

## **A TURBAN AND A KIRPAN: THE STORY OF A SIKH IN AMERICA**

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*“Diversity can and has meant the creation of religious ghettos with little traffic between or among them. Today diversity is a given, but pluralism is not a given; it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies... Pluralism is not just tolerance, but the active seeking of understanding across lines of difference.”*

- Diana L. Eck, Harvard University

*“When there is liberty,  
you expect a higher degree of freedom and not human rights abuse.”*

- Auliq Ice

### **A Day in the Life of a Long Haul Truck Driver**

*“Have a safe trip, my dear Jag!”* These were the only words he remembered hearing from his wife before leaving home in California in early January for a chicken delivery to Mississippi. A week later, he was handcuffed and on his way to a Mississippi police station under suspicion of being a terrorist. It was January 16, 2013 and Jagjeet Singh, 49, a long-haul truck driver and a devoted Sikh, was leaving to Texas after dropping off a truckload shipment in Mississippi. He wore a turban on his head and kirpan on his belt. The trip to Texas was long, but Jagjeet was used to living on the road.

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To him, the job was a life of solitude and strangers. Being away from the family was very difficult, but the desire to support his family was always stronger than the challenges that he faced on the road. This, at times, meant living out of his truck without knowing where and how long the next delivery would take. Like other long-haul truck drivers, Jagjeet grew accustomed to meeting dockworkers, truck stop employees, and other drivers, as opposed to people he knew. Over the years, he has learned how to enjoy the experience.

Jagjeet knew how to adapt to the loneliness of the long drive by listening on his truck's CD player to his favorite hymns in the form of kirtan (please refer to Appendix A for more explanations), a traditional Sikh style of call-and-response chanting. A sudden thumping that sounded like a flat tire on the Interstate 55 North in Pike County, Mississippi interrupted the sound of the kirtan and was followed by the sirens of a police car. Jagjeet was pulled over by a police officer for driving with a flat tire and was instructed to report to Osyka weigh station (ACLU 2013; Christie 2013; Kemp 2013; Weaver 2013).

### The Mississippi Highway Patrol Officers and the Kirpan

As he was instructed, Mr. Singh drove to the station. When he arrived, *"He was subjected to a series of degrading remarks and events because of his minority faith and ethnicity"* (Weaver 2013: 1).

As a devout Sikh, he wore a turban and carried a kirpan, a small spiritual dagger sheathed at his waistband. (See Exhibit 1 for an image of a Kirpan). As an article of faith, the kirpan was worn to remind Sikhs of their obligations to justice and by no means was a weapon (Weaver 2013). A kirpan was designed as a religious symbol for a Sikh much as were the nine-pointed star for the Baha'is, the Wheel of Dharma for Buddhists, the cross for Christians, the Om for Hindus, the six-pointed star of David for Jews, the star and crescent for Muslims, the Torii Gate for Shinto believers, the Yin and Yang (Taiji) for Taoists, etc. (Religious Symbols n.d.).

When the police officers searched Mr. Singh at the Osyka weigh station, they found the kirpan. Contending that the kirpan was a weapon, the officers demanded that Mr. Singh hand it over. Jagjeet Singh tried to explain that the kirpan was a sacred religious article. He showed the officers videos stored on his cell phone and on YouTube about the Sikh religion. Nonetheless, the officers laughed at him. One declared, *“All Sikhs are depraved and terrorists”* (Weaver 2013: 2). The officers forced Mr. Singh to circle his own truck with his hands on his turban while they searched the vehicle (Atwood 2013). Finally, they arrested him, alleging that he had refused to obey an officer's lawful command to hand over an illegal weapon (Atwood 2013; Christie 2013; Kemp 2013). A Department of Transportation (DOT) spokesperson confirmed the arrest but did not comment any further on the incident (Kemp 2013).

Heather Weaver, Senior Staff Attorney of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a complaint on behalf of Mr. Singh on September 25, 2013. Weaver (2013: 1) stated:

*“Our Constitution’s guarantees of religious freedom and equal protection under the law means that law enforcement officers must put aside their personal prejudices and strive to treat all members of the public - regardless of race, ethnicity, national origin, or faith - with respect. Unfortunately, Mississippi Department of Transportation (“DOT”) officers stationed in Pike County appear not to be aware of their obligations. Earlier this year during what should have been a routine traffic stop, DOT officers harassed and humiliated Jagjeet Singh, a practicing Sikh because of his religious beliefs.”*

### Exhibit 1. A Sikh Kirpan

Source: Images provided by Mr. Tahil Sharma and used with his permission



Bear Atwood, a lawyer for the Mississippi office of the ACLU (quoted in Kemp 2015: 8) said,

*“The officers’ shameful treatment of Mr. Singh was an abuse of their authority and a betrayal of the public’s trust that law enforcement officials will carry out their duties free from prejudice.”*

### The Judge and the Turban

Mr. Singh returned to the Pike County Court in Mississippi on March 26, 2013 as he was ordered to do for the charge of refusing to obey a command. According to ACLU attorney Bear Atwood:

*“Mr. Singh’s ordeal did not end with the MDOT. When he returned to Mississippi on March 26, 2013, for his court date at the Pike County Justice Court, he once again suffered humiliation, harassment, and discrimination because of his religious beliefs.”*

Waiting for his attorney in the back of the courtroom, he was stunned when four Highway Patrol officers approached him and ordered him to leave the courtroom. The officers stated that Judge Aubrey Rimes had ordered them to eject Mr. Singh from the courtroom because he did not like Mr. Singh’s turban. Moreover, they told Mr. Singh that Judge Rimes would punish him if he failed to remove his headdress (Atwood 2013; Goldman 2013).

Judge Rimes went further and referred to the turban that Mr. Singh wore as a “rag” by asking him - in his exact words - to “remove that rag” (Atwood 2013). Like all Sikhs, Mr. Singh believed that the turban was an inseparable part of his Sikh religious identity. “A man cannot be considered a Sikh if he does not wear the turban (see Exhibit 2) and that unwrapping his turban and exposing his ‘naked’ head in public is sacrilegious and shameful (Atwood 2013).

Accordingly, he refused to obey an order based on his religious beliefs, knowing there could be consequences.

### Exhibit 2: A Sikh Man in Turban

Source: Images from Raghbir Singh, Jathedar the religious head of the Walnut, CA Sikh Temple.

Picture credit: Mr. Tahil Sharma. The images were used with both Mr. Singh's and Mr. Sharma's permission.



As a result of his refusal to remove the turban, Mr. Singh was forced to wait several hours before he was allowed into the courtroom to plead guilty and pay a fine (ACLU 2015; Kemp 2013; Goldman 2013). On September 28, 2013, the attorney Bear Atwood of the Mississippi office of the American Civil Liberties Union told ABC's Good Morning America:

*"This is a disgrace and a clear infringement of religious rights...He [Mr. Singh] was treated disgracefully by the Department of Transportation. Then he came back to Mississippi for his court date and was treated very badly by a judge whose behavior was despicable" (Goldman 2013).*

## Sikhism

A way of life and philosophy, Sikhism was founded over 500 years ago. The religion preached a message of devotion and remembrance of God at all times, truthful living, equality of mankind, social justice and denouncement of superstitions and blind rituals (Sikhs.org). In the Punjabi language, the word “Sikh” meant “disciple.” Accordingly, Sikhs were the disciples of God who followed the writings and teachings of ten Sikh gurus (Sikh.org; Singh 2016a). According to Raghbir Singh, the Jathedar (religious head) of the Shri Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara in Walnut, California:

*“Our responsibility as Sikhs is to see the Light of God within all people, regardless of who they are, what they do, and where they come from; Sikhism tells us to love and serve all people, no matter who they are on the outside or the inside”* (Singh 2016a).

### ***The Birth of Sikhism: Guru Nanak***

It was the year 1469 in the village of Talwandi, located in what is now Kasur, Pakistan, where an orthodox Hindu boy named Nanak was (McLeod, n.d.). He was born into a Khatri-caste family that worked in commerce within a bustling community of Hindus and Muslims (for more information on the Khatri, refer to Appendix B). The boy was destined for greatness in his life (Cole & Sambhi 1998).

### ***Nanak: The Teacher***

In his individual journey for knowledge, Nanak often sought solidarity to reflect on his own contemplations; he grew dissatisfied with the formal faith traditions of a society that made people poor and defenseless (Kaur Singh 2011).

Because of his formal studies and debates with a number of clerics and scholars on faith and philosophy, Nanak received his own epiphany of the Divine. After having gone to bathe at the Bain River, members of his village were shocked to find his clothes lying on the bank, without him in sight. Having assumed that he had drowned, the villagers mourned the loss of Nanak,

but to their surprise, he re-appeared as a transformed and enlightened man three days later (Teece 2005: 5).

Guru Nanak spoke words of wisdom, exclaiming, *“Na koi hindu na musalman.”* No one was either Hindu or Muslim, but merely a Sikh: a “student” or “disciple” to the divine, referred to as the Great Teacher, or Waheguru. Nanak argued that devotion to Waheguru measured beyond all material forms of riches and power; even *“kings and emperors”* could not compare to *“an ant filled with the love of God”* (Ramakrishnan 2009: 213).

Guru Nanak promoted the existence of a single God, contemplated by and existing within all living beings in different ways, as expressed in the first line of the Guru Granth Sahib, the religious scriptures of the Sikh faith:

*“God is only One. His Name is True. He is the Creator. He is Without Fear. He is inimical to none. He is Eternal. He is beyond births and deaths. He is self-illuminated. He is realized by the kindness of the True Guru. Repeat his Name. He was true in the beginning. He was true when the ages began. He is true even today. Nanak says that He will even be true in the future”* (Kaur Arneja n.d.: xii).

### ***The Guru’s Three Principles of Living***

The guru established three principles of living that were universal in practice and significant in action. These principles were eternal devotion and reverence to a single God, *“Naam japo,”* a life of honesty and truth through contentment, honesty, and hard work, *“Kirat karo,”* and sharing one’s wealth and services to those in need, *“Wand kay shako”* (Kaur Singh 2011).

Sikhism shared ideas of imageless monotheism and inward devotion from Islam and the ideas of material detachment and pluralistic approaches to the divine from Hinduism (Kaur Singh 2011). What made Sikhism so different was the promotion of absolute equality between all human beings, nullifying the ideas of caste, the promotion of religious diversity and pluralism that denounced ritualism and the emphasis on social justice for impoverished communities,

underrepresented religious minorities, and women (Kaur Singh 2011; Ramakrishnan 2009; Singh 2016a; 2016b).

### ***Sikh Baptism and Code of Conduct***

Baptism into Sikh orthodoxy as an *amritdhari* - one who has received ambrosial nectar - was a decree made by the tenth guru on *Vaisakhi* (the festival of the harvest) in 1699 to confirm people's dedication to the faith and the cause of defending humanity (Cole and Sambhi 1998; Jhutti-Johal 2011; Kaur Singh 2011). Five volunteers who swore to risk their lives to defend the faith and the meek were the first orthodox Sikhs now known as the *Panj piare*, or the five Beloved ones (BBC 2009-b). Baptism through the drinking of sweet water, stirred by a double edged sword, was representative of one's willingness to fight against injustice and for the faith, represented by the sword (Whiting & Whiting 1991), while maintaining purity and humility like water and the sweetness and saintliness of sugar that is combined to create *amrit* (nectar) consumed during baptism (Whiting & Whiting 1991).

Following Baptism, Sikhs adhered to a code of conduct and dress code. Recognized most prominently as the Five Ks, they were five articles worn by a baptized Sikh for which their identity and appearance made them stand out.

**1) The Kes**, or uncut hair, remained a central and natural symbol of holiness and strength. Keeping it unshorn indicated acceptance of God's gift in its natural form. Uncut hair was kept on all parts of the body, including body hair, eyebrows, and beard, although making sure it was kept clean and proper. The *dastar* (turban) was worn by men and some women to cover their long hair. Most women keep their hair uncovered except when entering a *gurdwara* (temple) when all people covered their heads (Barooah 2012).

**2) The Kara**, a bangle made of steel or iron, represented restraint and gentility. Round, it was representative of the eternity of God. As a circle, it has no beginning or end. It was most commonly made of steel or iron as a reminder that the Almighty watched over all the actions of



an individual. The use of steel was also representative of equality among all and the individual bonds we hold with the Divine (Markoe 2014).

**3)The Kanga**, or wooden comb, represented cleanliness and order, reminding people that they must take care of themselves while they take care of those in need. This differentiated Sikhs from those who renounce the world as ascetics in traditions like Hinduism and refrained from all forms of attachment, even washing the body or hair (Kaur Singh 2011).

**4)The Kachera**, or loose pair of boxer shorts, represented chastity and the sacredness of love that you show to a significant other. In fending off warriors of the Mughal Empire, Sikh warriors wore this kind of undergarment when they rode horses into battle (Kaur Singh 2011).

**5)The Kirpan**, or ceremonial dagger, was the literal and metaphorical representation of being a saint-soldier, or a *sant sipahi*. The dagger represented defending righteousness and the meek, and the struggle against injustice. Made in any length, it was always kept in its sheath. It was blunt, thus promoting all methods of nonviolence and peace in resolving issues before using any form of physical defense (BBC 2009a; Kaur Singh 2011).

### ***A Change in Tradition***

The second development that changed the Sikh tradition took place when Guru Gobind Singh was on his deathbed. After having lost his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and his 4 sons to martyrdom (Raju 2011), he named the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh scriptures, to be his successor (Kaur Singh 2011). The revolutionary idea of seeking all guidance from a single book allowed all Sikhs to interpret scriptures for themselves. Since the establishment of the Guru Granth Sahib as the Eternal Guru, Sikh temples had become gathering places for communities of Sikhs around the world. Congregations gathered in a *gurdwara* (dwellings of God) in which a central throne (*takht*) was where Sikhs paid obeisance to the scriptures as the incarnate wisdom of the Divine (Nesbitt & Kaur 1999). The protocol for entering a Sikh place of worship borrowed from Indian cultural and religious practices, namely:

- (1) Having your head covered and shoes removed, showing respect to the religious space,
- (2) Having everyone seated on the floor, representative of the equality we share as servants in the sight of God, and
- (3) *Prashad*, or a blessed pudding made of wheat flour, water, sugar, and butter that is given to whomever comes in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib (Nesbitt and Kaur 1999).

**Exhibit 3. An Image of the Golden Temple: Amritsar, India**

Picture credit: Harleen Kaur. Used with her permission.



Centuries of tradition enshrined in prayer and service continued to resound in the halls and sanctuaries of all *gurdwaras*. *Gurdwaras* were open to all people from any religious or secular adherence, generally twenty-four hours a day. They served free meals (*langar*) to all people who came to the temple (Kaur Singh 2011). All people sat on the floor and food was cooked and served by volunteers. Only vegetarian food was served so that no person would be offended and everyone could sit together to share a meal without breaking any form of dietary restrictions (Jhutti-Johal 2011).

### ***Sikhs in North America***

While most Sikhs still resided in India, Sikhism in the United States had a long history. As the sixth largest faith tradition in the world (Worldatlas.com, n.d.; see also Appendix C), at over 28 million people, at least 200,000 Sikhs lived in the United States (Hackett 2012). Most U.S. Sikhs entered the workforce in forestry, agriculture, railroad construction, and in textile mills (Mann et al. 2008; also see The Pluralism Project, n.d.). According to Oxford Sikhs (n.d.), at least 800,000 Sikhs lived in Canada. Sikhs started immigrating to the United States in 1897. The majority lived in the eastern states (mostly in New York) or in the western states (mostly in California).

Thousands of Sikh laborers worked for the Western Pacific Railways to create approximately 700 miles of road between Salt Lake City and Oakland that now serves as a major part of Interstate 80 (Hill 2014) and the emerging prominence of agriculture in Northern California (Singh Kang n.d.). The Sikh community flourished in the United States and established places of worship, such as the first *gurdwara* in Stockton, CA in 1912 (Seth & Seth 2006).

### **What was Going on?**

In the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attack in 2001, Americans of Arab, Muslim and South Asian descent endured a level of discrimination that was unprecedented. In a study by Humm (2003) of almost a thousand New Yorkers surveyed by the City Commission on Human Rights, some 69 percent said they felt subjected to discrimination or harassment due to their race. Iyer (2015: 1) found:

*“While the level of anti-Muslim sentiment increased precipitously in the months after 9/11, it has not subsided in the 14 years since. The aforementioned sentiment was created through an environment that was fed with discriminatory policies and practices, xenophobic rhetoric, and biased media representations [...] that created a new reality that many members of these communities (Muslim and non-Muslim) contend with daily.”*

Of the 80,000 charges filed nationwide with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), religious discrimination accounted for only about three percent. This number increased from 1,500 in 1995 to 2,500 in 2002 (Morahan 2015). On the other hand, allegations of discrimination based on national origin, which comprised 11 percent of all charges filed, had also been on the rise. About 7,000 charges alleging discrimination based on national origin were made in 1995 compared to 9,000 in 2002.

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) intervened and investigated Jagjeet Singh's case. According to Pike County Administrator Andrew Alford, the DOJ offered to close its federal investigation if Pike County revised its nondiscrimination policy and implemented sensitivity training (Kemp 2015). As the story unfolded, the Pike County Board of Supervisors faced a major HR challenge in dealing with the changing dynamics of the society the County was supposed to serve. The County had to ensure full compliance with all civil rights laws and equal opportunity laws. It also needed to address the adequacy of the training given to police officers and even the judge in dealing with a diverse public.



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### Appendix A Explanations of the term “Kirtan”

*Kirtan* or *kirtana* is a call-and-response chanting performed in devotional traditions. It is a succession of two distinct phrases usually played by different musicians, where the second phrase is heard as a direct commentary on or response to the first (Nye 1995).

In Sanskrit, *Kirtana* means “praise or eulogy” (MacDonnell 2004). A person performing *kirtana* is known as a *kirtankara* or, colloquially, a *kirtaneera*. *Kirtana* practice involves chanting hymns or mantras to the accompaniment of instruments such as the harmonium, tablas, two-headed mridanga or pakhawaj drum and hand cymbals. It is a major practice in Vaisnava devotionalism, Sikhism, the Sant traditions and some forms of Buddhism, as well as other religious groups. *Kirtana* is sometimes accompanied by story-telling and acting. Texts typically cover religious, mythological or social subjects (Varadpande 1992).

The Sikh tradition of *kirtana* was started by Guru Nanak at Kartarpur in the early 16th century and was strengthened by his successors, particularly Guru Arjan. *Kirtana* continues to be performed at the Golden Temple and other historical *gurdwaras* (Novetzke 2003). According to Novetzke (2003: 221), “*Kirtan is vital to Sikh religious practice, for example when the songs of the gurus are sung with precision and reverence, accompanied by a set melody.*”

### Appendix B The Khatri

Sources: Peoplegroupindia.com (n.d.) and Encyclopedia Britannica, <http://www.britannica.com/topic/Kshatriya>

The Khatri are a trading and mercantile community who originated in Punjab and spread to the many states in which they now live. About 2.5 million people, they live in Punjab, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Jammu and Kashmir, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chandigarh.

One legend states that Parashurama (Rama, 6th incarnation of Vishnu) wanted to massacre the Kshatriyas and caused every Kshatriya woman to miscarry. However, some women escaped and took refuge in Brahmin (highest priestly caste) houses. The Brahmin declared them to be Brahmin and even ate with them to show Parashurama that the Kshatriya women were from their caste, and thus saved them. Accordingly, the children born of these women became the Khatri.

## Appendix C The World Largest Religions

Source: World Atlas.com (n.d.)

South Asia, East Asia, and the Middle East were the birthplaces of the world's largest religions. Abrahamic religions combine to claim over half of the global populace. The world's largest religions generally fall in one of two major subgroups. These are (1) Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Baha'i, etc.) and (2) Indian religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, Jainism, etc.). Based on Pew Research Institute and other international demographic databases, the below listed religions are the world largest as measured by the number of adherents.

### ***1. Christianity (2.22 billion followers)***

Christianity began over two thousand years ago, and is a faith based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. From its humble beginnings as a tiny sub-group evolved from Judaism, Christianity has grown to become the most popular religion in the world, with followers all across the globe. Christians believe in the existence of one God who sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to save humanity from their iniquity and Hell. Followers believe that Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Crucifixion), his death, and his resurrection were all carried out to grant eternal life and forgiveness to all of those who accept Christ as their personal savior. In our modern society, Christianity plays an important and powerful role, not only in terms of religious rituals, but also on a much wider scale. In some degree, it even does so in terms of shaping social and political policies of Christian-dominant nations.

### ***2. Islam (1.605 billion followers)***

Islam began in Mecca in the Seventh Century. Followers of Islam believe there is only one God (Allah) whose words were written down and took form in the holy book of the Qur'an, which still serves as the central spiritual text in the faith. One of the historical figures central to understanding the Muslim tradition is the Prophet Muhammad, who lived from 570 to 632 CE. Followers of Islam believe that this man was God's ultimate prophet. Islamic religious law not only lays out the Five Pillars of Islam, but also imposes rules and regulations on almost every aspect of a follower's life. There are two major factions of Muslims, namely Sunni (the largest globally including 80% of all Muslims) and Shia (15% of all Muslims), along with Ibadi, Ahmadi, and many other denominations.

### ***3. Hinduism (1.05 billion followers)***

The majority of Hindus reside in such Southern Asian countries as India, Nepal, and Indonesia. In the nation of India alone, an estimated 80% of the population identify themselves as Hindus. Although not a lot is known about the founding of Hinduism, the faith is widely thought to have developed over a span of some 4,000 years. Due to its status as an ancient belief system, Hinduism is deeply entrenched within Indian society. In recent years, many of the practices of Hinduism have become increasingly popular in the West as well. Examples of this include participation in yoga, as well as interests in information pertaining to the body's chakra system

(energy points located throughout the human body that can be used for healing and improving health, both spiritually and physically).

#### **4. Buddhism (488 million followers)**

Buddhism was founded in India about 2,500 years ago, and is based on the teachings of Buddha, alternatively known as Gautama Buddha or Siddhārtha Gautama. The religion includes two main branches. Namely, these are Theravada Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism. In the country of Tibet, followers subscribe to a form of Buddhism known as Vajrayana, while Zen Buddhism is more commonly practiced in Japan. The main tenets of the Buddhist belief system include nonviolence, moral purity, and ethical behavior. Meditation, karma, and nonviolence all play major roles in Buddhists' daily lives. Without a doubt, the most recognized figure in the Buddhist world is Tenzin Gyatso, who is best known as the 14th, and current, Dalai Lama. This former monk is not only Tibet's spiritual leader, but also an outspoken peace activist.

#### **5. Shintoism (104 million followers)**

Shintoism is based in Japan. Its beginnings are thought to date to the Eighth Century. Followers believe in the existence of many gods, and the word Shinto itself translates into the "way of the gods." About 80% of Japanese citizens subscribe to Shintoism, with that country alone serving as a home to over 80 thousand Shinto shrines. One unique feature of the faith is that believers are not required to publicly declare their allegiance to the religion. The concepts of impurity and purification play major roles in Shintoism and its rites, which are known as Harae. These are performed on a regular basis with an aim to purify believers of sin, guilt, disease, and even bad luck.

#### **6. Daoism (93 million followers)**

Daoism originated in China about two thousand years ago. Also referred to as Taoism, this religion is associated with a belief in the occult and the metaphysical. The majority of Daoist followers live in such Asian countries as China, Japan, South Korea, and Vietnam. A man named Laozi is considered to have been the first philosopher of the religion, and it is he who was thought to have written the Daodejing, a text central to the faith. In terms of political issues, Daoists are generally regarded as being somewhat libertarians, with a preference for governments that shy away from political interference and the imposition of regulations and economic restrictions. Diet plays an important role in Daoist philosophy, especially as in regard to one's all around wellbeing. In keeping with this belief system, practices such as fasting and Veganism (abstaining from animal products) are encouraged.

#### **7. Sikhism (28 million followers)**

In terms of world religions, Sikhism is a relatively new faith. It began in India, and is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak and his Ten Successors. Historically, Sikhs have played major roles in regional politics and had significant influence during the Partition of India in 1947. Central to the Sikh faith are the core tenets of *sewa* and *simran*, which relate to community service and the remembrance of God, respectively. Although the majority of Sikh believers continue to



reside in northern India, over the years a great many followers have moved to diverse countries including Canada, the United States, South Africa, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

### ***8. Judaism (13.9 million followers)***

Judaism has a long and storied history, and one that can trace its beginnings to around the Eighth Century BC. This monotheistic religion originated in the Middle East and is made up of three main branches: Orthodox Judaism, Conservative Judaism, and Reform Judaism (ranked from most to least conservatively traditional). Although each of these is rooted in a common belief system, they differ on elements related to scriptural interpretation and specific practices. The synagogues, each presided over by a rabbi, serve as centers for Jewish worship and religious services. These are also used as a form of community centers. Therein, followers have opportunities to gather on a regular basis in order to socialize, celebrate, study the Torah, and learn about the Mitzvot (commandments of the faith).

### ***9. Muism/Sinism/Shingyo (10 million followers)***

Muism (which is also known as Sinism, Shingyo, or Korean shamanism) is a religion closely tied to traditional Korean culture and history. The faith can trace its roots all the way back to prehistory. In recent years, Muism has experienced a resurgence within South Korea. Even within the totalitarian regime of North Korea, it has been estimated that some 16 % of the population continue to subscribe to the Muism belief system. Among the key components of the religion include the existence of ghosts, spirits, and gods, and these are believed to inhabit the spirit world. The spiritual leaders in Muism, known as "Mudangs," are typically females whose function is to serve as intermediaries between the gods and human beings.

### ***10. Cao Dai (6.7 million followers)***

Cao Dai is a belief system that originated in Vietnam in 1926, and is regarded as a distinctly nationalist Vietnamese religion. The faith was founded by Ngo Van Chieu, a former administrator who believed that he had received a message from the deity revered as the "Supreme Being" during an extraordinary experience he had at a séance. Cao Dai draws elements from other major world religions, including Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Taoism. The religion's full name translates to "The Great Faith for the Third Universal Redemption." Devotees believe in the existence of one Supreme Being, regardless of whatever label or name (i.e. God or Allah) other religions have chosen to impose on this central deity. Practitioners of Cao Dai place a great deal of stress on universal concepts, such as justice, love, peace, and tolerance.

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