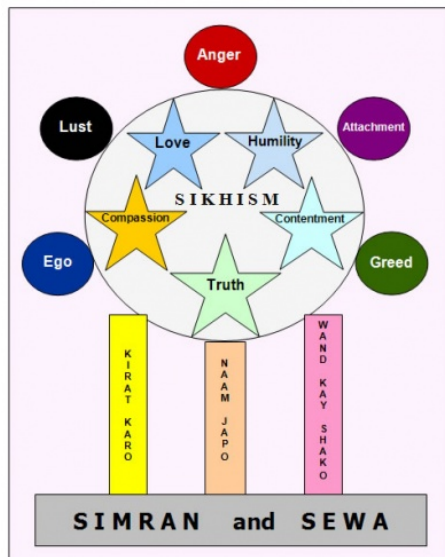
[sikhiwiki](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/)

Guru ka Langar (literally 'langar or refectory of the Guru') is a community kitchen, one aspect of the pillar of Sikhism known as *Vand Ke Chakna*, i.e. sharing the fruits of one's labour with others before considering oneself.

The institution of langar was started by the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak, in an attempt to abolish divisions based on religion, caste, colour, age, gender or social status. As langar embodies the ethics of sharing, community and inclusiveness, only vegetarian food is served, to ensure that all people—with whatever their dietary restrictions—will feel welcome to eat as equals.

Mata Khivi, the wife of the second guru, Guru Angad, would supervise the langar herself, serving the food with her own hands to all who came. Such was her dedication that langar came to be known as Mata Khivi ji ka Langar. Even the Mughal Emperor Akbar sat with everyone else when he came to langar.

No one is ever turned away. The food is normally served twice a day, every day of the year, and each week it falls to one or more families to provide and prepare the meal, which they do on a voluntary basis as part of their commitment to serve their community. Besides the langars attached to gurdwaras, there are improvised open-air langars at the time of festivals and gurpurbs. These special langars are possibly the most largely attended community meals anywhere in the world.



Three pillars of Sikhism

[sikhiwiki](http://sikhiwiki.org)

- Nam japna: to remember God
- Kirat karni: to earn one's living by honest means and hard work
- Vand chhakna: to share with others who are less fortunate

Nam japna is meditation on the qualities of God as described in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Sikhs are encouraged to read appropriate scriptures in the morning, evening and late evening before going to bed. It is not sufficient to simply repeat the hymns (shabads), it is also necessary to understand them, and then to act upon what they teach. Sikhism teaches that prayer should go side by side with working life, and to live a good life a Sikh must work to improve society. As Guru Nanak taught, "There can be no worship without performing good deeds."

Kirat karni is to work hard to earn one's own living. A Sikh is to lead the life of a family person, with all the responsibilities it entails. While working a person should meditate on God's name. It is in relations with others that God is found. Sikhs must not beg or be parasites or exploit others to become rich. The story of Bhago and Guru Nanak illustrates the point well.

On one of his travels, Guru Nanak reached a place called Emnabad, where Lalo the carpenter invited him to stay. A local man of considerable wealth, Bhago, decided to give a feast and invited all the rich and famous, including Guru Nanak. But when Nanak did not attend, Bhago asked him why. The guru replied, "Lalo's simple bread is earned by honest labour. But you have grown rich by exploiting and taking advantage of the poor. Your food is stained with the blood of the poor."

"Nonsense!" shouted Bhago. The guru smiled, and then legend says that he took in one hand a piece of bread from Lalo's house, and in the other a piece of bread from Bhago's house, and he squeezed them both. Milk dripped from Lalo's bread and blood from Bhago's. At which point Bhago realised his mistake and promised the guru to devote his life in helping the poor and needy.

The third golden rule is **vand chhakna**, i.e. the need to share one's earnings and serve others (*sewa*). Sewa may mean giving money, time, or using one's expertise to help everyone whatever their colour, creed or gender. The story of Bhai Kanhaiya is a good example of sewa:

During a battle between the Mughal Emperor's forces and the Sikhs, Kanhaiya was providing drinking water to the wounded. Some Sikh soldiers complained that he was giving water to the enemy soldiers. He was charged with helping the enemy and brought before Guru Gobind Singh. He explained to the guru, "I do not see a friend or a foe, but only human beings." The guru was pleased with the answer and blessed him for having the true Sikh spirit of service.



Pingalwara

www.pingalwaraonline.org

Pingalwara (literally ‘home for the disabled’) is the name given to a house for the destitute in Amritsar. Bhagat Puran Singh (1904 – 1992) worked most of his life to provide hope for people rejected by society. In 1947 he founded Pingalwara as a facility for the disabled, the mentally ill and other dispossessed—i.e. those people who were no longer accepted by society.

He worked tirelessly to provide for his ‘patients’, not allowing any barrier or hurdle stop him in his efforts to bring some dignity to the lives of individuals who had no other support, bringing hope and respect to people who have been rejected by their families and friends because of their terrible disabilities.

Today, the Pingalwara complex is housed in a three story building near the main Amritsar bus stand on the National Highway, also known as the Grand Trunk Road. Currently Pingalwara has facilities for 400 ‘patients’ who are fed, housed and looked after thanks to generous donations. Pingalwara is officially registered as All India Pingalwara Charitable Society; since the death of Bhagat Puran Singh in 1992, it has been headed by Inderjit Kaur, a physician by training who also runs a maternity clinic in Amritsar.

Pingalwara operates a free drug dispensary, a blood bank, a shelter for learning disabled children and a free primary school in a slum area in Amritsar. Poor and abandoned children raised by Pingalwara are helped to re-establish themselves in society following completion of their school education. An ambulance and a basic operation room are available for trauma care of accident victims.

Pingalwara is not an institution: it is a dynamic movement, inspired by Bhagat Puran Singh’s philosophy, which is the foundation of Pingalwara and which covers the entire spectrum of social problems of our society.