

- ❖ *Karah Parshaad* – A dish of sacred pudding prepared and served at all religious ceremonies conducted in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. It is served after the reading of the *hukam*. By accepting the *karah parshaad*, Sikhs symbolically accept the *hukam* as the sweet blessing of their *Guru* and agree to take it to heart.
- ❖ *Katha* – A religious sermon on Sikh theology, history, or discourse on hymn (s) from the *Guru Granth Sahib*, usually conducted by the *Granthi*.
- ❖ *Keertan* – Singing of Sikh hymns. *Keertan* is the dominant form of Sikh worship.
- ❖ *Matha tekna* – paying obeisance. Bowing down on the knees and touching the floor with your head, in front of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. It is important to note that Sikhs do not bow before the actual book itself, but submit to the scripture, the true word of God and Guru that is embodied in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Sikhs perform *Matha Tekna* as they enter the main hall. Non-Sikhs are not required to bow, but may enter and quietly join the congregation. Worshippers generally place a donation in front of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, but this is not mandatory, and is used for the management of the *gurdwara*.
- ❖ *Nitnem* – Sikh daily prayers. Sikhs are required to pray three times a day, with the longest prayers early in the morning, shorter prayers in the evening, followed by prayers just before going to bed.
- ❖ *Chaandni* – A canopy above the *Guru Granth Sahib*, signifying respect of its authority. This practice is derived from the traditional treatment of kings in India.
- ❖ *Tabla* and *Harmonium* – Musical instruments, a set of small drums and a piano-like instrument respectively, used to perform *Keertan*.
- ❖ *Waheguru* (also spelt as *Vaheguru*) – The name for God most commonly used by Sikhs. Meditating on the name of God is paramount to Sikhs, and the name *Waheguru* is considered by Sikhs to be the culmination of all aspects of God.
- ❖ *Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh* – Literally means “Khalsa belongs to Waheguru (God), Victory be to Waheguru (God).” This is the traditional Sikh greeting. *Guru Gobind Singh*, the tenth and final *Guru* of the Sikhs, gave this greeting to Sikhs on the day he established the Sikh initiation ceremony known as *Pahul*.

YOUR GUIDE TO OUR GURDWARA



Enjoy your visit!

Origin and Significance

Guru Nanak, the first Sikh Guru (prophet-teacher) and the founder of the Sikh religion, established the first *gurdwara* in the early 1500s. The Sikh Gurus established *gurdwaras* as places where the *sangat* (Sikh religious congregation) could come together to worship as a community, recite, and reflect upon the hymns in the *Guru Granth Sahib* (the Sikh scripture).

Using the *gurdwaras* as the centre of activity, the Gurus built flourishing cities around them. The *gurdwaras* have been a focal point of Sikh communities since the time of *Guru Nanak* and continue to be so even today. They are found throughout the world, wherever a sizeable Sikh community exists.

Gurdwaras range from majestic buildings to small rooms in someone's home. Any place that has the *Guru Granth Sahib* installed and a *sangat* present may be considered a *gurdwara*. *Gurdwaras* are a dear part of a Sikh's life as they provide Sikhs with an opportunity to sit with other followers of the Sikh faith and help each other grow spiritually.

A *Nishaan Sahib*, a saffron coloured flag with an emblem of a double-edged sword, two other swords, and an iron ring, almost always indicates the site of a *gurdwara*.

A *gurdwara* has one or more caretakers who are proficient in reciting the Sikh scriptures. The caretaker is called *Granthi* and usually addressed as *Bhai Sahib* (brother). Any Sikh man or woman can be a *granthi*.

Every *gurdwara* provides *langgar*, a free community kitchen that is open to everyone. Started by *Guru Nanak* and institutionalised by the third *Guru*, *Guru Amar Das*, *langgar* signifies Sikhism's precept of equality for all of humankind. It was mandatory for all to partake of *langgar* before having an audience with the *Guru*, so that kings and untouchables alike would sit together and eat the same meal.

Protocol

- ❖ WEAR modest attire
- ❖ REMOVE SHOES when entering congregation hall. This is for convenience and cleanliness. It is also a sign of respect to the sovereignty of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.
- ❖ COVER HEAD at all times as a sign of respect to *the Guru Granth Sahib*.
- ❖ BOW in front of the *Guru Granth Sahib* upon joining the congregation. Non-Sikhs are not required to bow, but may enter and quietly join the congregation. (People offer money and, sometimes, other materials; this is optional.)
- ❖ SIT on the floor
- ❖ STAND up during *Ardas* (prayer to God)
- ❖ PARTAKE *langgar* and keep head COVERED
- ❖ NO alcohol, tobacco, or smoking on the *gurdwara* premises
- ❖ Men and women are seated separately in many *gurdwaras*. This is not a religious condition but customary.

Chronological Outline of a Typical Day at the Gurdwara

- ◆ *Parkaash* – A short ceremony performed when the *Guru Granth Sahib* is formally opened each day
- ◆ *Nitnem* – Daily prayers
- ◆ *Keertan* – Hymns and religious sermons
- ◆ *Ardaas* – Prayer to God: everyone stands facing the *Guru Granth Sahib*
- ◆ *Hukam* – The order of the day read from the *Guru Granth Sahib*
- ◆ Community announcements and discussion, if any
- ◆ *Langgar* – Sharing a communal meal from the community kitchen
- ◆ *Rehiraas* – Evening prayers
- ◆ *Sukh Aasan* – A ceremony to formally close *the Guru Granth Sahib* that signals the end of services.

Some Terms and Traditions

Some Sikh terms and traditions are explained below:

- ❖ *Ardaas* – A Sikh prayer, phrased directly as an appeal to God, similar to the Christian practice of saying Grace. *Ardaas* is said on several occasions, most commonly after completion of morning, evening or night time prayers. *Ardas* is also said before the commencement of any important event.
- ❖ *Chaur* – A flowing wisk that is respectfully waved over the *Guru Granth Sahib* to indicate its sovereignty
- ❖ *Diwan Hall* – The main hall in the *gurdwara* where services are held in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.
- ❖ *Gurmukhi* – The script of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, which is also the script for modern Punjabi.
- ❖ *Guru* – literally teacher, refers to one of the ten Sikh prophets, *Guru Granth Sahib* (the Sikh scripture), or God.
- ❖ *Guru Granth Sahib* - The Sikh scripture, written mostly in the form of hymns and poetry, includes the writings of the Sikh *Gurus* as well as the devotional writings of 36 other holy persons, both Muslim and Hindu. It is 1,430 pages long and is the embodiment of the spiritual authority of all the *Gurus*, and is treated with the utmost respect. The *Guru Granth Sahib* received the status of *Guru* in 1708.
- ❖ *Hukam* – A reading taken at random from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. A new reading is taken each day. Sikhs are required to adopt all *hukams* from the *Guru Granth Sahib* into their everyday life practices.