History of Ten Sikh Gurus

Why in news?

Recently, Prakash Parva – The holy day commemorating the 350th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh was celebrated.

Sikh Gurus

- The era of the ten gurus of Sikhism spans from the birth of Nanak Dev in 1469, through the life of Guru Gobind Singh.
- At the time of Guru Gobind Singh’s death in 1708, he passed the title of Guru to the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth.

1. Guru Nanak Dev - Guru from 1469 to 1539

- Guru Nanak Dev, first of the 10 gurus, founded the Sikh faith, introducing the concept of one God.
- He started the institution of Guru Ka Langar. Langar is the term in the Sikh religion refers to the common kitchen where food is served to everyone without any discrimination.
- He emphasized the equality of women and rejected the path of renunciation and he rejected the authority of the Vedas.
- He was the contemporary of Mughal emperor - Babur.
2. Guru Angad Dev - Guru from 1539 to 1552

- Guru Angad Dev, second of the 10 gurus, invented and introduced the Gurmukhi (written form of Punjabi) script.
- He compiled the writings of Nanak Dev in Guru Granth Sahib in Gurmukhi Script.
- Popularized and expanded the institution of Guru ka Langar which was started by Guru Nanak Dev.

3. Guru Amardas Sahib - Guru from 1552 to 1574

- Guru Amardas introduced the Anand Karaj marriage ceremony for the Sikhs, replacing the Hindu form.
- He established Manji & Piri system of religious missions for men and women respectively.
- He strengthened the tradition of Guru Ka Langar.
- He also completely abolished amongst the Sikhs, the custom of Sati and purdah system.
- He was the contemporary of Mughal emperor - Akbar.

4. Guru Ram Das - Guru from 1574 to 1581

- Guru Ram Das, fourth of the 10 gurus, founded the city of Amritsar.
- He started the construction of the famous Golden Temple at Amritsar, the holy city of the Sikhs.
- He requested the Muslim Sufi, Mian Mir to lay the cornerstone of the Harmandir Sahib.

5. Guru Arjan Dev - Guru from 1581 to 1606

- He compiled the **Adi Granth**, the scriptures of the Sikhs.
- He completed construction of Sri Darbar Sahib also known as Golden Temple in Amritsar.
- He founded the town of Tarn Taran Sahib near Goindwal Sahib.
- He became the **first great martyr in Sikh history** when Emperor Jahangir ordered his execution. Thus, he was hailed as Shaheedaan-de-Sartaj (The crown of martyrs).

6. Guru Har Gobind Sahib - Guru from 1606 to 1644

- He was the son of Guru Arjan Dev and was known as a "soldier saint".
- He organised a small army and became the **first Guru to take up arms** to defend the faith.
- He waged wars against Mughal rulers Jahangir and Shah Jahan.

7. Guru Har Rai Sahib - Guru from 1644 to 1661

- Though he was a man of peace, he never disbanded the armed sikh warriors who were earlier maintained by Guru Har Gobind.
- He gave shelter to Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Mughal Ruler Shah
Jahan, who was later persecuted by Aurangzeb.

- He cautiously avoided conflict with Emperor Aurangzeb and devoted his efforts to missionary work.

8. Guru Har Krishan Sahib - Guru from 1661 to 1664

- Guru Har Krishan was the youngest of the Gurus. He was installed as Guru at the age of five.
- He was contemporary of Aurangzeb and summoned to Delhi by him under framed charges of anti-Islamic blasphemy.

9. Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib - Guru from 1665 to 1675

- He established the town of Anandpur.
- He opposed the forced conversion of the Hindu Kashmiri Pandits by Mughal ruler Aurangzeb and he was consequently persecuted for this.

10. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib - Guru from 1675 to 1708

- He became Guru after the martyrdom of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur.
- He created the Khalsa in 1699, changing the Sikhs into a saint-soldier order for protecting themselves.
- Last Sikh Guru in human form and he passed the Guruship of the Sikhs to the Guru Granth Sahib.
11. Guru Granth Sahib

- Guru Granth Sahib (also known as the Adi Granth) is the scripture of the Sikhs.
- The Granth was written in Gurmukhi script and it contains the actual words and verses as uttered by the Sikh Gurus.
- It is considered the Supreme Spiritual Authority and Head of the Sikh religion, rather than any living person.