

## Kirtan

Kirtan is the name given to devotional singing from the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Most of a Sikh programme will consist of singing by different spiritual musicians (Ragis). There is sometimes also explanations of specific hymns in the Sikh Scripture (Katha). Singing hymns from the Shri Guru Granth Sahib in the specific musical melodies (Raags) is considered the easiest and best path to enlightenment.

## Sukhasan

At the end of day the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is taken to a separate room and laid to rest. This ceremony is called Sukhasan and it will consist of an Ardas asking for forgiveness in anything that was said or done incorrectly and a procession to the special room where the Holy Scripture is kept overnight.

## PEOPLE IN A SIKH GURDWARA

Seva is the name given to selfless service. You will have unpaid Sikhs who help out at Gurdwaras every day around the world to help with the day to day running of the services. These people include the following:

## Granthi

This is the person who will sit behind the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in the Darbar Sahib. He or She will wave a Chaur Sahib, which looks like a fly whisk, and is waved over the Holy Scripture. This symbolises the supreme authority of the Word of God as an emperor of emperors.

## Langar Sevadar

The food for the free community will be made entirely by volunteers who usually start preparing the food early in the morning around 4am.

## Management Committee

Every Gurdwara will have a management committee to look after the day to day running of the institution such as paying bills, purchasing foods and organising spiritual musicians etc.

## WHAT IS THE SWEET BROWN PUDDING?

A sweet brown pudding is given at the end of every Sikh programme and it is called Parshad. The sweetness is a reminder of the loving nature of God, and it is given to everyone to highlight equality.

## WHY ARE SIKHS CARRYING SWORDS?

The knowledge of martial arts and self defence is considered vital in being able to assist in those rare situations where one needs to use physical force to uphold justice by protecting someone or yourself. So a small sword, called a Kirpan, is kept by Sikhs to defend the weak.

## ARE ANY PARTICULAR DAYS SPECIAL?

Sikhism is a spiritual lifestyle which does not limit spirituality to one day of the week such as Sunday for Christians or Friday for Muslims. Every day a Sikh will perform early morning and evening meditations. However most Sikhs will typically go to a Gurdwara on Sunday.

## REHANSABHAI - MEDITATION SESSIONS

A great way to experience authentic Sikh spirituality is to attend a Rehansahai. These will typically be 12 hour music, chanting and meditation sessions which start from around 8pm and continue through the night until 8am.

# Sikh Gurdwara

## INTRODUCTION TO SIKH GURDWARA

This infobite is designed to de-mystify the different elements of a Sikh place of worship, the Sikh Gurdwara, and explain the different ceremonies and protocols within it.

## RECOGNISING A GURDWARA

A Sikh temple is called a Gurdwara which means doorway to the Guru. A Gurdwara can be identified by a tall saffron flag which signifies that it is a public building open to everyone, regardless of caste, colour, creed, culture or any other division.

## IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN NOT DO IN A SIKH GURDWARA?

You should not take cigarettes or alcohol into a Gurdwara. In addition you should dress modestly and cover your head with a turban, chunni or a simple piece of cloth. There are usually spare head coverings available at the Gurdwara reception, but you may want to take your own.

## SIKH GURDWARA LAYOUT

The layout of all Gurdwaras worldwide are virtually the same and only differ in size and style. Every Gurdwara will have the following rooms:

### Shoe Room

Upon entering a Gurdwara you will need to take off your shoes (and socks in some Gurdwaras) and place them in the shoe room. There is usually a separate shoe room for men and women near the entrance of the Gurdwara.

Cleanliness is given a high degree of importance in eastern spiritual traditions and this is one aspect of outward cleanliness.

## Darbar Sahib

The Darbar Sahib or Diwan Hall is where the spiritual assembly is held every day. The Darbar Sahib will usually have women sitting on one side and men on the other. This is to ensure a respectful environment is maintained, especially during festive seasons when the Gurdwara will be full of people.

At the front of the hall will be a throne on which rests the Sikh Holy scripture, the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The Sikh Scripture is the spiritual guide for the Sikh community. It is considered the living conscious spirit of the ten masters of Sikhism and not just a book.

Upon entering the Darbar Sahib, Sikhs will walk towards the throne. They will place their monetary offerings into the community fund in front of the throne and offer a personal prayer before bowing with the forehead touching the floor. They will then take a place in the holy congregation.

Anyone is welcome to stay for as short or as long as they wish. There will usually be devotional singing (keertan) taking place and people are free to close their eyes and meditate on the music internally or sing along if they wish.

One thing to note is that it is considered rude to have your feet pointing towards the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. So, if your legs get tired you can always take a walk and then come back.

## Langar Hall

Apart from the Darbar Sahib the other main feature of a Gurdwara is the free community kitchen. Free food is served at all Sikh temples throughout the world.

This is Sikhism's practical approach in working

towards the vision of every human being having a minimum standard of living by ensuring that every human at least gets a good and nutritious meal.

The other aspect of the free community kitchen is to work as a tool for people from different backgrounds to come together to eat and reinforce that humanity is one. It is worth noting that some of the large Gurdwaras in Delhi and in Amritsar serve 100,000 per day, which is 4 million people annually.

## Reception and Shop

Some of the larger Gurdwaras will have a reception hall with a shelf containing spare head coverings in case people have not brought their own. There may also be free literature available on Sikhism and a shop selling Sikh items.

## STRUCTURE OF A GURDWARA PROGRAMME Ardas

Every Sikh programme will start and end with an Ardas, which is a personal request to God and the Guru, for something specific such as blessings, grace, peace, success etc.

The Ardas is the only part of the programme which is performed standing up. This is also useful in re-grounding a person after they have been connecting to God through devotional singing.

## Hukamnama

A hukamnama is an order from the Guru and one way in which God speaks to the congregation, after an Ardas (request) has been made, is with the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji being opened at a random page and a small section of the scripture being read.