





The Ten Sikh Gurus

Why were the 10 Gurus important to Sikhs and Sikhism?

1. Guru Nanak



Birth:

October 20, 1469

Death:

September 7, 1539

Age: 70

- Founded the Sikh faith five hundred years ago.
- Came from a Hindu family.
- Grew up surrounded by Muslim neighbours.
- From an early age he showed a deeply spiritual character.
- He broke away from his family's traditions and belief systems, refusing to participate in empty rituals.
- Nanak married and entered business, but remained focused on God and meditation.
- Eventually Nanak became a wandering musician. He composed poetry in praise of one God, and set it to music.
- He rejected idolatry (the worship of idols).
- He introduced the idea that there is only one God.
- He spoke about everybody/all humanity being equal.

2. Guru Angad Dev



Birth: March 31,
1504

Became Guru: 35
years old

Death: March 29,
1552

Age: 48

- Born to Hindu parents
- Second of the 10 gurus
- Converted (changed his religion) to Sikhism when he heard one of Guru Nanak's songs and then met him.
- He distributed food to the poor daily.
- Nanak tested him before he let him take the role of Guru.
- Nanak gave Lehna the name Angad, meaning "Part of the Original."
- Brought together all the writings of Guru Nanak
- Took great interest in the education of children and promoted physical fitness.
- Introduced the Gurmukhi script, the language of the Guru Granth Sahib.

3. Guru Amar Das



Birth: 1479
Became Guru: 73
years old
Death: March 29,
1574
Age: 95

- Guru Amar Das began life as a devout Hindu. He grew up to be a devotee of the Hindu deity Vishnu.
- At the age of 61, Amar Das overheard someone singing the hymns of Nanak and became a follower of Sikhism.
- He became a disciple of the second Guru, **Angad Dev.**
- He carried firewood and water for the guru's kitchen from Goindwal to Khadur every day.
- Tirelessly served the Sikh congregation for 12 years. His selfless service earned the trust of Guru Angad.
- Made the tradition of Langar (free food for all) more popular
- Improved the status of women, and encouraged them to remove the veil
- Insisted all people sat equally, regardless of wealth or caste

4. Guru Ram Das



Birth: 1534
Became Guru: 40
years old
Death: 1581
Age:47

- His name means “Servant of God”
- Born to Hindu parents, who died when he was 7.
- Lived with his grandmother, and from an early age **worked and gave money to the poor.**
- **Wrote nearly 6000 lines of poetry which became part of the guru Granth Sahib, including the hymns Sikhs still use for marriage today.**
- Began the excavation of the foundations of the golden temple in Amritsar.

5. Guru Arjun Dev



Birth: 1563
Became Guru: 18
years old
Death: 1606
Age:43 (killed)

- Son of the previous Guru, Ram Das.
- He was an architect and a poet.
- He was killed by Mughul Kings after being tortured for five days for refusing to change what was in Sikh holy texts (the Guru Granth).
- Fifth of the 10 gurus, he oversaw the construction of the Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib) in Amritsar.
- Brought together some of the writings in and contributed to the Guru Granth Sahib, 1604.

6. Guru Har Govind



Birth: 1595

Became Guru: 11

Death: 1644

Age:49

- As a child his uncle repeatedly tried to kill him to take his place as Guru!
- Sikhism was being heavily persecuted at the time of this Guru, so **he trained the Sikhs in military skills and provided them with horses and weapons.**
- **Constructed the Akal Takhat: a throne in front of the Golden temple representing his belief that Sikhs could and should rule themselves.**
- He raised an army and wore two swords symbolizing secular and spiritual authority. Established the religious center Sri Hargobindpur where also he built a mosque (Muslim place of worship).

7. Guru Har Rai



Birth: 1630
Became Guru: 14
years old
Death: 1661
Age: 31

- Grandson of the previous Guru
- Stressed the importance of Langar: free food to all – no one should ever be turned away.
- Encouraged honesty and hard work.
- Told rulers to look after their people and not get drunk
- Maintained a cavalry of 20,000 as his personal guard.
- Established a hospital and zoo, which was filled with animals he had saved and healed himself.

8. Guru Har Krishnan



Birth: 1656

Became Guru: 5
years old

Death: 1664

Age: 8

- Youngest son of previous Guru.
- Died of Smallpox after visiting those sick with the disease and taking care of them.
- Known for his wisdom, healing and compassion
- Did not choose someone to be Guru after him, only said which town he was in.

9. Guru Teg Bahadar



Birth: 1621

Became Guru: 43
years old

Death: 1675

Age: 54 (killed)

- The youngest son of the sixth Guru, Har Govind.
- Received spiritual education from the age of 4 ½. This included study of Sikh, Hindu and Islamic scriptures. He was also trained in military skills.
- Held peace negotiations with the Mughal emperors.
- **It is said that he immersed himself in meditation for 17 years before becoming Guru.**
- Was killed after 8 days of torture. He gave himself up to enemy hands trying to negotiate peace.

10. Guru Gobind Singh



Birth: 1666

Became Guru: 9
years old

Death: 1708

Age: 42 (killed)

- The only son of the previous Guru
- He was taught spiritual and military training from a young age.
- Completed the Guru Granth Sahib bestowing upon it title of everlasting Guru.
- Wrote huge amounts of poetry, but only included one poem in the Guru Granth.
- Created the Khalsa, a new kind of spiritual warrior, in 1699.

The eleventh GURU

11. Guru Granth Sahib

- Sikhism's holy scripture is the last and everlasting Guru of the Sikhs.
- 1430 pages, 43 authors, in a classical musical system with different parts made for different times of day.
- The poetic contents were brought together mainly by Guru Arjun Dev, the Fifth Guru.
- It is the collected hymns of the first five Gurus, assembled verses of enlightened Muslim and Hindu teachers, Spiritual Musicians, and the last two Gurus too.
- In a private home, the Guru Granth may be wrapped and kept beneath a canopy on a small furnished cot.

