

Techniques for Propagating the Sikh Way of Life

www.ProjectNaad.com



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2 Why has this Document been Written?

It is shocking to find that the mainstream Sikh community has become extremely lazy when it comes to sharing their way of life with non-Sikhs. There are very few if no Sikh missionaries and there are no missionary centres which actually offer free educational programmes on Sikh spirituality and Sikh philosophy to non-Sikhs. The common argument given for this situation is that Sikhs don't convert people. However, this is in complete contradiction to the lives of the Sikh Gurus. Guru Nanak Dev Ji is Earth's most widely travelled Prophet. He undertook four major journeys in order to spread the truth to as many people as possible. The subsequent Gurus also built on this tradition of educating the masses about the Truth. This is the reason why Sikhism is still alive today and why we are 20 million people. We of course completely agree that converting people forcefully or beyond their will is completely immoral and against Sikh principles, but at the same time it is a duty for every Sikh to share their way of life to those who wish to know about it. Sikhs were not made to keep the light to themselves like the ascetics or yogis once did, they were made to spread the light in common society and be the star which lights up the universe, helping everyone to become more conscious and closer to the light of God. This is what a Gurmukh is, the one who follows the teachings of the Guru who then becomes enlightened, and then helps others to become enlightened too.

The Guru Granth Sahib teaches:

"Nanak instructs the Saints to teach, that the mind is imbued with loving devotion to the Lord." - Page 80

"The Gurmukh is the spiritual teacher, and the Gurmukh is the preacher." - Page 131

"Practice this yourself, and teach others instil the Lord's Name in your heart." - Page 185

"Those who have meditated on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, and departed after having worked by the sweat of their brows, Nanak says, their faces are radiant in the Court of the Lord, and many are saved along with them!" - Page 8

But sadly after the Gurus, our community has done little (with the exception of a few groups and individuals) to propagate Sikh philosophy and the Sikh way of life. It is not an accident that followers of the Sikh way of life are present in every country now. This is part of the Lord's Divine plan to spread the message of Truthful living. Sikhs in countries outside India are ambassadors of the Guru. It is not acceptable to just sit around, hide out, worship amongst Indian-Punjab Sikhs only or stick exclusively to your own culture and caste. Sikhs must mix with the indigenous communities of the countries which they inhabit and share their way of life to those who wish to know about it.

This document contains ideas for good ways for Sikhs to share their way of life with other people and every Sikh should make it their duty to spread the message of Sikhism. This will not only consolidate the way of life of the Sikhs but also win many converts because the lifestyle and the philosophy is essence of religion itself! The document has been divided into 3 main sections including:

- 1) Changes to your Gurdwara
- 2) Reaching Out
- 3) The Power of Youth

3 Changes to your Gurdwara

3.1 *The Purpose of a Gurdwara*

The Gurdwaras started by the Great Sikh Masters were the World's first multi faith centres. The Gurus embraced people of all cultures, races and religions and welcomed them all to the house of the Guru. It is important to remember this tradition when running a Gurdwara.

3.2 *Having an Open, Warm and Friendly Welcome*

This is crucial for non-Sikhs interested in Sikhism and for visitors to feel comfortable and relaxed. The things you can do to ensure that our Gurdwaras are open, warm and friendly places is to have:

- A Sevadara or steward at the entrance to the Gurdwara to welcome people and to show people around if necessary
- A large modern stylish billboard kept outside the Gurdwara with a selection of Sikh basic truths in the local language of the people. This means that if your Gurdwara is in France then you would use French as the language and not Punjabi. If the Gurdwara is in Germany then you would use German. The purpose of the board would be to provide a quick insight into a few Sikh basic truths as people pass the Gurdwara on their way to work or the town centre. The contents of the board could include the following items:

This is a Sikh Place of Worship

Everyone is Welcome

Sikhs Recognise:

- One Eternal God known by many names including Jehovah, Raam, Allah, Waheguru etc.
- God's Light radiates within All
- Unity of the all Human Beings
- Gender Equality
- Selfless service to Humanity
- Compassion, Humility and Tolerance
- Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds
- Earning an honest living, Charity and Meditation on Naam
- Democracy, Freedom of Speech and Freedom of Religion
- Human development through Science, Technology & Education

- Upon entering the Gurdwara there should be another bill board designed for visitors who may have never entered a Gurdwara and who may be unsure of what to do. The contents of this board should be aimed at providing the few rules which should be followed when in a Gurdwara and a map of the Gurdwara with everything labeled. Again you should ensure that the board is in the local language of the people. It's no good having the following message board in Punjabi!

This is a Sikh Place of Worship

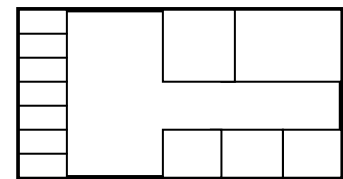
Everyone is Welcome

Could all people entering the Gurdwara kindly:

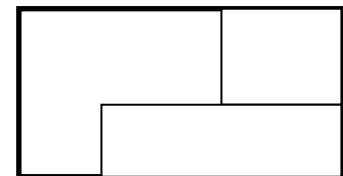
- Not use or possess Alcohol, Tobacco or Drugs
- Dress modestly
- Not bring pets inside the Gurdwara
- Cover your head with a head scarf (on wall in front of you)
- Take off your shoes and socks in shoe room (see site map)
- Wash your hand

Services

- Enjoy a free meal in the Langar Hall!
- Meditate in the Prayer Hall
- Other Services listed here...



Ground floor



First floor

3.3 Open Days for your Gurdwara

Open days for the Gurdwara (especially on a Gurburab/Diwali or other religious occasion) should be held regularly and everything should be done to make the wider public aware of the event. An example would be to include an advert in the local paper and/or have it announced on the local radio station (this is usually done at no cost because it is a 'news' item). On an open day you should ensure there are stewards (preferably young people) who welcome non-Sikhs into the Gurdwara and who will show people around and talk about the different elements constituting a Gurdwara. It would also be great to have some:

- Vegetarian dishes native to the land
- Talks, poems and songs in the local language of the people e.g. German, French etc. so that visitors can truly get a glimpse of Sikh spirituality.

3.4 Location of New Gurdwaras

If you are building a new Gurdwara then please consider building it in an area which contains as many non-Sikhs as possible or at least as far from other Gurdwaras as possible. The reason for this is to allow non-Sikhs to be given a chance to experience Sikh spirituality and find out about the teachings of the Sikh Gurus.

The Gurus travelled to many different parts of the world to establish congregations. It is our duty as ambassadors of the Guru to do the same. It is time now for Sikhs to proactively increase the racial and cultural diversity within the Sikh community.

Again it would be important to ensure that services (e.g. Sunday services) contain a mixture of Punjabi (for the older Punjabi generation) and poems, songs and translations in the local language of the country. This will be for the benefit of the Sikh youth and new people joining the Sikh way of life. To make this a success you will need to mobilize and utilize the skills of the younger generation and new Sikhs as much as possible.

3.5 Providing Additional Support Services

There is currently no support service or facility for those who have taken Amrit (Sikh baptism) for members of the Sikh way of life to attend if they are experiencing problems or difficulties of any kind after having taken Amrit. There should be a support team established either locally or at a regional level in the country where people can go with questions regarding the Sikh way of life. If there are educated people in the community with knowledge and experience of the Sikh way of life then they should make themselves known to the community and offer their time to people who have questions about their spirituality. Every Sikh should make an effort to learn about the Sikh way of life and share their insights with other Sikhs and non-Sikhs.

3.6 Providing Local Translation Services

It is no longer acceptable to just have a Sunday service in Punjabi only especially for congregations based outside of India. You MUST have poems, Keertan (singing God's praises) and Katha (explanation of the scriptures) in both Punjabi and the local language of the country. A good start would to have at least 50% of a programme in Punjabi and 50% of the programme in the local language.

Secondly the following websites provide Sikh holy scripture translation search engines of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, Dasam Granth Sahib Ji and Amrit Keertan in both Gurmukhi and English:

- SearchGurbani - www.searchgurbani.com
- SikhiToTheMax - www.sikhitothemax.com
- Sri Granth - www.srigranth.org
- Sikher - www.sikher.com

It is vitally important that your local Sikh Gurdwara invests in an electronic projector, projector screen and a laptop which it can use to project the translations of meanings of the Shabads (hymns) sung in the Gurdwara onto the screen for all the congregation to see.

The Hukamnama (Daily Orders from the Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji) and the Ardas (Standing Prayer) should be done in both the local language and Punjabi. A good model to start with is to say the requests of the Ardas in both the local language of the country and Gurmukhi. Or you can choose to do a local language version of the Ardas after the Gurmukhi version.

4 Reaching Out

Reaching out - means, leaving the safe environment of our Gurdwara and pro-actively disseminating information about Sikhism and making non-Sikhs aware of the Sikh community. Some ideas for things which you can do are given below.

4.1 *Giving Free Ice-Cream in the City Centre*

On the day we commemorate the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, it is traditional for Sikhs to give out ice-cream to remind people of the sacrifice performed by the 'King of Martyrs and the Ocean of Peace'.

It would be great to prepare an information leaflet about Guru Arjan Dev Ji (just a one side A6 document) describing his sacrifice and what it means to the Sikh community. The stall would ideally be set up in the middle of the city centre with a big sign saying 'FREE ICECREAM' and you would give free ice-cream to anyone requesting it - and yes there will be lots of people queuing up!

Most people will naturally ask why you are giving out free ice-cream and you will be able to give them the small leaflet and talk about the sacrifice of Guru Arjan Dev Ji or Sikhi in general. This is a fun way of spreading the message of Sikhi.

You could give out other free items on a religious day such as free sweets on Guru Har Krishan's Birthday in the city centre and give out colouring pictures to young children.

4.2 *Invite the City to a Diwali Fire Works Display*

Diwali is always a fun festival and you could invite the general public to join you at the Gurdwara for celebrating Diwali. Plenty of free sweets, a children's play area, a Bouncy Castle, speeches in the local language and a fireworks display to end the evening would be a great example of sharing the Sikh way of life by having fun.

4.3 *Newspaper Mail shots on Vaisakhi Day*

In the United Kingdom it is possible to put a flyer in one of the local newspapers. The flyer would then reach everyone in the local community/city. This is relatively inexpensive and would ensure a very large coverage. You would want to include a brief description of Vaisakhi and the basics of the Sikh way of life. The leaflet would ideally be no more than one A4 page (both sides) and it would be posted out one week earlier than the Vaisakhi celebrations so that anyone wanting to visit the celebrations could do so.

4.4 *Family Camping Trips*

Sikhi Camps are great ways for people to spend time together, learn about the Sikh way of life and have fun! Everyone on a camp should be treated equally and preference should be given to people who have recently entered the Sikh way of life or people who are interested in becoming Sikhs and want to experience Sikh spirituality.

A great example of a fun, non-judgemental, well organized life changing Sikhism Camp is the Sikh Student Camp www.sikhstudent.org.

There are many other great models of Sikhism camps such as the 3HO-Europe Kundalini Yoga camp which takes place once a year in France and has an attendance of 2000+ people interested in spirituality and Dharma.

4.5 Sikhism Books in your Library and New Age Bookshops

Make sure your local library is stocked with plentiful books on the Sikh way of life. If it is not then you should raise the issue with your library and make sure they stock up on books. They will do this if you request it. Also ensure that your local bookshop (whether New Age or not) has books on Sikhism available.

4.6 Sikh Literature and Sikhism Resource CDs with Translated Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji

All Gurdwaras should have a stall in their reception with lots of free or at-cost literature on display for people to take. The ProjectNaad leaflets have been designed for this exact purpose to provide a quick insight into many aspects of Sikhism. A Gurdwara could for example have a leaflet stall in their main reception with some or all of the ProjectNaad leaflets which can be printed off using a normal printer and then photocopied.

CD's could also be made available with the entire Guru Granth Sahib and Keertan to take away in the reception hall. This could be done by copying the fantastic translations available on SikhNet - <http://www.sikhnet.com/s/GuruGranthSahib> and GurbaniFiles - <http://www.gurbanifiles.org/> as well as PDF versions of the ProjectNaad leaflets and presentations onto a CD for distributing.

4.7 Punjabi/Gurmukhi Classes for Adults and New Sikhs

Punjabi/Gurmukhi classes should be made available for adults who are not Punjabi speaking. This would also benefit young Punjabi adults who missed out on the opportunity of learning to read/write/speak Punjabi.

4.8 Articles in Local Newspapers and Local Radio

It is always a great idea to send in an article on the Sikh way of life before a religious day to a newspaper and/or the local radio. These are also great tools to use to publicise any events/open days which you may be holding at the Gurdwara and they will usually do it free of charge.

4.9 Personal Attitude

As an ordinary Sikh it is your duty to ensure that your Gurdwara is as open and friendly as possible to non-Sikhs. Always show kindness and consideration to all people visiting the Gurdwara and make it your personal responsibility to resolve any problems they had during their visit. Make sure you ask them if they enjoyed their visit. It is these single acts of kindness and consideration which will help to propagate the Sikh way of life.

5 The Power of Youth

5.1 Inter Cultural, Racial and Caste Marriages

Young Sikh people should be encouraged to marry people from other cultures, races and castes, so long as both sides agree to live a Sikh way of life. This is in line with the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh said, 'Recognise the human race as one'. So if we truly believe this then we should encourage mixed marriages. The couple should be married as per Sikh rites and both sides of the families must be made to feel comfortable in the Gurdwara.

5.2 Sikhism Awareness Days/Week in your Local University

As young Sikhs you need to take the time to organise a Sikhism awareness week/day which will include lectures on various aspects of Sikh philosophy and the Sikh lifestyle. These should be advertised openly in the university magazine (preferably the front page) and should be in an accessible lecture theatre. You could also have a meditation session at the end of the lecture or devote one evening in the 'Sikhi Awareness Week' to give young people an experience of Sikh meditation.

5.3 Fancy Dress Day

On a religious day you could get a group of Sikhs and non-Sikhs to disseminate free sweets (e.g. lollipops) to all the people walking through the students union. Also you could give all interested people a small information leaflet on Sikhism. This would be a fun way of spreading the wonderful message of Sikhi.

We would recommend dressing up as either:

- Action heroes (e.g. He-man, She-ra, Superman, Incredible Hulk, Spiderman, Batman etc.)
- Famous cartoon characters (Mickey Mouse, Daffy Duck, Homer Simpson etc.)
- Animals (e.g. Cow, Dog, Giraffe, Lion, Cat, Bird etc.)

5.4 Using Music as a Tool for Spreading the Gurus Message

Young Sikh people should use their knowledge of rapping, street music, Rock'n'Roll, RnB, Soul, Hip Hop, Classic music and digital technology to translate the message of the Gurus into something which the average person in the local country could relate to. You could play this music in the city centre or at a university campus or just for the wider Sikh youth population. This would be a great way of expressing your love for Sikhism and introducing more people to the Sikh way of life.

5.5 Playing an Instrument on the Underground

Have you ever seen those wonderful people who play music on the underground tubes in London? Well you could be one of those people playing e.g. a Sikh classical instrument or maybe a Tabla or a Harmonium on a clean cloth, either to a Vaheguru mantra, Shabad (hymn) or maybe just a Raag (specific melody creating a specific mood).

On the side you could have for example, the Sikhism Basics leaflet for people to take away. This would be an amazing and unique way of adding some diversity to the lives of non-Sikhs by making their journey to or from work that slightly different.

5.6 Put Pamphlets on School/College/University Boards

Make sure your university campuses have plenty of information on Sikhism for any interested students. Your University may have a multi-faith network and if it does then make sure you have a seat on it!

5.7 Join Multi-Faith Networks

Again, you need to join as many of the inter-faith networks as possible both inside and outside the university campus so that more people become aware of the teachings of the Sikh lifestyle.

5.8 Online Forums

There are lots of forums online such as religion forums, interfaith forums etc. We have come across many Sikhs who have needed some form of educational or emotional support in their lives in such places. In addition we have also met many non-Sikhs who have had relationships with Sikh people or who may generally be interested in Sikhism and need some advice on converting or how to become Sikhs themselves.

There are also many people who spread false truths about Sikhism in forums and as ambassador of the Guru we should correct any false statements made by people whether intentionally or accidentally.

5.9 Facebook and Social Networking Websites

These are a relatively new phenomenon and an excellent way of spreading the message of Sikhism. You can create your own Gurmat Vichaar groups and create users which are designed to promote Sikhism such as the ProjectNaad Sikh Dharma user and the ProjectNaad Sikhism Education centre on Facebook, MySpace, Hi5 or Bebo.

5.10 Blogging Your Day-to-Day Life

Blogging takes its name from the term 'web log' and is also a recent phenomenon. The idea behind a blog is like a ready-to-go personal website to which you can post articles, notes, images (photoblog), videos (vlog) and audio (podcasting) about your life and your thoughts. For Sikhs this is very important and innovative way to make history, by recording your day-to-day life experiences and challenges both good and bad with the whole world. A log also allows you to have a permanent web presence to where you can redirect your family and friends to find out about your life. You can now blog through email, mobile phone MMS and text messaging, web cams, digital cameras and websites. To get started with Blogging is extremely easy. Visit the following websites to set up your free blog instantly:

- Wordpress - <http://www.wordpress.com>
- Blogger - <http://www.blogger.com>
- Movable Type - <http://www.movabletype.org>
- LiveJournal - <http://www.livejournal.com>

5.11 The SikhiWiki Project

A wiki is a collaborative website which can be directly edited by anyone with access to it. The SikhiWiki (<http://www.sikhiwiki.org>), founded by SikhNet, is a wiki based on MediaWiki (<http://www.mediawiki.com>), which anyone can add articles or other media to. A group of volunteers then collaborate to ensure that the articles are of high quality. So one way in which you could propagate the Sikh way of life is by contributing a few articles to the SikhiWiki project. It will not cost you anything and may help someone out there looking for such an article whether Sikh or not!