

What is Sikhism?

Founded in Punjab in the 16th Century, the religion now has a following of over 20 million worldwide, with over 300,000 currently living in the UK. Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, following one God and stresses the importance of doing good actions rather than merely carrying out rituals. The religion is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and those of the nine Sikh gurus who followed him.

What is Guru Granth Sahib?

This is the Sikh scripture and is considered a living guru. The tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, decreed that after his death (1708) the spiritual guide of the Sikhs would be the teachings contained in that book; the book has the status of a human Guru and is shown the same respect. However, Guru Gobind Singh did declare that Sikhs should not seek answers from the scripture but instead ought to decide issues as a community, based on the principles in the Guru Granth Sahib.

What is the Khalsa?

Guru Gobind Singh laid the foundations of Panth Khalsa in 1699, a community of faithful who wore visible symbols of their faith and trained as warriors. Today the Khalsa comprises all practising Sikhs.

The Guru introduced the five K's to identify members of the Khalsa, make the community more strongly bound together. They are physical symbols, taken together to symbolise dedication to a life of devotion and submission to the Guru. Each K has particular significance:

- Kaccha/Kachh/Kachera – cotton underwear
- Kanga – a wooden comb
- Kara – a steel bracelet
- Kesh – uncut hair
- Kirpan – steel sword

What is Vaisakhi?

The Sikh celebration of New Year, falling on the 13/14th of April in 2014 is also a commemoration of the year 1699 when Sikhism became a collective faith.

The Vaisakhi festival was underway in Anandpur Sahib when Guru Gobind Singh, emerging from a tent baring a sword, challenged any Sikh who was prepared to give his life to come into the tent. Five men entered one by one and each time the Guru Gobind Singh emerged with his sword covered in blood. The crowd were relieved when finally five men returned wearing turbans, these men, the Panj Piare, were sprinkled with Amrit and baptised into the Khalsa.

How is Vaisakhi celebrated?

Nagar Kirtan processions, singing and dancing happen throughout the day and Gurdwaras are decorated and visited. Many Sikhs choose to be baptised into the Khalsa brotherhood on this day.



Glossary of Terms

Amrit – immortalising nectar: the Sikh term for holy water.

Anandpur Sahib – a holy city in the Rupnagar district of Punjab.

Gurdwaras – place of congregational worship.

Guru Gobind Singh – the tenth Guru, he created the Khalsa brotherhood.

Guru Granth Sahib – the book of Sikh scripture.

Guru Nanak – the founder of Sikhism.

Kirtan – the singing of hymns from the Guru Grath Sahib.

Nagar Kirtan – singing processions through the town, led by Panj Piaras to celebrate Vaisakhi.

Panj Piare – ‘the beloved five’. The first five members of the Khalsa brotherhood.

Panth Khalsa – the Order of the Pure Ones: the Khalsa

April Dates in the Sikh Calendar

April 14th – Vaisakhi

April 18th – Birthday of Guru Teg Bahadur

April 18th – Birthday of Guru Angad

Location of Local Sikh Worshipping Spaces

Sri Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara, 57 Upper Chorlton Rd, Manchester, Greater Manchester M16 7RQ

Sikh Community Welfare and Gurdwara, 15 Monton St, Manchester, Greater Manchester M14 4LS

Location of Most Sacred Spaces

Darbar Sahib - The Golden Temple, Amritsar, Punjab, India.

Anandpur Sahib, Rupnagar, Punjab, India.

The Five Holy Takhts (Thrones) situated across India in Punjab, Maharashtra and Bihar, each have special significance. They are considered the seats of Sikh religious authority and many important decisions concerning the religious and social life of the Sikh community are made from within them.

Sikhism at the University

As with all religious and belief systems the University is very supportive of the Sikh community.

More information is available:

www.staffnet.manchester.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/equality-groups/religion-belief

Religious Observance Guidance:

www.documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=8362

Sacred Spaces Map:

www.documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=9044

