

# Introduction to Sikhism

By Dr Zakir Naik

Sikhism is a non-Semitic, Aryan, non-Vedic religion. It is a religion that has the sixth largest following in the world. Some consider it as an offshoot of Hinduism. It was founded by Guru Nanak at the end of the 15th century. It originated in the area of Pakistan and North West India called Punjab, meaning the land of the five rivers. Guru Nanak was born in a Kshatriya (warrior caste) Hindu family but was very strongly influenced by Islam and Muslims.



## DEFINITION OF SIKH AND SIKHISM

The word 'Sikh' is derived from the word sisya meaning disciple or follower. Sikhism is a religion of ten Gurus, the first Guru being Guru Nanak and the tenth and the last being Guru Gobind Singh. The sacred book of Sikhism is Sri Guru Granth also called Adi Granth Sahib.

## THE FIVE – 'K's

Every Sikh is supposed to keep the following five 'K's, which also serve to identify him as a Sikh:

Kesh – uncut hair.

Kanga – comb; used to keep the hair clean.

Kada – metal or steel bangle; for strength and self-restraint.

Kirpan – dagger; for self-defence.

Kaccha – special knee length underwear or under-drawer for agility.

## CONCEPT OF GOD IN SIKHISM

## MULMANTRA: THE FUNDAMENTAL CREED OF SIKHISM

The best definition that any Sikh can give regarding the concept of God Sikhism is to quote the Mulmantra – the fundamental creed of Sikhism, which occurs at the beginning of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

It is mentioned in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, volume 1 Japuji, the first verse:

"There exists but one God, who is called The True, The Creator, Free from fear and hate, Immortal, Not begotten, Self-Existent, Great and Compassionate."

Sikhism is a monotheistic Religion

Sikhism enjoins its followers to practise strict monotheism. It believes in only One Supreme God who is, in the unmanifest form, called Ek Omkara.

In the manifest form He is called Omkara and has several attributes such as:

- Kartar – The Creator
- Akal – The Eternal
- Sattanama – The Holy Name
- Sahib – The Lord
- Parvardigar – The Cherisher
- Rahim – The Merciful
- Karim – The Benevolent

He is also called Wahe Guru – the One true God.

Besides Sikhism being strictly monotheistic, it also does not believe in Avataravada – the doctrine of incarnation. Almighty God does not incarnate Himself in what is known as Avatara. Sikhism is also strongly against idol worship.

Guru Nanak was influenced by Sant Kabir

Guru Nanak was influenced by the sayings of Sant Kabir so much that several chapters of Sri Guru Granth Sahib contain couplets of Sant Kabir.

One of the famous couplets of Sant Kabir is:

"Dukh mein sumirana sabh karein  
Sukh mein karein na koya  
Jo sukh mein sumirana karein  
To dukh kaye hoye?"

"In times of trouble, God is remembered by all  
But none remembers Him during peace and happiness.



If God is remembered in good times of happiness  
Why should trouble occur?"

Compare this with the following verse of the Qur'an:

"When some trouble toucheth man,  
He crieth unto his Lord,  
Turning to Him in repentance:  
But when He bestoweth  
A favour upon him  
As from Himself,  
(Man) doth forget what he cried  
And prayed for before,  
And he doth set up  
Rivals unto Allah."  
[Al-Qur'an 39:8]

The Sikh scriptures therefore emphasise monotheism and God-consciousness.