

## THE GURDWARA & LANGAR

The Sikh place of worship and learning is called the gurdwara or “door to the guru” and serves as the most important Sikh institution. Gurdwaras are open to all people regardless of gender, faith or culture. Sri Guru Granth Sahib is installed in each gurdwara and the congregation engages in the contemplation and singing of verses along with discourses on Sikh history and spirituality.

Each gurdwara contains a langar or free community kitchen where all persons are welcome to share a free vegetarian meal.

## SIKHS IN CANADA

Sikhs have been in Canada for well over 100 years.

In 1867, Canada’s first Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald wrote:

“War will come someday between England and the United States, and India can do us a yeoman’s service by sending an army of Sikhs ...

The first Sikhs arrived 1897 as part of the army regiments travelling through Canada in celebration of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee.

By 1907 there were close to 5000 Sikhs in Canada and the first Sikh gurdwara was established in Vancouver in 1908.

Discriminatory immigration laws soon reduced the number of Sikhs in Canada and many decided to either move to California or return home.



Biased attitudes and immigration policy towards Sikhs were embodied by the tragic Komagata Maru incident in which a ship of 376 mostly Sikh passengers was turned back from the Vancouver port after not being allowed to dock and being denied food and supplies for two months.

Despite discriminatory immigration policies, a Sikh community persisted in Canada and nine Canadian Sikhs are known to have fought for the Canadian forces in WWI.

As immigration policies were liberalized in the 1960s and 1970s, thousands of Sikhs came to settle in Canada and communities were established in every Canadian province.

Today Canadian Sikhs are an inseparable part of the Canadian fabric and are engaged in every facet of Canadian life from politics to the armed forces to civil society.

This publication is produced by the World Sikh Organization of Canada (WSO). WSO is a non-profit organization with a mandate to promote and protect the interests of Canadian Sikhs, as well as to promote and advocate for the protection of human rights for all individuals, irrespective of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and social and economic status

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# THE SIKH FAITH





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The Sikh faith is one of the youngest of the world's religions. It originated in Punjab in the late 15th century, with its founder Guru Nanak, who was both a spiritual teacher and social reformer.

Sikhs believe in one God and the complete equality of all humanity, regardless of gender, nationality, race, or class.

Guru Nanak taught that the purpose of human life is to unite with God and this is possible by observing the three principles of meditation on God's name (nam japna), earning an honest living (kirat karna), and sharing one's earnings with others (vand shakna). These three enjoinders have become the pillars of Sikh society.



There are approximately 30 million Sikhs worldwide, living predominately in India, Canada, the United States of America and Great Britain. Smaller Sikh communities can be found in almost every country of the world.

### THE SIKH GURUS & SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The Sikh faith was formed and developed by 10 human Gurus from Guru Nanak, who was born in 1469, through to Guru Gobind Singh, who in 1708 appointed the Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, as the eternal Guru of the Sikhs.

The Sikh Gurus spread the message of a universal God and the oneness of all humanity. They spoke out against blind ritualism and the division of society on gender, class and religious lines.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the revealed word of God and is composed of the divinely inspired verses of the Sikh Gurus along with those of other saints and bards of diverse social, caste and faith backgrounds who experienced union with God.

The verses and hymns of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are reflections upon God and also establish moral guidelines for spiritual development and union with God.

The verses of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are composed in 31 raags or traditional musical measures and span 1430 pages, known as ang or limbs.

### VAISAKHI & THE BIRTH OF THE KHALSA

On Vaisakhi day in 1699, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and final human Guru of the Sikhs, created the Order of the Khalsa. The Khalsa refers to the collective body of initiated or amritdhari Sikhs. Khalsa is translated as both the 'sovereign and free' and as the 'pure'.

The Khalsa was dedicated by Guru Gobind Singh to the service of God and humanity and to oppose injustice in all its forms. The formation of the Khalsa is celebrated every year at Vaisakhi in April with great celebrations and parades known as nagar kirtans.

Anyone can become a member of the Khalsa by accepting amrit initiation from the Punj Pyare or five initiated Sikhs and agreeing to follow the Sikh code of conduct or rehit maryada. Amritdhari Sikhs (members of the Khalsa) are easily identifiable by the Sikh articles of faith



## SIKH ARTICLES OF FAITH

All amritdhari Sikh must wear the five articles of faith known as kakaars. Sikhs wear these articles of faith as reminders of their commitment to the tenets of their faith, including justice, charity, morality, humility, and equality. These articles of faith are:



1. kesh – unshorn hair symbolizing acceptance of God's will; the hair must be kept covered at all times with a keski or dastaar (turban or head-covering) representing spiritual wisdom;
2. kanga – a wooden comb representing self-discipline; worn in the hair and used to keep it neat and tidy;
3. kara – an iron or steel bracelet worn on the wrist; the circle signifies the oneness and eternity of God and to use one's hands for the benefit of humanity;
4. kachhera – cotton undergarment representing high moral character and restraint;
5. kirpan – a stylized representation of a sword, which must be worn sheathed, restrained in a cloth belt, and next to the body; the kirpan signifies the duty of a Sikh to stand up against injustice. Most kirpans range in size from 6 to 9 inches in length.