LO: to explore the act of prayer in Sikhism









House of Doors

- The literal meaning of the Punjabi word Gurdwara is the residence of the Guru, or the door that leads to the Guru. It has 4 entrances to show it is always open to all.

A Gurdwara in Bedford

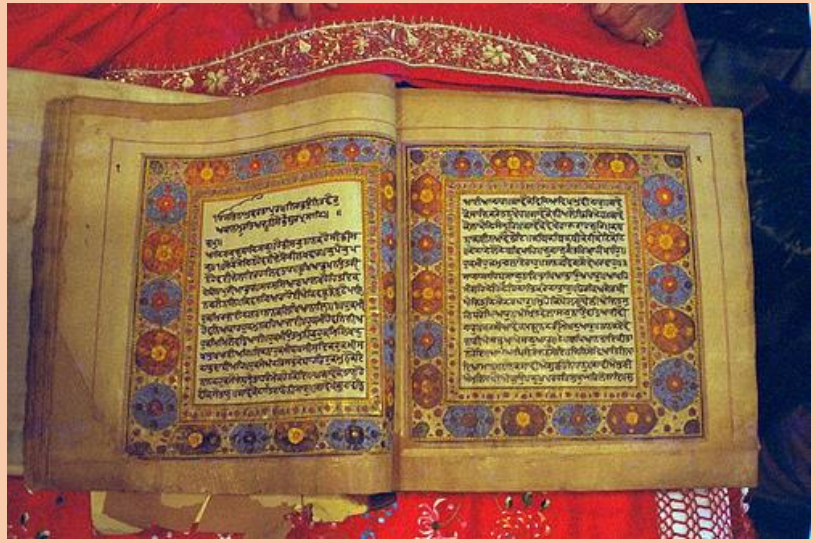


The Gurdwara is used for many different reasons:

- Meetings
- Worshipping God.
- Centre for learning for children and adults. To learn the Punjabi language.
- Celebration of important occasions – Weddings and births.
- Relaxation.

In a modern Gurdwara the Guru is not a person, but the book of Sikh scriptures called the Guru Granth Sahib.

It is the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib that gives the Gurdwara its religious status, so any building containing the book is a Gurdwara.



The Four Doors

- 4 doors of a Gurdwara
- These doors SYMBOLISE that people from all four points of the compass are welcome.
- There's always a light on in a Gurdwara, to show that the Guru's Light is always visible and is accessible to everyone at any time

Before going into a Gurdwara

Remove your shoes and wash your feet if they are dirty.

Cover your head.

On entering a Gurdwara



- Firstly, Sikhs bow to the Guru Granth Sahib, touching the floor with their forehead. This SYMBOLISES respect and submission to the truths contained in the book.

- Secondly, they place an offering of food or money in front of the Guru Granth Sahib.





- This is used to run the Gurdwara and the free food kitchen (langar). The offering is NOT charity, but a SHARING of God's gifts. If a person has no money or food to offer, they may offer flowers, or just some words of sincere thanks

When entering a Gurdwara, the main thing that stands out is the raised platform, on which the Guru Granth Sahib is placed to be read from during the prayer service.

This platform called a 'palki', and it SYMBOLISES respect.



A person always stands next to the holy book or behind it, and waves a fan over it. This is called a 'chauri'. The chauri SYMBOLISES authority.





Seating in a Gurdwara

- Everyone sits on the floor in a Gurdwara. This SYMBOLISES humility before the Guru Granth Sahib, and because it gives everyone a place of equal status to sit. Most people sit cross-legged. Cushions and seats are not allowed.





The Guru Granth Sahib is treated with greatest respect, and so when it is not used for prayers, Sikhs place it in a different room over night, where it is covered with special cloths. This room and the covers symbolise protection and safety.

The next morning it will be taken again into the main prayer hall,

The free food kitchen, or Langar



After every service Sikhs come to the Langar where a free vegetarian meal has been prepared for everybody. Sharing food is important as the Gurus taught that all Sikhs should share their possessions. All the work involved in preparing the food, serving it and clearing up afterwards is called 'seva' which means voluntary, selfless service.

- Although Sikhs are not required to be vegetarian, only vegetarian food is served in the gurdwaras. This ensures that any visitor to the Gurdwara can eat in the Langar.

