

POPULATION IN THE WORLD:

~20 million

POPULATION IN CANADA:

~455,000 or 1.4% of Canadians

HISTORY:

Sikhism traces its roots back to the Punjab region of South Asia (modern-day India and Pakistan). Around 1500 CE, an individual named Guru Nanak received a vision that led him to teach the people how to reach God. Sikhism is based on Guru Nanak's teachings and those of the nine gurus who came after him. Each of these gurus was in deep communion with God, and their spiritual guidance is found within the sacred scripture.

The 10th guru, named Guru Gobind Singh, died in 1708. Before he died, he did not pass on the authority of the guruship to a human being. Instead, this authority was passed on through the *Guru Granth* (scripture) and *Guru Panth* (spiritual community). The word *khalsa* (derived from Arabic, meaning "pure") refers to the community of Sikhs who have been initiated into the faith and thereby dedicated their lives to *sarbat da bhalla* (the good of all). There are five distinct physical symbols of this initiation, commonly referred to as the 5 Ks. There is great diversity among the communities of Sikhs around the world, and ritual expression is based on cultural context. As in other faiths, Sikhs do not believe in performing empty rituals or observing superstitions.

FORMAL PLACE OF WORSHIP:

Gurdwara

SACRED SCRIPTURE(S):

Guru Granth Sahib

- The *Guru Granth*, sometimes respectfully called "Sri Guru Granth Sahib," is a unique scripture because it includes inspired hymns by non-Sikhs. It is considered to be a living guide and inspiration for all Sikhs.
- These hymns contain the divinely inspired word of God, described as both mystical and practical.

SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES:

- Sikhism is a monotheistic faith: followers believe that there is only one God.
- The internal religious state of the individual is paramount.
- Each individual has a personal and direct link with God, and all individuals are equal.
- Ethical action and truthful living are more important than mere performance of ritual.
- There are three duties that must be carried out by Sikhs: remembering God at all times (*Nam Japna*); earning an honest living (*Kirt Karni*); and sharing one's wealth and caring for others (*Vand Chhakna*).
- Human beings spend their time in a cycle of birth, life and rebirth, and the quality of this life depends on the law of *karma*—the nature of one's current life is based on the good and the deeds performed in the previous life.

OTHER IMPORTANT TRANSLATIONS:

- *Guru* is a Sanskrit word meaning teacher, saint or honoured/religious person.
- *Sikh* is a Punjabi word for disciple or student and refers to followers of Sikhism.

REFERENCES:

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- Statistics Canada – National Household Survey: statcan.gc.ca/daily-quotidien/130508/dq130508b-eng.htm
- BBC Religions – Sikhism: bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/sikhism
- Sikhism: sikhs.org