



Introducing religions

Three different Sikh temples

Narrator:

It is one o'clock in the morning and the start of the day at the Harmandir Sahib or Temple of God in Amritsar. Sikh pilgrims from all over the world, as well as from Amritsar itself have come to take part in its daily rituals. Gurdwara is the name given to a Sikh temple. At the heart of the gurdwara here in Amritsar, is the Harmandir Sahib. It is covered with gold leaf, which is why it is also known as the Golden Temple. During the day it houses a book, the Holy Guru Granth Sahib. The Harmandir Sahib is being prepared for the auspicious moment when the book will enter its precinct for another day.

Men wash it with a mixture of milk and water, to clean and sanctify the space. This takes an hour each morning. They think of it as a service rendered to God, and to the community.

Joginder Singh:

The fact is that the space where the Guru is to enter must be neat and clean. So people go there to clean it. They think that it not only cleans the physical space, but also their souls. So primarily they go there to purify their souls and incidentally the space is also cleaned.

Narrator:

Elsewhere in the complex, people are waiting to catch a glimpse of the Guru Granth Sahib on its way to the Harmandir Sahib.

This holy book is treated as a living guru, so it's taken to rest at night in the Akal Takht, and in the morning is carried back in a palanquin to the Harmandir Sahib.

The book is opened at random. Whatever page it opens on becomes the page for the day. And the opening words of the hymn at the top of the left hand page are read.

This is known as a hukamnana an order, or a Vak or saying. Transmitted on all Indian radio, it's the Guru's guidance for the day.

At the end of the day the Guru Granth Sahib is put away for the night. The last two lines of the open page are read, and the holy book covered up and taken back to its place of rest.

The Sis Ganj Gurudwara in Delhi is built on the spot where the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded in 1675. The Guru made a stand against Mughal pressure to convert to Islam. He was given three choices. To embrace Islam, perform miracles, or be ready to meet his death. He chose the last. The gurudwara commemorates his martyrdom.

Kanwar Deep Singh:

We had ten gurus from period 1469 – 1708. And the holy book of ours contains the sayings of our six Gurus, plus the Muslim, Hindu's sayings and scholars and philosophers and other people. Who had the same ideology of humanity, equality, universal brotherhood, love and service. Even their sayings have been included in there.

Secondly, you may have seen or read the various religious books of the world. Usually all of them give the life history of the prophets and commands of them. But it's not so in our holy book.

Granthi is basically is an attendant to the Guru Granth Sahib, like the king is sitting on the throne. There are people standing behind. And they're giving attention to it, and giving

service to it. It's not like the priesthood. Everybody is equal. And no-one is superior, no-one is inferior.

Basically what Sikhism talks about is love and universal brotherhood. In a common man's understanding, gurudwara literally means 'the door of the Guru'. So inside in the centre, under the canopy, beneath the flower and the cloth, the holy book is there. And people are paying respects to the holy book. And that is not the worship. Because worship as you know is only to the god. And the only worship to the god is to love his creations and serve them, and stay in harmony with nature. And the three men sitting on the site are basically singing the power of holy book with music. People sitting and listening to it. That's what was part one of the gurudwara. So every gurudwara apart from part one, has part two as well. Because when you read the text, it usually says 'sangat' and 'panget'. Okay. So the group of people sitting in the gurudwara in part one is called 'sangat'. And the people having meals in an organised line in the community kitchen, the second part is called 'panget'. So it goes on and it goes hand in hand.

It's a kind of community kitchen. Where in any person from any country, any religion, rich or poor, black or white. Or even who doesn't believe in god. Anybody can go in there, have a meal and no-one is to pay for it. And it's not only here, you go to any part of the world, every gurudwara has it.

What is going on in part one is a part of pottery class going on. And what is happening in Part two is a kind of practical training as to what is preached. And that is not to be confined within the bound of this area. To be exercised the world over in your personal day to day behaviour.

Narrator:

The Shree Guru Singh Sabha Gurudwara was completed in 2003 in Southall, West London. It was built on the site of a smaller gurudwara, but as the Sikh community grew, there was a need for a much bigger place of worship. It is now the largest gurudwara in Britain.

Dr Garcha:

The basic principal of the gurudwara is that the opulent or the primary place would be for a holy book, the Guru Granth Sahib. And the design follows around it. And to try and facilitate to make sure that we show honour and respect for our Guru Granth Sahib and the living Guru. And what we've decided in the design aspect of it, is to take aspects of design from the Punjab, and also from the western Diaspora which we live. Stained glass, he is associated in this country with places of worship. And we said we are recognising that, but use some significance of Sikh faith. The one in the main hall is a mixture of western and Sikh influence. Whereas the one just on the north side, is really mainly of Sikh significance. But it shows a bowl with sort of Ambrosial nectar. And out of it are coming five rays. And then you have the Khandar in the stained glass windows, which is what some people call the emblems of the Sikhs, the Chakar the double edged sword, the one double edged sword and the sword of the spiritual and temporal significance. Which is shown as a balance between the two.

Narrator:

Today is a special occasion. It is the celebration of the birth of the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru's birthday is marked by continuous reading of the holy book. This takes about 48 hours.

Once the reading is completed, the Ardās, the daily formal prayer is read. In which the sacrifices made by Sikh's are remembered.

After this, the members of the congregation who sponsored the continuous reading of the holy book are shown respect.

Dr. G:

They were given a honour in Guru Granth Sahib, which is called a Saropa. That's the sort of saffron scarf. And that was presented by the Grunthajee just as an honour to say 'Thank you for sharing your good news and prayers with us'. All Sikh's follow a conduct of three basic aspects of Naam Japo. Which is the remembrance of meditation upon the name of god. Kirat

Karō, which is honest labour and Vand Ke Chakna, sharing with your neighbour. And that sharing is of respect, love and common courtesy in all fields. And helping them when others are in need.

The is again the thing of Vand Ke Chakna, which is sharing with one's neighbour. The spiritual significance is that it is prepared one of sort of some people say five elements of using fire, water, sugar, flour and the spirituality. And putting them all together and cooking it. And it is the concept of sharing with the congregation, the Sangat's, so we're all having it. and that is very significant.

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