

Quotes

Nanak is believed to have had a revelatory experience when he was about 30 years old.

Guru Nanak : History Section

“Air is the Guru, Water is the Father, and Earth is the Great Mother of all. Day and night are the two nurses, in whose lap all the world is at play.”

Guru Nanak, Mehla 1, Guru Granth Sahib - Ang 8

“Upon that cosmic plate of the sky, the sun and the moon are the lamps. The stars and their orbs are the studded pearls. You have thousands of eyes, and yet You have no eyes. You have thousands of forms, and yet you do not have even one. What a beautiful Aartee, lamp-lit worship service this is!”

Guru Nanak, Mehla 1, Guru Granth Sahib - Ang 13

[Guru Amar Das] embraced Sikhism at the age of sixty after meeting Guru Angad. In 1552, he was appointed the third Guru of Sikhism. He introduced the Dasvandh system, where Sikhs contributed a tenth of their income for religious purposes, and strengthened the Langar tradition, which provided free meals to all. He worked against oppressive practices like the veiling of women and the custom of Sati, advocating for women's rights and dignity.

Guru Amar Das, Mehla 3 : History Section

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FOR THE MODERN AGE
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INTRODUCTION

This book is about the history and spiritual teachings of the ten Gurus that founded the Sikh Religion. Its purpose is to invite the reader to understand the universal message of Sikhism, which promotes individual spiritual awareness, service to humanity, and physical defense of these principles; hence the title, 'Saint-Soldier'.

The word *Guru* means Teacher, and the word *Sikh* means a Student. Starting with the first teacher Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh theology, the religion recognizes all ten Gurus as divine messengers of the faith.

The ten Sikh Gurus shaped Guru Nanak's spiritual message and vision into a mainstream religion between the years 1500-1700. All this took place primarily in the Punjab region of India in the backdrop of tremendous strife with the Mughal Empire. The Sikh religion evolved through the intertwining of history and spirituality. For this reason, this book is divided into Historical and Spiritual sections.

The Historical section covers life and time of the Gurus, their interaction with the Mughal emperors, their political contributions, and their sacrifices. Each Guru has the title Mehla #, the number 1-10 represents the order in lineage. The author has taken care to provide information in the historical section from historical texts only. Each Guru has his own historical chapter with a table showing the Guru's biographical data and listing his main political and literary contributions to the faith.

In the Spiritual section, there is a chapter for each of the seven Gurus who were the primary contributors to spiritual writings recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh Holy Scripture. Not all Gurus contributed with spiritual writings. In addition, this section has writings of two main non-Sikh poet-saints of the time whose writings are recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib. Information in the Spiritual Section is strictly from the Guru Granth Sahib. Next to each quote of this Holy Scripture is the page number of Guru Granth Sahib. This book provides only excerpts with original Gurumukhi text and an English translation. Using the Page number (Ang number), the reader can use other resources to explore the full text from the Guru Granth



Sahib. Only for the 10th Guru Gobind Singh's writings, texts are from other sources.

Unlike most other religions, the Guru Granth Sahib is not only the Sikh Holy Scripture but also regarded by Sikhs as their eternal Guru. The 10th Guru Gobind Singh, before his death in 1708, conferred the status of Eternal Guru on this Holy Scripture and directed all Sikhs from that day forward, to consider the Guru Granth Sahib as their only Guru. The chapter on Guru Granth Sahib describes its origin, evolution, and structures to help the reader better understand this immense volume of spiritual works.

The author visited Amritsar, Goindwal, Kiratpur, Anandpur Sahib, Delhi, and Sirhind multiple times in order to better understand the historical and spiritual significance of these places in Sikh religion. These towns are key places central to Sikh Theology.

Throughout this book, the readers will see for themselves how both the history and teachings of Sikh Gurus are relevant in the modern age. The Historical section is easy to read and engrossing as it shows the strife, sacrifice, and temporal transformation of Sikh faith from the onslaught of Mughal Emperors. The valor and humanity exhibited by the Gurus will motivate all. Time and again, readers can immerse themselves in the spiritual pages to find a connection to Guru Nanak's message. The message of finding peace by giving up self (or ego), forgiving, and living a life of truth and compassion.

Lokesh Kumar
Michigan, USA
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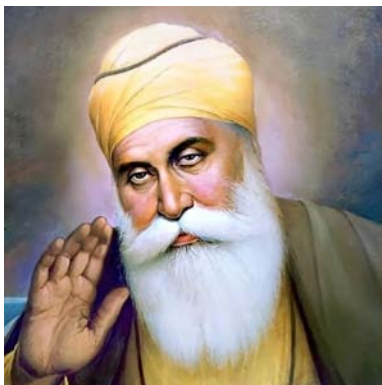
Mehla identifies which Guru is the author of the verses that follow it in the Shri Guru Granth Sahib.



SECTION 1



HISTORY OF SIKH GURUS



Guru Nanak was born in Talwandi, now in Pakistan, a village between rivers Ravi and Chenab. A prominent family in Talwandi employed Nanak's father Mehta Kalu as an accountant. Nanak's family was well to do and his father ensured Nanak received a good education in Persian and Sanskrit. He was very intelligent and learned mathematics and the languages very quickly. By age 14 years, he began exploring philosophy and poetry on his own.

Soon after, Kalu sent Nanak to Sultanpur to stay with Nanak's sister there and find work with the treasury office. At about 16 years old, Nanak started working for the local revenue office of the Delhi Sultanate, though his passion remained in exploring spirituality, poetry, and music.

Born	Nanak 15 April 1469 Talwandi, Punjab Mughal Empire
Died	22 Sept. 1539 Aged 70 Kartarpur, Punjab, Mughal Empire
Cause of Death	Natural
Spouse	Mata Sulakhani
Children	Sri Chand Lakhmi Das
Parents	Mehta Kalu Mata Tripta
Guruship	c. 1499–1539 40 years at age 30
Literary Works	Created Gurmukhi script. Wrote 974 poems, Japji Sahib, Kirtan Sohila, Sidh Gohst, Dakhni Onkar
Known for	Founded Sikhism Travelled all India, Persia, Arabia.

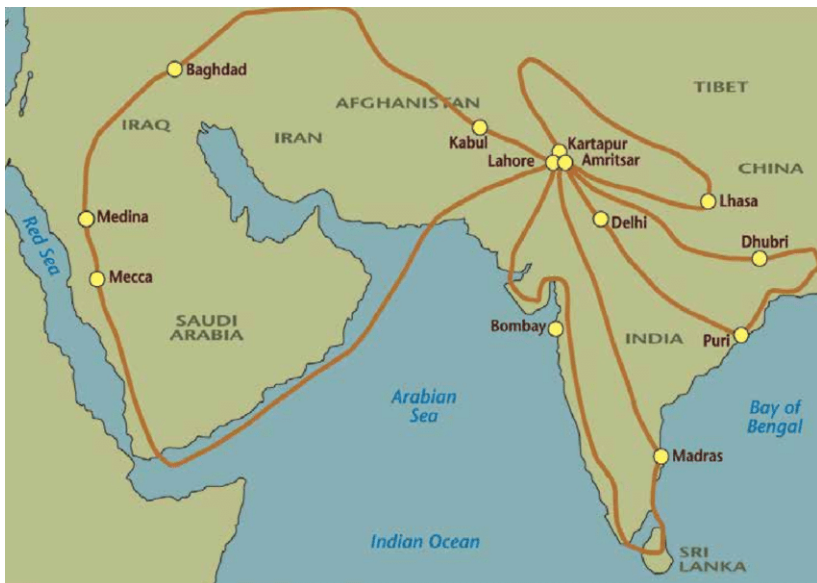


His spiritual wisdom and poetic expression revealed a profound insight into life.

In his work for the revenue office, Nanak was sincere, and hardworking. He got married in Sultanpur at age 18 in 1487 and had two sons. He spent days working and evenings preaching using his poetry in the form of hymns along with music. His wife Sulakni understood Nanak's desire to make life better for all people and always supported Nanak in his mission. Eleven years went by like this.

At about Age 30, Nanak is believed to have had a revelatory experience. He had gone for a swim, did not return home for some days. He later recollected that he had fallen into a trance, and he heard a voice telling him to travel from place to place and bring his teachings to the world. Nanak's vision embraced the concept of one God; he rejected divisions based on caste and creed, mingling freely with both Hindus and Muslims. From then on, he was called Guru Nanak (Nanak the Teacher).

Map-illustrating the places Guru Nanak is reported to have visited Courtesy of Sikh Legacy of The Punjab. Smithsonian Institute





Guru Gobind Singh (born Gobind Das; December 22, 1666 – October 7, 1708) was the tenth and last mortal Sikh Guru. He was a warrior, poet, and philosopher. In 1675, at the age of nine, he became the leader of the Sikhs after his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur (the ninth Guru), was executed by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Guru Gobind Singh lost all four of his biological sons during his lifetime—two in battle and two who were executed by the Mughal commander Wazir Khan. Among the Sikh Gurus, Gobind Singh stands out as the one who suffered the most and lost everything fighting for the Sikh faith. His decisions, spirituality, and vision

*Guru Gobind Singh painted
by Nainsukh, circa 1800*

Born	Gobind Das 22 December 1666 Patna Sahib, Bihar Subah, Mughal Empire
Died	7 October 1708 (Aged 41), Hazur Sahib, Nanded, Bidah Subah, Mughal Empire
Cause of death	Assassination
Spouse	Mata Ajeet Kaur Mata Sundar Kaur Mata Sahib Kaur
Children	Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, Fateh Singh Zorawar Singh Palit (Adopted)
Parents	Guru Tegh Bahadur Mata Gujri
Period in office	1675–1708 (23 years) at age 9
Predecessor	Guru Tegh Bahadur
Successor	Guru Granth Sahib
Known for	Founded Khalsa, ended Guru succession, final compilation of Guru Granth Sahib, Dasam Granth



transformed the Sikh faith into a mainstream religion.

Gobind Singh was the only son of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Mata Gujri. He was born in Patna, Bihar, while his father was visiting Bengal and Assam. In 1670, the family returned to Punjab, and in March 1672, they moved to Chakk Nanaki in the Himalayan foothills of northern India where he was schooled. At age 10, he married Jito, and they had three sons: Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, and Fateh Singh. At age 17, he married Sundari, and they had one son, Ajit Singh. At age 33, he married Sahib Devan, though they had no children. Sahib Devan played an important role in Sikhism and was a spiritual companion to Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru named all his children Singh (meaning lion) twelve years before he created the Khalsa and formalized the Singh surname for all Sikhs.

Among Guru Gobind Singh's most significant contributions to Sikhism was the founding of the Khalsa, a Sikh warrior community, in 1699. He also introduced the Five Ks—the five articles of faith that Khalsa Sikhs wear at all times. This tradition was created to give baptized Sikhs a unique identity. To become a member of the Khalsa, an individual must undergo self-baptism and be mature enough to fully understand the commitment. The Khalsa was established as the military wing and protector of Sikh people. The colors traditionally associated with the Khalsa are navy blue and bright yellow.

Guru Gobind Singh finalized the Guru Granth Sahib as Sikhism's central religious scripture and sealed it from further edits. This scripture includes the writings of the first nine Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh chose not to include his own writings in the Guru Granth Sahib. Instead, his hymns were compiled in a separate Dasam Granth, which is another sacred text used in Sikh prayers and Khalsa rituals. The Dasam Granth contains compositions such as Jaap Sahib, Nitnem, hymns, letters, and discussions on warriors and theology.

Guru Gobind Singh was appointed as leader of Sikhs and the tenth Guru at age 9 in Anandpur Sahib. The day he became the tenth Guru, he was presented with the decapitated head of his father. Rather than being discouraged, this moment strengthened the young Guru's determination to stop Mughal oppression and protect Sikh religious values. Soon after, Emperor Aurangzeb ordered the destruction of Guru Gobind Singh and his family.



SECTION 2



SPIRITUAL



Guru Nanak is undoubtedly a divine personality. He is not only the founder of Sikhism, but also a great saint, a great poet with divine vision, a brilliant social reformer and a great philosopher. However, the permanent feeling of his works is the feeling of exclusive devotion towards God.

Through his writings, Guru Nanak rises above the burden of duality, in the experience of oneness with the Creator. He touches our hearts by remembering the Creator day and night, yearning for the Lord, and putting his inner pain into words, voice and music. In such a situation, his works do not remain ordinary poems, they become his conversation with the Supreme Being, they become a sweet invitation for all living beings to recognize that vast element and enjoy in it.

His compositions appear to be divine in the sense that they cannot be recreated. The word combinations alone are elegant, simple, and musical. And when set to music as he did, they reverberate through the soul. The only true way to appreciate them is to chant them in the original form. Any attempt to translate them results in crude extraction of meaning only. Lost in translation is the effect his compositions have on the mind and soul. Following are excerpts of some of his compositions.

Gauree Raga, Adi Granth, Mehla I, Ang 151

"I go from place to place scared, scared; I'm afraid as much as I'm scared; Without you, there is no one else. Whatever's done is done on your Command; Fear God if I must fear All other fears are just a restless mind."

Guru Nanak's words are the spiritual voice that warns us of the enemies residing within us: "In this city, five thieves based on lust and anger reside; these are our five senses. God resides inside every being, but the veil of ignorance keeps us from crossing the ocean of life without accepting the word of God." Guru Nanak's words are the words



have your feet and head done to you? Behold your Beloved within yourself. ||120|| Who is a swan, and who is a crane, if God blesses him with His Glance of Grace? If it pleases Him, O Nanak, He changes a crow into a swan. ||124|| What is that word, what is that virtue, and what is that magic mantra? What are those clothes, which I can wear to captivate my Husband Lord? ||126|| Humility is the word, forgiveness is the virtue, and sweet speech is the magic mantra. Wear these three robes, O sister, and you will captivate your Husband Lord. ||127||



Quotes

“ੴ ਸਤਿਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ
 ॥ *One Creator. Truth is his Name. Fearless is the Creator.
 Unable to Hate. Forever Living. Beyond Birth. Self Existent. By
 Guru's Grace. Mehla 1, Guru Granth Sahib - Ang 1*

*“When the hands and the feet and the body are dirty, Water
 can wash away the dirt....But when the intellect is stained and
 polluted by sin, It can only be cleansed by the Love of the
 Name.” Mehla 1, Guru Granth Sahib - Ang 4*

“ਭੂਲ ਚੁਕ ਅਪਨਾ ਬਾਰਿਕੁ ਬਖਸਿਆ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਭਗਵਾਨਾ ॥੧॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਸਦਾ
 ਦਇਆਲਾ ਮੋਹਿ ਦੀਨ ਕਉ ਰਾਖਿ ਲੀਆ ॥ ਕਾਟਿਆ ਰੋਗੁ ਮਹਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਆ”
*The errant child has been forgiven by the Supreme Lord
 God. ||1|| My True Guru is always merciful; He has saved me,
 the meek one. He has cured me of my disease, and I have
 obtained the greatest peace;
 Mehla 5, Guru Granth Sahib : Ang 383*

“ਸੱਬ ਸਿੱਖਣ ਕੋ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਯੋ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ॥“
*Before his death [in 1708], the 10th Guru Gobind Singh
 declared that from then on, Sikhs would follow the Holy
 Scripture Guru Granth Sahib as their eternal Guru, ending the
 succession of mortal Gurus.
 Guru Gobind Singh : History Section*

*“The nights are wasted sleeping, and the days are wasted
 eating. Human life is such a precious jewel, but it is being lost
 in exchange for a mere shell. ||1||”
 Mehla 1, Guru Granth Sahib – Ang 156*