

# The Sikhs

*Celebrating their  
vibrant culture  
and contribution  
to Huddersfield  
and Britain over  
the years.*



**WW Sikh Soldiers**  
Every Man Remembered

# Who are the Sikhs?

Founded in the 16th century in Punjab, now part of India and Pakistan, Sikhism has approximately 20 million global followers, known as Sikhs.

Sikhism is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and the nine Sikh gurus that followed him.

Sikhism was founded against a background of Hinduism and Islam by the first guru, Guru Nanak, whose teachings were very different from earlier religions.

Over the next few centuries, nine gurus followed Guru Nanak. By the time of the fifth guru, Sikhism was well established. He compiled the first authorised Sikh scriptures known as the Aad Granth. Because of the progressive nature of the Sikh religion Guru Arjan was seen as a threat by the state and was later executed in 1606.

The sixth Sikh guru, Guru Hargobind, placed much emphasis on military preparation. This allowed the Sikh people to fight against oppression, which they did a number of times. Following Guru Hargobind, Sikhs lived in peace until the Moghal Emperor, Aurangzeb, executed the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur.

In 1699 the tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, formed both male and female Sikhs into a military group called the Khalsa. He believed that all Sikhs should be able to defend their faith. Guru Gobind Singh also established the Sikh rite of initiation, as well as the "five K's" – the things that give Sikhs their distinctive appearance.

## *The five K's that give Sikhs their distinctive appearance:*

- 1** Kesh  
Uncut hair
- 2** Kara  
Iron Bracelet
- 3** Kanga  
Wooden comb
- 4** Kaccha  
Cotton long underwear
- 5** Kirpan  
Iron sword





A Sikh is defined as someone who is initiated into the Khalsa and believes that there is only one God. Sikhs believe that everyone is equal before God, they do not practice religious rituals as this distracts from the true path to a good and godly life. Devoting time to community, hard work and doing good deeds is seen as the true way to become at one with God.

Sikhs believe that we are born, live, die and then are reborn again. Each new life relies on Karma from your past life, meaning that the good deeds from your past life will influence your next. To break the cycle of rebirth, Sikhs believe that a complete union with God must be achieved. It is viewed that the path to God is often blocked by an obstacle called "Haumain" – a person's pride – and our concern for material things.

In order to live a good life as a Sikh it is important to focus on your deeds in daily life itself, rather than resorting to spiritual rituals to become closer to God.

The three main principles that Sikhs adhere to are: pray, work and give. Prayer keeps God in the mind, work enables a person to earn an honest living and give to charity, enshrining humility. Five things to avoid as a Sikh are things known as the five vices, they are: lust, covetousness and greed, attachment to material things, anger and pride. Although the five vices are things to avoid, Sikhs believe that God is inside everyone and everyone is capable of change.



# Sikhs & Great Britain

With a reported 423,000 Sikhs living in Great Britain, and a history together going back more than 150 years, Sikh culture has a prominent place in the British community and has contributed to many aspects of Britain's history and economy.

Most Sikhs came to Britain during the 1950's and 60's from the Punjab region in Northwest India, and later from East Africa. Maharaja Duleep Singh was the first recorded Sikh to arrive and settle in Britain in 1849 after being dethroned from the Sikh Kingdom of Punjab after six years rule. A statue of Maharaja was unveiled near his home in Norfolk by the Prince of Wales in 1999. However, the first Sikh temple was not built in Britain until 1911.

Britain's industry attracted many Sikhs during the 1950's, most of which had left their homeland to escape the division between

India and Pakistan. The majority of the newly arrived Sikhs settled in London, Birmingham and West Yorkshire, finding work in industries such as textiles. In order to secure jobs without prejudice, most Sikhs removed any outward signs of their religion (the five K's).

Sikhs also came to Britain from East Africa after being expelled from their countries due to their religion. This community of Sikhs wore their five K's with pride in Britain, and their skill as labourers gave them an advantage at finding work. This inspired other Sikhs to also start wearing their five K's with pride.

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*Sikhs have been contributing to British culture and community for over 150 years.*







Over the years Sikhs have made a large contribution to both World Wars. During the First World War a staggering 1.5 million Indian soldiers, including Sikh, Hindu and Muslim men volunteered to fight.

During the Indian Empire, Sikh soldiers were held in extremely high regard by British soldiers. They fought alongside the British on the Afghan frontier and Winston Churchill rescued a Sikh soldier when he was fighting in the Malakand campaign in 1897.

The Indian forces were spread throughout the Western Front, Mesopotamia, Gallipoli, Egypt and East Africa. Out of these men, 50,000 died, 65,000 were wounded and 10,000 were reported missing. 98 Indian army nurses were also killed. Death was not just in battle, however. Some regiments arrived

in Britain with only tropical cotton outfits causing many to die of frostbite before their winter kit arrived. Racist attitudes at the time also meant that injured Indian soldiers were not allowed to receive direct care from nurses in hospitals.

A monument to India's dead in the First World War was built in Neuve Chapelle in France in the 1920's, but it was only in 2015 after fundraising by British Sikhs that a memorial was unveiled in Arboretum in Staffordshire to remember the 130,000 Sikh soldiers who fought in the conflict.



# Commerce & Community

The contribution to the British economy from the Sikh community has been valued at a staggering £7.63 billion according to the 2014 British Sikh Report.

The British Sikh Report, 2014, found that more and more British Sikhs are branching out into the teaching and education industry, something that has not usually been attributed to British Sikhs.

In the survey, only 4% of all Sikhs described themselves as unemployed – Sikhs therefore play a major part in the British infrastructure and make important contributions to industries such as Healthcare and Law.

Family is held in high regard within the Sikh community with almost half of all Sikhs surveyed reporting to live with at least one parent. Whilst Sikhs have maintained their religious identity, they have also successfully integrated into British communities across the country with the majority of Sikhs displaying their pride in being British by referring to themselves as British Sikhs.

Their role in the community is supported by their religious beliefs, which centre around helping others and doing good deeds. Their active roles with charities and promoting tolerance and equality between all faiths and backgrounds extends to their religious festivals, at which anyone is welcome – regardless of faith.

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*“The British Sikh community is one of the most hard-working and successful groups in the UK, contributing so much to our culture, economy and way of life.”*

David Cameron  
Prime Minister



# Commemorating the Sikhs

Sikhs played a major part helping Britain in both World Wars. One source suggests that Sikhs made up 20% of the Indian volunteer army even though they made up less than 2% of the Indian population as a whole.

The Sikh community in Huddersfield is placing a Sikh Soldier Statue (from the Second World War) to commemorate the contributions of Sikhs for this great nation – Great Britain. The statue is dedicated to the large number of Sikh soldiers who died fighting for Britain in both World Wars.

Money was raised through social events such as fairs – including gatka demonstrations (sword fighting) and a turban tying contest – to commemorate and celebrate the Sikhs of Great Britain and Huddersfield.





# A Monument to the Sikh Soldiers

In the two World Wars Sikhs played prominent roles in the conflicts. The closest estimates report that 83,005 Sikhs gave their lives in the battlefields of the two World Wars, with 109,045 wounded in battle across the world.

Thousands of Sikhs who bravely volunteered to join the war effort in both great conflicts were never to see their homeland again. They were however, to leave an incredible legacy of tales of great bravery and courage. The sacrifice of our gallant Sikh brothers is hardly given a nodding mention in the history books in Britain.

We The Sikh Soldier Organisation are delighted to announce that a monument to our fallen brothers will be commissioned and installed in Greenhead Park in Huddersfield West Yorkshire.

## *Why A Memorial in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire?*

Huddersfield boasts a large and vibrant Sikh community, who work hard to engender a good community base for all concerned and make Huddersfield a unique town in terms of integration.

We are proud to be Sikhs but we are also proud Yorkshire men and women, who feel our collective heritage should be remembered and celebrated. Many of the people of Huddersfield and beyond have grandfathers and great grandfathers who fought alongside the Sikhs in battle, and it is to mark the great sacrifices made in the name of freedom that this statue has been commissioned.

The inclusion of a statue to mark the role of Sikh soldiers in the various combats will only help to strengthen community ties.

# Highest Awards for Valour

## *The First World War*

The Victoria Cross, the highest award for bravery, was presented to: Darwan Singh Negi, Lance Daffadar, Gobind Singh, Risaldar Badlu Singh and Gabar Singh. Darwan Singh Negi was among the first Sikh soldiers to be presented with the VC by King George V on 5 December 1914.

## *The Second World War*

Amongst the recipients of the Victoria Cross, we can honour Subadar Ram Sarup, Ishar Singh, Naik Gian Singh, Naik Nand Singh, Jemadar Prakash Singh and Lt Karamjeet Singh Judge.

*Many Sikhs have been awarded a large number of medals:*

# 290

Indian Orders of Merit

# 23

Military Crosses

# 706

Indian Distinguished Service Medals.



# The Sikh Warrior's Prayer

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*Grant me this blessing O God*

*May I never refrain from the righteous acts*

*That I shall not fear when I go into battle*

*And with determination I will be victorious*

*That I may teach myself this creed alone,  
to speak only of Thy praises*

*And when the last days of my life come*

*I may die righteous in the might of the battlefield.*

The plaque on the plinth for the Memorial will open with the warrior prayer bestowed by Guru Gobind Singh which Sikhs recite prior to going into battle.

These precious words in the prayer were written by Guru Gobind Singh to inspire his Sikhs to confront life's challenges and rise up with a pure heart and a strong mind living the life of righteousness.

Thousands of miles from their homes in Punjab, these brave Sikhs were to do just that, making the ultimate sacrifice in the name of freedom and world peace.

*Their legacy is worthy of remembrance.*





# The Monument In Greenhead Park *Huddersfield*

The Sikh Soldier Organisation has commissioned a design for the monument which we believe is compatible with the surroundings and ambiance of our historic Greenhead Park.

The statue itself will depict a Sikh soldier resplendent in his turban and WW1 Army uniform, and will be installed on a designated site in the Rose Garden. The monument will be made of alfa bronze, stand over 6 feet tall on a stone plinth bearing a plaque explaining the significance of the statue of the Sikh soldier.

The Sikh community of Huddersfield is proud and excited that this important memorial is to be exhibited in such beautiful surroundings and marks the strong role the Sikhs play in British culture and history.



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## *How Can I Give?*

Through our website [sikhsoldier.org](http://sikhsoldier.org) via the Charitable Giving link Direct to the Sikh Soldier Organisation  
Through your gurdwaras and other organisations

*Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa | Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh*

## *Get In Touch*

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