



- 1 Homeland of the Sikhs
- 2 Holy City of the Sikhs
- 3 Capital of Punjab
- 4 Capital of India
- 5 Capital of Pakistan
- 6 Capital of Afghanistan

Total population of the Sikhs: 18 million throughout the world, 12 million in the Punjab.

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WHO ARE THE SIKHS?

"An offshoot of Hinduism" - The New York Times; "A break-away sect of Hinduism" - The Los Angeles Times; and radical and fundamentalist like Iran's Khoumany, etc., are some of the different comments that an average American hears and/or reads about Sikhs and Sikhism. However, Michael Brown of ABC News in Houston summed up Sikhism on the national TV network; "Theirs is a religion of love, 16th century teaching of praise, hard work and equality of man. Theirs is a universal channel, a song of respect. They say, there is One God who is without hate and great beyond his own creation."

The Sikhs are a people with an independent history, a unique religion akin to both Judaism and Christianity, a language and a homeland. In these respects the Sikhs are like the Jews, the Irish, the Ukrainians and the Armenians. They are an independent people who trace their heritage to the invading army of Alexander the Great over 2000 years ago; the Khalsa, which marked their beginning as a Nation in 1699; and through the Sikh commonwealth (1730-1849) which ruled the Punjab - their modern homeland - and parts of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kashmir and India.

Sikhism is modern, scientific, practical and the youngest religion. The idea of religion came to the human mind when it craved for equilibrium, equanimity, harmony and peace. Just two decades before Martin Luther posted his 95 theses, the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) and nine subsequent Gurus preached the philosophy of absolute oneness of God and the brotherhood of humankind. Guru Nanak taught:

"There is one God; HE is the Supreme Truth; HE, the Creator, is without fear or enmity; HE, the Omnipresent, pervades the Universe; HE, being unborn, cannot die to be born again; through His grace, All may worship HIM."

The Sikh religion is monotheistic. Sikhism is the only major religion of India which is purely Indian. Hinduism came with Aryans from Central Asia, Islam from Arabia, Christianity from Europe and Zoroastrianism from Persia (Iran). Bhuddism, born in India, has hardly any following there. Jainism has been completely absorbed into Hinduism.

The word "Sikh" means a "disciple" or learner. As disciples of Guru Nanak, Sikhs have rejected the caste system and rituals like fasting, omeus and austerities, believing instead in human dignity and equality. Service and humanity are the essence of Sikh religion. The ultimate goal of human life, in Sikh belief, is to merge with the Supreme Creator. It can be accomplished, as taught by the Sikh Gurus, by meditation, performance of acts of service and charity. The Code of Conduct of the Faith is the practice of Truth. "Truth is the highest virtue," says Guru Nanak, "but higher still is truthful living."

Sikhs are recognized by turbans, beards and steel bracelets on the men and saris on the women. The purpose of wearing a turban and unshorn beards is

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not to look different. These are not signs of aloofness, inflexibility, orthodoxy or fanaticism. On the contrary, a Sikh is very warm hearted, friendly and thoroughly human. His beard and turban convey a profound universal message of a long standing mission to stand for justice, equality of man and freedom of worship. Just as the "cross" is to Christianity, the beard and turban have deep rooted spiritual meaning for a Sikh. On April 13, 1699 A.D. the Tenth Prophet Guru Gobind Singh baptised the Sikhs to give them the final present form - unshorn hair, beard, turban and sword. Indian history is full of sacrifices the Sikhs have made to uphold the principles of justice and freedom by maintaining their unshorn beard and turban even if it means meeting death face to face. Through centuries, the beard and turban have become the most significant and visible signs of the Sikhs' commitment to freedom, justice and universal brotherhood of man.

These sturdy, tall and handsome people come from Punjab - a state between India and Pakistan, just below Kashmir. Putting their beliefs into practice, they have become India's best farmers, fiercest soldiers, fine sportsmen and renowned travelers. Today, Sikhs are a minority within India, less than 2% of the population, and a minority within Pakistan, concentrated in their homeland - the Punjab in northwestern India and northeastern Pakistan. Abroad and at home they have become professionals - doctors, engineers, architects, scientists, civil servants, businessmen and businessmen-farmers. While the Punjab in India is the Sikh homeland, Sikhs are now scattered across the world from Bangkok, Hong Kong and Singapore to East Africa to London and Toronto and Vancouver, and in the United States from New York to California. Total Sikh population in the world is about 18 million of which 80% live in their homeland; 1/2 million in the United States.

Professor Harold S. Jacoby (1956) writes, "There is no evidence that these (Sikhs) people are less emotionally linked to Americans by reason of their tendency to enjoy curry, speak Punjabi with their friends or worship at the temples of their fathers..In this regard, there is little today to indicate they are less entitled to the name 'American' than are any of the rest of us. Misguided pressures for 'complete assimilations' of the Sikhs into the American scene may lead to a loss of the unique contribution that the Sikh culture can make to the USA." Professor Jacoby further says, "Loyalty is an outward thing demonstrated not by the clothes people wear, the language dialects they may use or even the oaths they are compelled to sign, but by the whole bent of their personality and character." A true Sikh who can preserve his culture, religion and tradition and yet wholeheartedly participates in the economic, social and political sphere surrounding him will be able to prove himself a good American. It is only in this manner of keeping his distinct personality intact that a Sikh can, in this great land of freedom and opportunity, react more effectively and make meaningful contributions to the American society and nation.

Sikhs, without exception, take pride in their heritage and roots; serve their country of adoption with complete loyalty and ability; and their heart beat is always in tune with the welfare of humankind and the Khalsa Panth - Sikh Nation.

THE SIKH DEMANDS FOR JUSTICE

- I To preserve and promote the historical reality of distinct and independent identity of the Sikhs as a Nation.
- II Greater Autonomy: Amendment of the Indian constitution to make it a true federal structure where all states are represented equally at the center, similar to the United States and Canada. Greater autonomy for all states including the Sikh homeland, Punjab, limiting the authority of the center to defense, foreign affairs, currency, communication and transportation only.
- III Sikh Homeland: Bring all the Sikh Punjabi-speaking areas into Punjab from the neighboring states to create a contiguous geographic area where Sikh interests are constitutionally recognized as of primary importance and where Sikh sentiments can find full expression and satisfaction.
- IV Capital of the Sikh Homeland: Chandigarh, the capital of Punjab is being held as a political hostage by Center since 1966, should be transferred back to Punjab. There is no precedent anywhere in the world that the capital of a state and/or country is managed by others than the people themselves.
- V Punjab Rivers Water: The riparian rights and the authority of the state government on the state rivers, headworks, distribution of water and allocation of energy, should be immediately restored. A recent decision to give 76% of the total water and energy to nonriparian states will turn the birthplace of 'Green Revolution' into a virtual wasteland.
- VI The Sikh Shrines: The Government of India is called up to reopen the Mehru-Liaquat Pact, under which the birthplace of Sikhism has been declared as an evacuee property and all shrines in Pakistan are looked after by the non-Sikhs. The Shrines should be placed under the maintenance and management of the faithfuls, to preserve their Sanctity.
- VII Golden Temple and Transmitter: The Golden Temple Amritsar is the holiest of holy Sikh shrines and considered as the city-state or Vatican of Sikh world. Permission to install a transmitter at the Golden Temple to relay religious programs should be accepted.
- VIII All India Gurdwara Act: To stop interference into the Sikh religious affairs, an All India Gurdwara should be passed forthwith. All Sikh historical shrines in India should be brought under the management of the SGPC, the highest religious body, which maintain the Sikh shrines according to religious traditions.
- IX Armed Forces & Quota Systems: The quota system for the recruitment into the Armed Forces should be rescinded; only 2% for Punjab, the Sikh homeland, is discriminatory and is politically motivated.
- X Restoration of Human Rights: Thousands of innocent Christians, Moslems, Sikhs and so-called untouchables are suffering in jails, for political dissent and caste bias. Hundreds have been shot. Killing should stop and political prisoners be released.
- XI Restrictions on Movement: There is a strict ban on the movements of the Sikhs; even high ranking Sikh army personnel and civil servants are searched as common crooks. Entry of hundreds of Sikhs - Americans, Canadians, and citizens of many other nations - is banned. They are not allowed to visit their ailing parents and their holy shrines in India. These restrictions must be lifted.
- XII Industrial License: Heavy industry licenses should be given to the Sikh homeland, which hitherto have been denied out of prejudice and design.