

Sikh Rites of Passage

Learning Objective:

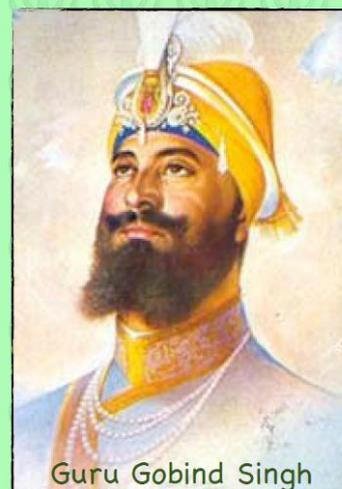
To find out about the Sikh baptismal ceremony of Amrit.



What does the word baptism mean?

Answer is on the next page..

A baptism is a ceremony that initiates someone into a religion. Sikh baptism is called Amrit or 'Amrit Sanskar'. The first Amrit ceremony took place in 1699 in India when Guru Gobind Singh asked a gathering of Sikhs if they were prepared to die for God. At first, no one responded but then one man stepped forward and he was taken inside a tent. Guru Gobind Singh soon reappeared alone carrying a sword dripping with blood.



Guru Gobind Singh

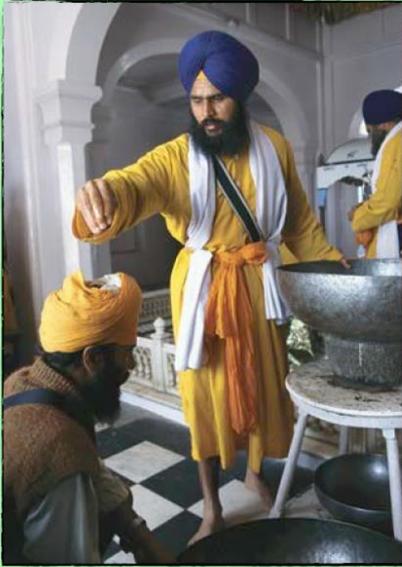
He asked again who was prepared to die for God and another man stepped forward. Again, he was taken into a tent and Guru Gobind Singh reappeared alone with the sword. Three more men stepped forward, each disappearing into the tent.

The onlookers were afraid that they had all been killed. However, all five men then re-emerged from the tent. Not one of them was harmed. These five men became known as the 'Beloved Five' or 'Panj Pyares' and they were the first to be initiated into the Sikh Khalsa brotherhood. Guru Gobind Singh then performed the ceremony that Sikhs follow today.

What happens at an Amrit ceremony?

Anyone can be baptised into the Sikh faith by undergoing the Amrit ceremony but you must be of an age where you fully understand what this life-long commitment means. Before the ceremony, the person being baptised must wash their hair, cover their head and wear clean clothes.





During the ceremony, the person being baptised is told about the Sikh code of conduct and what will be expected of them when they become a member of the Khalsa brotherhood. Hymns are read from the Sikh holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib. Next, the five men who are leading the ceremony prepare the Amrit which is a mixture of water and sugar. The mixture is sprinkled on their eyes and hair and then they drink some too.

Everyone then recites the Mool Mantra which is the most important text in the Guru Granth Sahib.

One universal creator God. The name is truth. Creative being personified. No fear. No hatred. Image of the undying, beyond birth, self-existent. By Guru's grace.

Prayers are then said and speeches are made. Finally everyone shares a meal together called the 'langar'.

Once a Sikh has been initiated into the Khalsa brotherhood they must wear the 5 Ks to show their commitment to the faith. The 5 Ks are:

The Kesh
The Kanga
The Kara
The Kaccha
The Kirpan

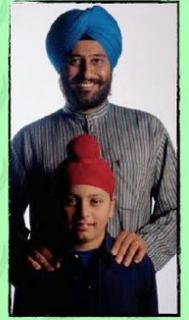


Can you guess what any of these five items might be?

The 5 Ks

The Kesh

Kesh is hair. Sikhs never cut their hair but grow it long as a commitment to their faith. They wear turbans to keep their hair tidy.



The Kanga

The kanga is a small comb which is worn under a turban. The comb not only helps to keep their long hair tidy but also acts as a reminder for a clean and orderly life.



The Kara

The kara is a metal bracelet. Its circular shape is a reminder that God has no beginning and no end. By being worn visibly on the wrist, it also helps remind Sikhs of their duties.



The Kaccha

A kaccha is a loose undergarment, a bit like boxer shorts, which is worn by Sikh men and women. The first kacchas were knee-length but today they tend to be shorter. Kacchas remind Sikhs to be modest and to always conduct themselves with dignity.



The Kirpan

The kirpan is a small dagger or sword. It is worn on a belt and is a reminder that Sikhs must always be ready to fight for their beliefs. This does not mean that they are violent but that they are ready to engage in a spiritual battle for what is right and true.



Once a Sikh has been baptised and is accepted as a member of the Khalsa brotherhood they must wear each of these five articles of faith all the time.

Choose from the Bronze or Silver Activity

Bronze Activity

The 5 Ks - Five Articles of Faith

Can you match the pictures to the descriptions?

Kara

Kara is a round metal bracelet. It is a reminder that God has no beginning and no end.



Kirpan

Kirpan is a sword or dagger. It is worn on a belt and reminds Sikhs to fight for what is right.



Kanga

Kanga is a small comb which is worn under a turban. It helps keep their long hair tidy and is a reminder to live a clean life.



Kesh

Kesh means hair. Sikhs never cut their hair. They grow it long to show their commitment to God. They wear a turban to keep their hair neat.



Kaccha

Kaccha is a type of underwear which is worn to remind Sikhs to be modest.



Silver Activity

The 5 Ks - Five Articles of Faith

Can you describe how each of the 5 Ks is worn and what each symbolises?

Kesh



Kanga



Kara



Kaccha



Kirpan



Answers

The 5 Ks - Five Articles of Faith

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Kara

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Kanga

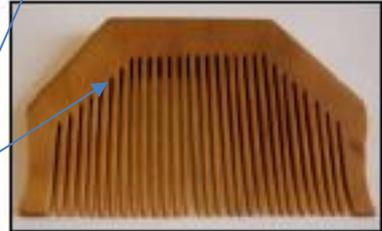
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PLENARY

Sikhs do not take part in the Amrit ceremony until they are old enough to understand what they are committing to.

What age do you think someone is old enough to do this and why?

