

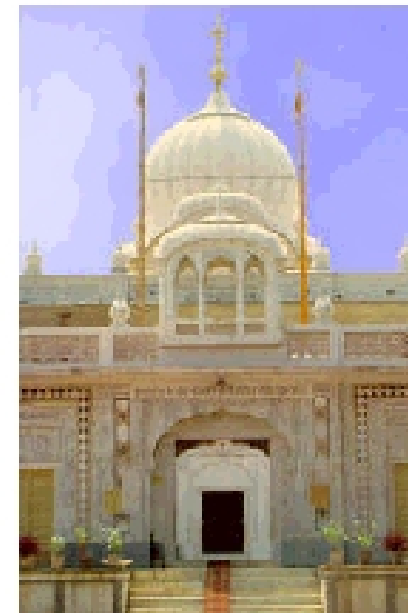
they enter the main hall. Non-Sikhs are not required to bow, but may enter and quietly join the congregation. Worshippers generally place a donation in front of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, but this is not mandatory, and is used for the management of the *gurdwara*.

- ❖ *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. It is said in *gurdwaras* to begin and conclude *katha*, announcements, and *keertan*. *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* (*Amrit*).

Chronological Outline of a Typical Day at the Gurdwara

- ◆ *Parikaash* – 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
- ◆ Religious School - Sikh history or *Gurmukhi* classes conducted for Sikh children in most *gurdwaras*
- ◆ *Rehiraas* – Evening prayers
- ◆ *Sukh Aasan* – A ceremony to formally close the *Guru Granth Sahib* that signals the end of services.

YOUR GUIDE TO OUR GURDWARA



Enjoy your visit!

Produced by Sikh Link

For more information on the religion or history of the Sikhs please contact Sikh Link at:
P O Box 228, Blackburn South, Victoria 3130 or Email: rks@bluep.com

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). At *gurdwaras* Sikhs learn about the teachings of their religion, meditate, and make decisions that affect their local community and sometimes the entire Sikh community.

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 a sharp 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 a sign of respect to the sovereignty of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. All *gurdwaras* have shoe racks.
- ❖ 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 *Ardaas* (prayer to God)
- ❖ SIT on the floor during *langgar* and keep head COVERED

- ❖ NO alcohol, tobacco, or smoking on the *gurdwara* premises
- ❖ Men and women are seated separately in many *gurdwaras*. However, this is not required religiously.

Please refer to the Terms and Traditions section below for an explanation of Sikh concepts.

Terms and Traditions

- ❖ *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. *Ardaas* 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. The procedure for taking the *Hukam* is described in the *Sikh Rehat Maryada* (Code of personal and corporate conduct).
- ❖ *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