



Gurduārā

A Sikh Place of Learning

Gurduārā (popularly spelled Gurdwara) is the name given to the Sikh place of learning and not only worship, a place where Sikhs have historically assembled to facilitate their spiritual and political growth. Literally, “through the Guru,” the gurduara is a gateway to Sikh culture and lifestyle. The Gurūs sought to build a model human society through an ideal and compassionate world organization. The *Gurū Granth Sāhib*, the Sikh spiritual canon, is placed on a high palanquin under a canopy in the middle of one end of the hall, a design resembling that of a *darbār* (royal court). The Gurū Granth Sāhib is considered *dhur kī bāṇī* a revelation from One Creator, and so the royal symbolism of the court reflects the Gurū’s sovereign status.

At a gurduārā, all women, men, and children are treated as equals. The institution generally offers shelter, food, education, physical care, and an open-discussion forum for Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike. Attached to every gurduārā is a community kitchen where the *langar*, congregational meal, is prepared to be distributed free of charge. During this meal, everyone sits together on the floor to symbolize equality, a key characteristic of Sikhi. Historically, the institution of the gurduārā has embraced all visitors, from peasants to emperors.

The Sikh community continually attempts to establish better relations and understanding between the Sikhs and other communities by inviting any and all to visit the Gurduārā. Such visits are necessary to create an environment of open dialogue and understanding between different communities.

Gurduārā Protocol

- Dress modestly.
- Remove shoes before entering the main hall.
- Cover head (one may bring your own head covering or one will be provided. Using a hat is typically not recommended).
- It is appropriate to bow in front of the Gurū Granth Sāhib upon joining the congregation. Non-Sikhs are not required to bow, but may enter and quietly join the congregation.
- Sit on floor during the *divān* (service).
- Stand during *Ardās*, the concluding prayer.
- No alcohol, tobacco, or smoking on premises.

Terms & Traditions

- ❖ *Ardās* – A Sikh prayer, phrased directly as an appeal to God. *Ardās* is said on several occasions, most commonly after completion of morning, evening, or nighttime prayers. *Ardās* is also said before the commencement of any important event.
- ❖ *Gurū* – literally “enlightener,” refers to one of the ten Sikh prophets, *Gurū Granth Sāhib* (the Sikh scriptural canon), and the *Gurū Khālsā Panth* – duly initiated community of Sikhs.
- ❖ *Gurū Granth Sāhib* - The *Gurū Granth Sāhib* is the scriptural canon of the Sikhs, a compilation of revelatory writings by enlightened individuals. It includes compositions from six Gurūs, three devotees, fifteen saints of various religious traditions, and several bards from the Gurū’s court. The inclusion of non-Sikh contributors highlights the Sikh faith’s universal nature, a universality that stems from the belief that people from any faith structure can experience Oneness.