Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born in 1469 in the village of Rai Bhoi Ki Talwandi, now known as Nankana Sahib, near Lahore in present-day Pakistan. His birth is celebrated worldwide by Sikhs during the festival of Guru Nanak Gurpurab. Guru Nanak's father, Mehta Kalu, was a Patwari, an accountant for crop revenue in the village, and his mother was Mata Tripta. His parents were both Hindu, belonging to the merchant caste. Despite his Hindu background, Guru Nanak would go on to establish a distinct religion that emphasized the unity of God, equality among humans, and the rejection of caste-based discrimination. From a young age, Guru Nanak was fascinated by spirituality and religion. He displayed a contemplative nature and a keen interest in divine subjects. According to Sikh tradition, as a child, he astounded his teacher by describing the implicit symbolism of the first letter of the alphabet, resembling the mathematical version of one, as denoting the unity or oneness of God. He married Mata Sulakhni, with whom he had two sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das. However, domestic life did not distract him from his spiritual quest, and he continued to explore and question the rituals and conventions of the religions around him. Guru Nanak embarked on a series of spiritual journeys known as Udasis, covering thousands of miles on foot. His travels took him across South Asia and the Middle East, including to Mecca, Medina, Baghdad, Tibet, and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), among other places. Accompanied by his Muslim companion Bhai Mardana, a rabab (stringed instrument) player, Guru Nanak engaged in interfaith dialogues, preached his message of one God and universal brotherhood, and composed hymns that would later be included in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of Sikhism. Guru Nanak's teachings are encapsulated in 974 hymns included in the Guru Granth Sahib. His poetry is noted for its beauty, rhythmic eloquence, and depth of thought. He preached about the importance of 'Naam Japna' (the remembrance of God's name), 'Kirat Karni' (earning an honest living), and 'Vand Chakna' (sharing with others). These principles laid the foundation for what would become the core tenets of Sikhism. His hymns were composed in various raags, musical measures that are intended to evoke certain emotions in the listener. Guru Nanak is often remembered for his stance against the caste system prevalent in India during his lifetime. He denounced the caste-based hierarchy and the notion that any person could be considered impure or untouchable by birth. His message was one of equality, and he welcomed everyone to partake in 'Langar', a communal meal served to all visitors of the Gurudwara (Sikh temple) without distinction of religion, caste, gender, or ethnicity. This practice was revolutionary at the time and remains a central aspect of Sikh worship and community life. One of the most compelling stories from Guru Nanak's life is when he disappeared into the river for three days, leading the townspeople to believe he had drowned. Upon his return, he was enlightened and began to preach the Sikh philosophy. He proclaimed, 'There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim,' implying that the divine light is in all, and religious labels are ultimately irrelevant in the quest for spiritual unity. This marked the beginning of his mission to teach and spread the message of 'Ik Onkar' (One God). Guru Nanak's influence extended to political and social realms. He critiqued the corruption and tyranny of rulers and emphasized the value of 'Sarbat da bhala', the welfare of all. During his travels, he encountered Babur, the founder of the Mughal Empire in India, and criticized him for his invasion and the suffering it caused. Guru Nanak's courage in speaking truth to power and his advocacy for justice and human rights are celebrated by Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike. Guru Nanak's legacy is not only spiritual but also literary. He was a pioneer of the Punjabi language, and his writings are among the earliest examples of the Gurmukhi script, which would later be standardized by the second Sikh Guru, Guru Angad. Guru Nanak's use of local languages for his hymns, rather than Sanskrit, which was the liturgical language of the time, made his teachings accessible to the common people and emphasized his message of inclusivity. Guru Nanak appointed Bhai Lehna as his successor, giving him the name Guru Angad, meaning 'part of oneself'. This act established the tradition of the Guru in human form, which would continue with ten successive Gurus until the final, eternal Guru, the Guru Granth Sahib. The selection of a successor based on spiritual merit, rather than lineage, reinforced the Sikh principle that leadership should be earned through devotion and service. The final resting place of Guru Nanak is in Kartarpur, now in Pakistan, where he spent the last years of his life farming and preaching. The Kartarpur Corridor, a visa-free border crossing and religious corridor, was opened in November 2019 to allow Indian Sikh pilgrims to visit the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur. This initiative marked a rare instance of cooperation between India and Pakistan and underscored the enduring significance of Guru Nanak's message of peace and unity across borders and divisions.