



**Sikhism**

**My Perspective**

**By**

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# What is Sikhism?

- ♦ A distinct Religion founded in India (1469) by Guru Nanak and built upon by the nine prophet -teachers (Gurus) who succeeded him. The living Guru now is the holy scripture of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS), the eternal guide to the Sikh faith.
- ♦ The word “Sikh” means disciple or student.
- ♦ The word “Guru” means teacher or God
- ♦ One of the world’s youngest monotheistic religions – There is only one God (Ik Onkar)



# *What is Sikhism...continued?*

- ♦ Fifth largest religion with 28M followers
  - ♦ About 22M Sikhs live in India - consider the state of Punjab as their home
  - ♦ About 700K Sikhs live in the US, most residing on the east and west coasts
  
- ♦ Universal religion which is open to all - recognizes & respects all human beings as equals.
  - ♦ Does not recognize race, class, caste, or other earthly distinctions between people.
  - ♦ Standing up against oppression and injustice is a Sikh's duty
  - ♦ Recognizes men & women as equal in all aspects of life.

*"We are born of woman, we are conceived in the womb of woman, we are engaged and married to woman. We make friendship with woman and the lineage continued because of woman. When one woman dies, we take another one, we are bound with the world through woman. Why should we talk ill of her, who gives birth to kings? The woman is born from woman; there is none without her. Only the One True Lord is without woman" (Guru Nanak, Var Asa, pg. 473)*
  
- ♦ Sikh place of worship is called 'Gurudwara'
  - Guru=teacher; Dwara=door
  - Golden Temple in Amritsar
  - Several in central CT area (Southington, Windsor etc.)



# *Sikhism – 3 Basic Tenets*

## 1. Naam Japna

Always Remember the name of God in all you are and do

## 2. Kirat Karna

Honest and Hard Work

## 3. Vand Chakna

Charity and Giving incorporate in daily life

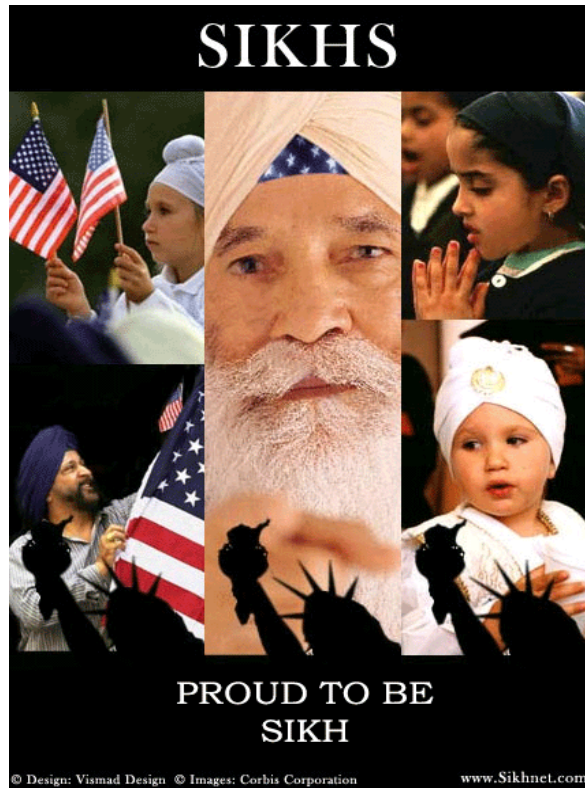
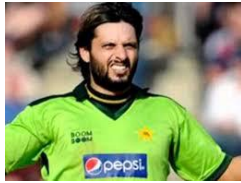
Daswandh – 10% mandate

# Who Are Sikhs?

## Singh

Middle name of all Sikh males

Lion - brave



## Kaur

Middle names of all Sikh women

Princess



# *Sikhs and Turbans*

- ◆ ~99% of the people who wear turbans are Sikhs.
- ◆ Some Sikh women wear ‘smaller’ turbans to keep their head covered as well.
- ◆ Sikh boys and men wear “patkas” a head cover which lends itself to sports/active lifestyle.
- ◆ Everyone covers their heads in the Gurudwara (It’s a mandate)



# *Traditional Sikh Greetings*

- *Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh* – The Khalsa (Sikhs) belong to the Almighty, Victory to the Almighty.
- *Sat Sri Akaal* – True and Forever is the Timeless Lord.



# *Sikh Prayer Service - Kirtan*



- Sikhs engage in spiritual hymn singing known as *Kirtan* (akin to a church choir) as part of the Gurudwara service.
- Much of the kirtan is from the SGGS (holy scriptures), especially at the Gurdwara
- *Tabla* (percussion) and harmonium (*string*) are usually used during the service, though other instruments are also utilized.
- Proper conduct mandates one to remain silent and meditative during *Kirtan*.



# *Langar – The Gurudwara 's Free Kitchen*

- Langar is a term used in Sikhism for a community kitchen where free meals are served to all visitors, without distinction of religion, caste, gender, economic status, race or ethnicity.
- Is always vegetarian and simple usually consisting of Dal (lentils), Dahi (yogurt), Sabji (vegetable), Rice and Roti (Bread).
- Everyone sits on one level (usually on the floor) to demonstrate equality
- Langar was created by the founder, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Guru.



# *Nishan Sahib - The Sikh Flag*

- Nishan=symbol
- Hoisted on a tall flagpole outside every Sikh *Gurudwara*.
- The emblem on the flag is a “Khanda” which is a double edge sword representing Miri Piri (Spiritual Soldier)
- Like a flag on any institution, this Nishan Sahib also symbolizes the presence of the Khalsa (the pure Sikh) and is an indication of hospitality. Anyone can always find food, shelter and basic needs in case of crisis or distress. No one will be turned away.



# The Sikh Code of Conduct (Rehat Maryada)

The Rehat Maryada was developed by the Sikh governing body called Shiromani Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee in 1945 and is fairly controversial. It was designed to be a supplement to our holy scriptures to provide a practical structure for a way of life.

A baptized Sikh is called the Pure One (the Khalsa) and must follow the Rehat Maryada which has many mandates including the following:

1. Belief in One God
2. Equality of All the Human race - respect for all, irrespective of gender, age, status, color, caste, sexual orientation
3. Self-Control – Kill the 5 evils (kaam – lust; krodh – anger; lobh – greed; moh – attachment; & ahankar (conceit)
4. Alcohol, Cigarettes & Illegal Drugs are forbidden
5. Follow the 5 Virtues for Self-Improvement (sat – truth; santokh – contentment; dya - compassion; nimrata –humility & pyar - love)
6. Maintenance the Sikh Uniform

## The Sikh Uniform with the 5 Ks:

1. *Kesh* (unshorn hair) – for identity
2. *Kirpan* (sheathed sword) - to protect against injustice
3. *Kachera* (modest underpants) - to represent modesty
4. *Kanga* (comb) – to keep hair hygienic &
5. *Karha* (steel bracelet) – to remind you of your commitment to God

Kanga	Kesh	Kara	Kirpan	Kachera
	This is the uncut hair which symbolises spiritual power		A Sikh sword, a symbol of respect and justice	
A special comb that represents cleanliness		A steel bangle, symbolising unity, of self and a process of constant learning		A special pair of shorts. These are a symbol of modesty 11

# Sikhs and the attempted Genocide (1984)

- June 1<sup>st</sup> 1984 – Operation Bluestar launched by the Indian Govt. was an invasion on dozens on Gurdwaras, including the holiest of them all, The Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab.
  - This was allegedly in response to the Sikh movement demanding rights for oppressed minorities including women, lower castes, impoverished communities and minority religions (such as Sikhs).
  - Sikhs conducted these movements via peaceful protests which at a large scale threatened the economic and social stability of India.
  - This timeframe is one of the Gurburab timeframes which commemorates the 5<sup>th</sup> Guru's martyrdom. Many Sikhs go to their respective Gurdwaras for memorial services.
  - The estimated casualties were in the range of 10,000-20,000 although government only reported about 675.
- October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1984 – Indira Gandhi the prime minister of India was assassinated by her two Sikh bodyguards
- October 31<sup>st</sup> – November 3<sup>rd</sup> 1984 – 3 days of massacre and violence on the part of the Indian government to wipe out all Sikhs in the Delhi region. The casualties just from Delhi riots were close to 10,000 although government only reported 2,800.

*For more information, please read "India's Guilty Secret" published in 2017 by Pav Singh, which uncovers the hidden crimes of November 1984, the conspiracy behind the genocide and the indifference of the British government under PM Thatcher.*

# *Sikhism and US Laws*

- The Turban and the *Kirpan* have been the target of many US lawsuits
- Both are articles of the Sikh faith that cannot be compromised as per the tenets of the faith
- Outcome of litigation in the U.S. has been overwhelmingly in support of the Turban and the *Kirpan*
- The U.S. Constitution affords general and broad protection for the free exercise of one's religion
- First Amendment – “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof”
- The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) says that customer preference is not a sufficient reason to deny an employee's request to wear religious attire.

In January 2017, following the outcome of a lawsuit under the **Religious Freedom Restoration Act**, regulations were changed, allowing for any the wearing of beards & turbans by religious individuals (the same ruling also allowed Burkas & Hijabs by Muslims). The ruling stipulates that the regulations may require beard lengths (rolling/clipping is allowed) and must not interfere with operations.

US Army has not changed the regulations but has granted exceptions for Sikhs to have long hair (turban and beards)

**Homeland Securities Federal Protective Service (FPS)** policy acknowledges that civil rights laws may mandate the entry of certain seemingly prohibited items – **like kirpans** – into federal government buildings. Previously, federal law barred the entry of knives with blade lengths of 2.5 inches or greater – including kirpans – into federal facilities. Under the new policy: Sikhs carrying kirpans with blades of less than 2.5 inches will, in most instances, continue to be allowed entry into FPS-secured buildings with their kirpans. Sikhs carrying kirpans with blades 2.5 inches or greater may request an exception (temporary) or exemption (permanent) to enter FPS-secured buildings with their kirpans. The granting of an accommodation is discretionary. Sikhs initially denied entry with their kirpans will have an opportunity to appeal the decision to FPS headquarters.

## **TSA Regulations:**

In October of both 2007 and 2010, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) issued new regulations. Checking headwear and religious head gear such as turbans includes possible removal of turban by Transportation Security Officers (TSO) and these 100% mandatory procedures:

- Advanced Imaging Technology (AIT) machine scan or full body pat down.
- Hand wand and pat down of turban.

**Public Education Regulations** state “All students who attend public schools have the right to be free from discrimination, harassment, or bullying based upon their religion, race, ethnicity, or national origin”

# *Sikhs post 9-11*

- Hate crimes against Muslims and those perceived as Muslims spiked after 9/11. Sikh men grow long beards and wear turbans as a commitment to their faith, and many Americans mistake them for Muslims.
- In the first month after 9/11, the group documented more than 300 cases of violence and discrimination against Sikhs in America.
- In the years since, hundreds of hate crimes have been reported, many of them described by police as cases of mistaken identity, like the September 15, 2001, murder in Mesa. The first reported fatality of post 9-11 violence in the US was victim of 911 hate crime was Balbir Singh Sodhi, a gas station owner, who was fatally shot in Mesa, AZ. Other examples include: Rajinder Singh Khalsa – beaten severely by a group of assailants resulting in multiple fractures & a Sikh family was assaulted by three males outside their home in Queens, New York. The men yelled “Bin Laden go back to your country” and held and punched adult family members in full view of their children.
- Sikh Americans suffered their darkest moment on August 5, 2012, when white supremacist Wade Michael Page went on a shooting rampage at a Sikh Gurdwara, or temple, in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. Page killed one woman and five men; all the men were wearing turbans.
- Sikh community leaders say they’ve seen another uptick since the 2016 presidential election and the Trump administration’s proposed immigration and travel bans. Those proposals, they argue, are fueling an intensified xenophobia. Earlier this year, two Sikhs and two other Indian men were shot in attacks in Kansas, Washington and South Carolina. In two of the incidents, authorities said the shooters expressed a variation of the same sentiment: “*Go back to your country!*”