

# Khalsa Panth

The Khalsa Panth refers to both a community that practises Sikhism and a specific group of initiated Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of Sikhism, established the Khalsa tradition in 1699. Its establishment was a watershed moment in Sikhism's history. Sikhs commemorate the creation of the Khalsa at the Vaisakhi festival.

The topic has a chance of being asked as a UPSC Prelims History Question or as a Current Affairs Question.

## About Khalsa

Following his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, being killed during the Mughal King Aurangzeb's Islamic sharia reign, Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa tradition. The Khalsa was founded and started by Guru Gobind Singh as a warrior tasked with protecting the innocent against Islamic religious oppression. The establishment of the Khalsa marked the beginning of a new era in Sikh history. The Khalsa warriors were given an initiation ceremony (Amrit Sanskar, nectar ceremonial) and standards of conduct. It replaced the previous Masand System with a new organisation for the Sikhs' temporal leadership. The Khalsa also gave the Sikh community a political and theological vision. A Khalsa Sikh is given the names of Singh and Kaur to males and females respectively, which signify "lion" and "princess," respectively, at the time of initiation. The laws of life comprised a behavioural code called "Rahit" that prohibited the use of tobacco, intoxicants, adultery, and the consumption of Kutha meat, as well as no hair alteration on the body as well as a dress code (Five Ks).

## Background

During the Mughal Monarchy's reign, Sikhs were persecuted for their faith. In 1606 Mughal Ruler Jahangir imprisoned and executed Guru Arjan Dev, the 5th Guru. Guru Hargobind, the Sikhs' next Guru, officially militarised them and stressed the complementary nature of temporal and spiritual power. In 1675, Mughal King Aurangzeb executed Guru Tegh Bahadur, the 9th Guru of the Sikhs and father of Guru Gobind Singh, for fighting religious persecution of non-Muslims and rejecting to convert to Islam. The sons of Guru Gobind Singh were slain because they declined to convert to Islam.

## Foundation of Khalsa

Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th Guru of Sikhism, summoned Sikhs to Shri Anandpur Sahib on the harvest festival Vaisakhi, i.e. April 13th, 1699. Guru Gobind Singh addressed the crowd from the entranceway of a hilltop tent (now known as Shri Kesgarh Sahib). As per Sikh legend, he drew his sword and then sought for a volunteer from amongst the crowd, someone ready to sacrifice his head. One stepped forward, and he led him into a tent. The Guru reappeared in front of the gathering, without the volunteer, but wielding a bloody sword. He sought for another volunteer and went back to the tent four more times, each time returning without anyone but with a bloodstained sword. The Guru reappeared with all 5 volunteers, all unharmed after the 5th volunteer entered the tent with him. Instead, the Guru had murdered five goats, the blood of which had appeared. In Sikh tradition, he referred to the volunteers as the Panj Pyare and the very first Khalsa. Following were the five volunteers:

1. Daya Ram (Bhai Daya Singh)
2. Dharam Das (Bhai Dharam Singh)
3. Himmat Rai (Bhai Himmat Singh)
4. Mohkam Chand (Bhai Mohkam Singh)

#### 5. Sahib Chand (Bhai Sahib Singh)

Guru Gobind Singh then prepared Amrit ("nectar") by mixing water and sugar in an iron basin and swirling it with a double-edged blade while uttering Gurbani. He then delivered this to the Panj Pyare, followed by narrations from the Adi Granth, thereby establishing the Khalsa khanda ki pahul (baptism ceremony). The Guru asked that the very first five Khalsa to baptise him as a Khalsa after the first five had been baptised. As a result, the Guru's name was changed from Guru Gobind Rai to Guru Gobind Singh, and he became the sixth Khalsa.

Sikh communities throughout India used to have a structure of Masands designated by the Sikh Gurus earlier to the Khalsa. The Masands gathered wealth and tributes for the Sikh mission by leading local Sikh groups and temples. After concluding that the Masands system was corrupt, Guru Gobind Singh abolished it and replaced it with a more centralised structure, aided by the Khalsa, who were under his direct control. These events divided Sikhs into two groups: those who joined the Khalsa and those who stayed Sikhs however did not join the Khalsa. The Khalsa Sikhs considered themselves a distinct religious group, whereas the Nanak-panthi Sikhs maintained their own viewpoint. The Khalsa warrior community practice, which began with Guru Gobind Singh, has influenced recent scholarly debates on Sikhism's plurality. His legacy has continued into present times, with initiated Sikhs known as Khalsa Sikhs and those who have not been baptised as Sahajdhari Sikhs.

### Code of Conduct and Clothing

Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa's 5 K's tradition, which are:

1. **Kesh:** uncut hair.
2. **Kangha:** a wooden comb.
3. **Kara:** an iron or steel bracelet worn on the wrist.
4. **Kirpan:** a sword.
5. **Kachera:** short breeches.

He also declared a Khalsa warrior code of conduct. Tobacco, meat slew as per Muslim practice, and sexual relations with anybody other than one's spouse were all prohibited. The Khalsas likewise agreed that people who followed competitors or their successors would never interact with them. The co-initiation of men and women from diverse castes into the Khalsa ranks further formalised Sikhism's tenet of equality, irrespective of caste or gender. Amritdhari Khalsa Sikh men must always wear a turban as well as the 5 K's, per the Sikh Code of Conduct (Sikh Rehat Maryada). It is not compulsory for baptised women to wear a turban; it is a personal choice. It also specifies unequivocally that Sikh women should not hide their faces with any sort of veil, as is the practice in the Hindu, Islamic, or Judeo-Christian religions. Sikh men and women are not allowed to pierce their noses or ears to wear jewellery. Sikhs are not allowed to wear any religious symbols. Sikhs are not permitted to wear hats or shave their heads. They are also prohibited from wearing any body jewellery that pierces through any portion of the body.

### Duties and Warriors

A Khalsa must be truthful, treat everyone equally, contemplate on God, retain his integrity, and reject oppression and religious persecution of himself and others. Arms training is one of the Khalsa's obligations. This has been considered essential due to the rulers' increasing persecution. Most people came from agriculture, pottery, brickwork, carpenters, Labanas, and other vocations before joining the Khalsa.