

## **Introduction to Sikhism:-**

The meaning of the word “Sikh” is “student” or “learner.” The area called Northern India is the region in which the Sikh religion was founded. It was founded by Baba Guru Nanak. This religion is different from Islam and Hinduism. It is a monotheistic religion i.e. it’s believers believes in one God and also this religion focuses on the gender equality. Sikhism has three basic principles. The first principle is Meditation or Prayer for seeking God. The second principle is earning by honest and true sources and also sharing the earnings of one’s person with others. The third principle is that the Sikhism rejects racial discrimination and class systems. Sikhism stresses to serve Humanity.

Sikhs wears turbans to cover their extensive hair and with regard to God. They have uncut hair, moustaches and beards. Sikhism teaches the principles of which the great democracy is founded. These principles are the principles of Humanity. These include equality, freedom and justice. In the world, the Sikh population is about 25 million.

A Sikh is "any human being who faithfully believes in *One Immortal Being; ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh; the Guru Granth Sahib; the teachings of the ten Gurus and the baptism bequeathed by the tenth Guru; and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion*"<sup>1</sup>.

## **Background:-**

THE 10 GURUS:-

A Guru is defined as:-

---

<sup>1</sup> Kanwaljit Kaur and Indarjit Singh, *Rehat Maryada: A Guide to the Sikh Way of Life* (Sikh Cultural Society, 1971).

“The Guru is a person who banishes the darkness of ignorance”<sup>2</sup>.

The first Guru of Sikhs was Baba Guru Nanak who later on appointed a disciple as successor.

The final Guru of Sikhs in human form was Guru Gobind Singh.

#### 1. GURU NANAK DEV JI:-

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 in Talwandi. Guru Ji always used to help the poor and he also served food to them. He often used to invite the poor in his house. Baba Guru Nanak died at the age of 70, in 1539. He laid down the foundation of a religion named Sikhism.

Guru Nanak is the founder of Sikhism which is one of the youngest religions of the world. To spread his religious teachings, he travelled to South Asia and Middle East. His teachings were written in the form of 974 religious songs, which was named ‘Guru Granth Sahib,.

#### EARLY LIFE:-

He (Nanak) was born in a Hindu family. He was raised by his parents, named Mehta Kalu and Mata Tripta. He spent his early age with his older sister named Bebe Nanaki.

The sister of Baba Guru Nanak got married to Jai Ram in 1475. After this, she moved to Sultanpur. Nanak went to Sultanpur to stay with his sister for few days. In Sultanpur, Nanak used to go to a nearby river to take bath and to meditate. One day, he went to the river and didn't return for three days. It is said that Nanak spent this time in the forest. On his return, he kept silent and when he spoke, he said, “There is no Hindu, no Musalman.”<sup>3</sup> He repeated these words several times.

#### TEACHINGS:-

---

<sup>2</sup>A.M. Wani, *Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism: A Comparative Study* (Educreation Publishing).

<sup>3</sup> Karatāra Singha, *Biography of Guru Nanak* (Hemkunt Press, 1986).

According to Sikhism, every human being is able to attain spirituality and this spirituality leads him to God. According to Baba Guru Nanak, God has created many worlds and also God produced life. Guru Nanak asked his followers to say again and again the name of God to feel the presence of God. He emphasized the people to lead a holy life by helping others and by living an honest life without indulging in unfair means.

#### DEATH:-

On the death of Guru Nanak, Hindus and Sikhs wanted to cremate the body but Muslims wanted to bury it. Both i.e. Hindus and Muslims asked Guru Nanak himself that what should be done. Guru asked them i.e. Hindus and Muslims to bring flowers and put them next to his body and ordered that the performance of the last rites would be done by the party whose flowers didn't wilt for a night. Guru's instructions were followed and when people came back the next morning, they were astonished to see that none of the flower was wilted and another surprise was that the mortal remains of Guru were disappeared. Only flowers were present there.

#### 2. SIRI GURU ANGAD DEV JI:-

In 1504, Guru Angad was born at Sarai Matta in District Ferozpur of Punjab (India). His real name was "Lehna."

*(Like Guru Nanak, Guru Angad and the subsequent Gurus selected and appointed their successors by completely satisfying themselves about their mystic fitness and capacity to discharge the responsibilities of the mission.)<sup>4</sup>*

#### 3. SIRI GURU AMARDAS JI:-

---

<sup>4</sup> Guru Angad Dev, "Définition-Guru Angad Dev."

In 1479, Guru Amar Das was born. His birth place is Basarke village in Amritsar District. He is the student of "Guru Angad Dev Ji" who is the second Guru of Sikhs. He bought a piece of land in Goindwal. On that piece of land, he founded a Bawli. He died in 1574.

(Guru Amar Das to believe that all persons, high or low, rich or poor, Brahmans or Sudras, king or the commoner, and Hindus or Muslims, must sit in the same row as equals to dine in the Guru's langar.)<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. SIRI GURU RAMDAS JI:-

Guru Ramdas was born in Sodhi Khatri family. This family was residing in Mohalla Chuna Mandi situated in Lahore. He was born in 1534A.D. He declared himself a Guru in 1574 A.D. He died in 1581.Â

#### 5. SIRI GURU ARJAN DEV JI:-

In 1563, Guru Arjan was born in Goindwal which was a small town in District of Amritsar. Guru Arjan Dev built a great temple at a distance of some mile from Amritsar District. He called this temple "Taran Taaran." The Fifth and the Sixth Guru of Sikhs extended the work started by Baba Guru Nanak.

#### 6. GURU HAR GOBIN(1595-1644) –JUSTICE:-

The son of Guru Arjan Dev ji named Guru Har Gobin is the sixth Guru of Sikhs. His father was martyred on Jahangir's order.

He was the first Guru who ordered to fight through weapons to defend their religion. He introduced fighting skills and weapon use. He in, he built the first takht of the history. On this Takht, the complaints of the people were listened.

---

<sup>5</sup> Muninder K Ahluwalia and Anjali Alimchandani, "A Call to Integrate Religious Communities into Practice: The Case of Sikhs," *The Counseling Psychologist* 41, no. 6 (2013).

#### 7. GURU HAR RAI (1644-1661)-MERCY:-

Guru Har Rai was a supporter of peace but he never disregarded the creation of Sikh Military. He continued the military training project started by his father. He himself not participated in any political or controversial affair.

Later on, he decided to make his son a Guru. He decided so when his son was 5 years of age.

#### 8. GURU HAR KISHRAN(1661-1664)- PURITY:-

Guru Har Krishan was installed as a Guru when he was 5years of age. Aurangzeb called him to Delhi when he received a complaint against him. He was advised by his father to meet Aurangzeb personally.

An Epidemic was spreading in Delhi. He served the people suffering from smallpox irrespective of caste or creed. Muslims got impressed from his humanitarian acts. He also got infected from the disease and died at the age of 8.

#### 9. GURU TEGH BAHADUR(1665-1675)-TRANQUILITY:-

Guru Tegh Bahadur is the ninth Guru.He travelled throughout India and fought Aurangzeb on behalf of Hindu Kashmiris. On his refusal to convert to Islam, he was tortured and punished severely. He was martyred. His was body was cremated secretly in Anandpur Sahib.

#### 10. GURU GOBINd SINGH (1675-1708)-ROYAL COURAGE:-

Guru Gobind Singh is the last Guru of Sikhs in human form. He became Guru at the age of 9. Guru Gobind Singh passed his earlier life in Anandpur. He practiced arms and trained himself as a soldier.

A sneak attack of the Pathan assassins of Wazir Khan who inflicted the wound which cause the Guru's death.<sup>6</sup>

### **Beliefs:-**

#### 1. View of God:-

The Sikhs believe that the God is above time and is immortal. They define God by the word "Truth". He is the creator of this universe. He is vacant of birth and death. He can be felt through prayers. His blessings are equal for all. God is love. God expects from everyone to act in his love.

#### 2. Concept of Birth of Universe:-

*According to Sikhism (See Maru Solhe in AGGS20 page 1034) there was darkness everywhere. The earth, the sun, the moon, the days and the nights did not exist. The Omnipresent Lord prevailed in the void (Sunn). There was no sound, no air, no water, no birth, no death and no planets. Then the Lord expressed His Will (kvwau) and out of the word expressing His Will the universe came into existence.<sup>21</sup> At first it was a hot nebula spinning out different planets and then "The True Lord created air. Air gave birth to water. Water brought forth life. God infused His spirit in all his creation."<sup>7</sup>*

#### 3. Reality of Human Soul:-

---

<sup>6</sup> Gobind Singh, *Zafarnama* (Penguin Books India, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Gurbachan Singh Sidhu, *A Brief Introduction to Sikhism* (Sikh Missionary Society Gravesend, Kent, 1977).

The human soul is a part of the universe. As the waves generates from the ocean and as the sparks arises from the fire, Similarly, Human Soul emerges from the God and after death, it merges back into God. As soul is attached with the material body so it tends towards the pleasures.

If one acts on the will of God then his soul develops the God's characteristics like love, service and courage etc.

#### 4. Transmigration of the Soul:-

Sikhism believes in the evolution of human soul. This evolution depends on the human deeds. According to Sikhs, the soul is immortal.

Brain is like a piece of paper on which our acts are recorded but the God is merciful. God can turn one towards the right path and God can also destroy one's sins.

#### 5. Fate of those who fail to deserve God's Grace:-

Those who fails to get God's Grace are punished. Their soul is entered into a cycle of birth and death and this cycle is endless. They can only get out of this when they seeks guidance from a true Guru, repents over their deed and moves towards the right path.

#### **Symbols:-**

#### 5 K's of Sikhism<sup>8</sup>:-

There are 5K's in Sikhism which are their religious symbols:-

---

<sup>8</sup> Bhupinder Singh, "The Five Symbols of Sikhism: Some Contemporary Issues," *Sikh Formations* 10, no. 1 (2014).

1. Kara:-

As Kara is in a circle, so it symbolizes divine energy and shows that energy has no start And no ending.Kara is worn in wrist to remind them of keeping truth and power etc.

It also represents Sikh's motto of no fear and no hate.

2. Kirpan:-

Kirpan is a ritual sword. It symbolizes the importance of justice and it also symbolizes religious freedom

.

3. Kachera:-

Kachera is related to undergarments. It was originally worn by Sikh Soldiers. It represents self discipline and purity.

4. Kesh:-

In Sikhism, hair are considered as a blessing of God. So, the sikhs do not cut their hair. They uses Tuarban to cover their hair.

5. Kangha:-

Kangha is comb and it is generally made of wood. It's purpose is to clean and comb the hair.



### **Sacred Literature:-**

Adi Granth is the Holy Book of Sikhs. This book was given by Guru Arjan. It was published in 1604. It's original language is Punjabi .

Adhi Granth is the main scripture of Sikhs. It is also called Guru Granth Sahib. Sikhs consider it a living Guru. According to Sikhism, it's text is revelation from divine authority and answers of all questions that are related to religion or morality can be found in it. It's lines are called "Words of Guru" or sometimes "Words of God". Guru Granth Sahib includes the writings of Sikh Gurus and also Bhagats like Kabeer and Sheikh Fareed etc.

**Text is divine revelation:** According to the Gurus, whatever is written in Guru Granth Sahib was not written by their own but by the result of what God wants them to write.

**Teachings contained in Guru Granth Sahib:-**

1. Gender Equality
2. All Humans are equal.
3. God is one.
4. Truthfulness etc.

Sukhmani Sahib, Guru Arjan, Zafarnamah, Book by Guru Gobind Singh, Anand Sahib and Book by Guru Amar Das are also the Holy Scriptures of Sikhism.

### **Holy Places:-**

1. Golden Temple:-

Golden Temple is also called Harmandir Sahib. It is a Gurdwara and it is considered holiest. Harmandir Sahib is built around a man made pool. It is the most significant shrine on spiritual basis. It was the centre of Singh Sabha Movement. It is an open house for all men and women. It has four entrances.

## 2. Panj Takht:-

Panj Takhts are the five Gurdwaras that are of special importance for the Sikh community.

- Akal Takht was installed by Guru Har Gobind. It is situated in Amritsar. It is a part of Golden Temple.
- Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib is located in Anandpur Sahib. Anandpur Sahib is the birthplace of Khalsa. It was installed by Guru Gobind Singh.
- Takht Sri Damdama Sahib is located in Talwandi.
- Takht Sri Patna Sahib is located in Patna. Patna is the capital of Bihar.
- Takht Sri Hazur Sahib is located on the northern bank of Godawara River. Around Angitha Sahib, Takht Siri Hazur was constructed.

### **Prohibitions of Sikhism<sup>9</sup>:-**

Following are the prohibitions in Sikhism:-

- 1.Sikhs are not allowed to cut hair as hair are considered the blessing of God.
- 2.Sikhs are not allowed to use tobacco in any form.
- 3.Sikhs are not allowed to eat halal meat. Their tenth Guru did so to give a symbol that they are not slaves.
- 4.Sikhs are not allowed to have extra-marital relationships. However, sex within marriage is not prohibited.

### **Social Position of Women:-**

#### 1. Salvation:-

According to Sikhism, God is equal for both ie. males and females and both genders can achieve salvation by following the Guru.

#### 2. Education:-

In Sikhism, education is of great importance and it is considered a key to one's success. The third Guru of Sikhs installed many schools. Both genders are emphasized to seek education.

---

<sup>9</sup> Gobind Singh Mansukhani, "Sikh Rahit Maryada and Sikh Symbols," *It is a privilege to present this monumental work on Sikh religion and history, completed with the co-operation of a galaxy of distinguished scholars. The project was undertaken about two years ago at the instance of Justice Choor Singh of Singapore, by Sardar Daljeet Singh and Dr Kharak Singh in behalf of the Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh. The project suffered a serious setback due to the unfortunate demise of Sardar Daljeet Singh in October 1994, after which the burden fell largely on Dr Kharak Singh.* (1989).

*In, 'The Role and Status of Sikh Women', Dr Mohinder Kaur Gill writes, "Guru Amar Das was convinced that no teachings can take root until and unless they are accepted by women folk"<sup>10</sup>.*

### 3. Hereditary Rights:-

In Sikhism, both genders are considered and treated equal so both ie. males and females gets equal share from their father's property.

### 4. Gender Equality:-

Sikhs consider men and women different from each on the basis of their gender but this different does not brings any discrimination and it doesn't cause any harm to gender equality. Both are equal before God and also booth are given equal opportunities.

### 5. Importance of the Women's Views:-

Some religions consider women inferior to men and they do not allow women to be a testimony in Courts but Sikhism considers both genders equal and sikhism also signifies the women's views. According to Sikhism, both genders are equal from birth.

### **Religious Festivals and Ceremonies:-**

Following are the religious festivals and ceremonies of Sikhs:-

#### 1. Maghi:-

This festtival is observed on 30<sup>th</sup> January. This festival acknowledges The Battle of Muktasar.

This battle was fought against Muaghals and Mughals were defeated.

---

<sup>10</sup> DR MEENAKSHI RAJAN, "Spiritual Warriors: The Evolution of the Role of Women in the Sikh Religion," (2010).

2. Parkash Utsav Dasveh Patshah:-

It is observed on 5<sup>th</sup> January. This festival is celebrated to memorialize the birth of the tenth Guru of Sikhs ie. Guru Gobind Singh.

3. Sikh New Year:-

According to the Sikh Calender, New Year is celebrated on 14<sup>th</sup> March and so the festival is celebrated.

4. Holla Mohalla:-

Holla Mohalla is celebrated on 17<sup>th</sup> March. It is also called Sikh Olympics. This festival includes swordsmanship and horse riding etc.

5. Martyrdom of Guru Arjan:-

It is observed on 16<sup>th</sup> June. Guru Arjan was tortured to death on a complaint by a Hindu. It is celebrated in Gurdwara. On this festival, chilled drinks are distributed in Gurdwaras (due to hot weather).

6. Pahila Prakash Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji:-

It is celebrated on 1<sup>st</sup> September. On this day, Guru Granth Sahib was made the final Guru of Sikhs.

Other festivals like Bandi Chhor Divas, Guru Nanak Gurburab, Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Martyrdrom Of the Sahibzade are also observed.