

PARKASH UTSAV DASVEH PATSHAH:

Sikh celebration of Divine Knowledges

This festival's name, when translated, means the birth celebration of the 10th Divine Light, or Divine Knowledges. It commemorates the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh guru. The festival is one of the most widely celebrated event by Sikhs and takes place on **January 5th**.

The festival lasts for three days and is marked by early morning hymns, the reading of religious texts, the singing of devotional songs and decorations including posters, banners, flags and flowers.

Sikhism is a religion and philosophy founded in the Punjab region of the Indian subcontinent in the late 15th century. Its members are known as Sikhs. The Sikhs call their faith Gurmat (Punjabi: “the Way of the Guru”). According to Sikh tradition, Sikhism was established by Guru Nanak (1469–1539) and subsequently led by a succession of nine other Gurus. All 10 human Gurus, Sikhs believe, were inhabited by a single spirit. Upon the death of the 10th, Guru Gobind Singh (1666–1708), the spirit of the eternal Guru transferred itself to the sacred scripture of Sikhism, Guru Granth Sahib (“The Granth as the Guru”), also known as the Adi Granth (“First Volume”), which thereafter was regarded as the sole Guru. In the early 21st century there were nearly 25 million Sikhs worldwide, the great majority of them living in the Indian state of Punjab.



A Sikh **gurdwara** includes both the house of worship proper and its associated langar, or communal refectory. The Adi Granth must be present at the gurdwara, and all attending must enter with heads covered and feet bare. Sikhs show their reverence by bowing their foreheads to the floor before the sacred scripture.



Worship consists largely of singing hymns from the scripture, and every service concludes with Ardas, a set prayer that is divided into three parts. The first part consists of a declaration of the virtues of all the Gurus, and the last part is a brief salutation to the divine name; neither part can be changed. The middle part of the Ardas is a list, in a generally agreed form, of the trials and the triumphs of the Khalsa, which are recited in clusters by a prayer leader. The congregation responds to each cluster with a fervent “Vahiguru,” which originally meant “Praise to the Guru” but is now accepted as the most common word for God. The conclusion of the service is followed by the distribution of karah prasad, a sacramental food that consists of equal parts of coarsely refined wheat flour, clarified butter, and raw sugar.

The **khanda** (above) is the symbol of the Sikh faith, which attained its current form around the first decade of the 20th century. It is an amalgam of three symbols: a double-edged khanda (ceremonial sword) in the center; a chakkar (or chakram, the circle); and two single-edged swords, or kirpan, crossed at the bottom, which sit on either side of the khanda and chakkar. These represent the dual characteristics of Miri-Piri, indicating the integration of both spiritual and temporal sovereignty together. The khanda depicts the Sikh doctrine Deg Tegn Fateh (a Sikh slogan in the Punjabi language that signifies the dual responsibility of the Khalsa (the community of Sikhs as well as specially initiated Sikhs): to provide food and protection for the needy and oppressed. In recent years, the khanda has also been used to show solidarity with and within the Sikh community after high profile shootings in the United States.



Sri Harmandir Sahib, also known as the Golden Temple in Amritsar, is the holiest shrine of the Sikh religion. Also known as the Shri Darbar Sahib, it is in the center of the old part of Amritsar. The Golden Temple sits on a rectangular platform, surrounded by a pool of water called the Amrit Sarovar from which the City is named.