

Discussion Workshop Set Up Guidelines

www.ProjectNaad.com



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2 Introduction

The Project Naad team speak from a personal perspective when we say that this very discussion forum changed our lives for the better, far beyond words could ever hope to capture. It was by the grace of the Guru, that we have now made this very same discussion forum available to all freely, so that your life may be transformed in the same way ours was, and indeed, continues to today.

To create a discussion workshop and to discuss Sikhism is one of the most empowering, uplifting and enlightening things that a person can ever experience. It is both a challenge to keep people interested and at the same time gives you the most wonderful realisation that Sikhism is the embodiment of perfection itself, and can teach any person to find the perfection of God within themselves.

We provide this very concise guide so that you may have some basis and vision to start off your all brand new shiny Sikhism discussion workshop at your local Gurdwara or Sikh youth centre. The document has been formed after over 8 years of creating and maintaining a successful discussion forum. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us, we would be most privileged to serve you in any way we can.

3 The Vision of the Discussion Workshop

For any project undertaken, having a vision to take you forward is key! This will now be your vision for the Discussion Workshop:

- Our mission is to serve, uplift and enlighten all people to a higher level of consciousness through meditation, selfless service and honesty in living
- Our mission is to teach, impact and progress all people in their path of Sikhism through humility, communication and congregation
- Our mission is to journey towards having the inner and outer purity of Khalsa, and in that process, share our journey of experiences, wisdom and light with all people

4 What You Will Need to Start Off

4.1 Material Resources

- **Room** - You will need a room large enough to accommodate the numbers you are expecting to attend each week on the same day and time. The ideal place is your local Gurdwara. You should go and visit them in person and ask if they will host you. If a Gurdwara is not available, then you should use your local community centre. Contact them and find out what days and times it is available for use.
- **Finances** - You won't need much of this! Try to use what you already have to its maximum. The main cost is printing of materials each week. You may be able to find some government grants for printing or reduced photocopying costs if you visit your local Community and Voluntary Service or CVS (e.g. <http://www.ealingcvs.org.uk/>). CVS is a brilliant organisation which you need to get to know for additional financing and to find links to other organisations that may be able to assist you financially.
- **Printer, Paper, Ink** - You will need a printer, paper and ink for printing posters and the discussion material each week. You may wish to also create a recycling scheme where old discussion material gets recycled. A trick to reduce printing costs is to get your discussion attendees to go to www.projectnaad.com and download and print the next week's discussion topic questions off for themselves. This is just an idea to save you some costs, but it's recommended that you print off sufficient numbers of questions for your group because

people tend to forget and also are less likely to come to the discussion if it's too much hassle.

4.2 Human Resources

- **Organiser** - Someone to ensure everything is ready for the discussion every week and can organise and coordinate people, resources and finances to ensure smooth running of it (will probably be YOU who is reading this).
- **Designer** - A good graphics designer is always a bonus to any team. The designer may design posters and even maintain a website for the discussion workshop. Good designs attract more people to come and join in.
- **Administrator** - Someone who organises the photocopying or printing of sufficient copies of the discussion topic questions each week. You need at least one sheet per group and ideally one sheet per person.
- **Religious Consultant** - Someone with a deep understanding of Sikh philosophy and way of life. This could be yourself or someone else. Age is not important, but it is important that they have wisdom on a broad range topics within Sikhism. It's also important that this person can speak fluent English to communicate with any youth. Ideally someone with an open mind and humble attitude.

5 Format of a Typical Discussion (1 Hour)

- **Start Promptly with Ardas or Standing Prayer (5 minutes)** - The Ardas or Standing Prayer is the single most effective and important aspect of creating a successful discussion forum. It will create the magnetism and positive environments for your discussion workshop to flourish with growth of numbers attending and the personal growth of people attending.
- **Introduce Topic (10 minutes)** - The topic of the week is presented with some food for thought for the discussion. Perhaps some background information and key concepts can be explained at this point. People are then organised into smaller groups.
- **Main Discussion, Presentation, Video or Activity (30 minutes)** - Now in small groups of 5 to 10 people the discussion topic is discussed. The group leader, chosen by the group, goes through the various questions and people attempt to answer them by communicating with each other. Everyone is included in this discussion and asked if they agree with the answers by the group.
- **Closing Topic (15 minutes)** - Everyone is brought back into one large group and group leaders are asked to give their answers in front of the entire group. The answers and grey areas are corroborated and confirmed with the Religious Consultant.
- **Langar or Free Kitchen** - Eating together is just as important as discussing together. If in a Gurdwara, the Langar or Free Kitchen is made use of to have a meal together with everyone. If hosted at a youth centre, some refreshments are brought along with us.

Note: The discussion does not have to be one hour, but should be the same duration, starting and ending time each week

6 Ten Golden Tips on How to Organise a Successful Discussion

1. **Breakdown Large Groups into Smaller Groups of 5 to 10** - Large groups do not tend to communicate and engage in discussion. Break the groups down into groups of 5 to 10 people so that they can discuss the issue. Groups can then nominate a group leader to guide them through the questions on the sheet. You

- may then conclude the discussion by bringing everyone from their individual groups back together and the nominated group leaders can share their conclusions with everyone.
2. **Choose Your Day of Discussion Carefully** - A time should be chosen which is convenient for most of people attending your discussions. Evenings are usually best because most people tend to finish work after 5:00pm. Ends of the week are also good because the discussion forum has a relaxed yet inspiring atmosphere which makes people more likely to come since they have less things to worry about, therefore after 6:30pm on Thursdays, Fridays and Weekends are good times and days to set your weekly workshop for.
 3. **Keep to the Times** - Discussions can go on endlessly. So it's imperative that you keep to your timed schedule to finish and start discussions on time. This is because people often wish to go home after promptly to their families. If everyone agrees to continue the discussion, then by all means carry on, but ensure that anyone who wishes to leave does not feel like they are missing out and that they are always feel free to leave when they wish.
 4. **Rollover Unanswered Questions** - If a discussion is inconclusive and time has run out to continue to discuss, then another technique is to rollover the discussion till the next week. Maybe next week you can put 10 minutes towards this discussion and then discuss the new topic for the week for 20 minutes.
 5. **Be Flexible** - Although it's good to keep to the schedule, sometimes you also have to have a degree of flexibility and be able to go with the flow! Sometimes things do not go as expected, so expect the unexpected and don't be afraid to change next week's plans to suit the needs of your discussion group. Always keep three questions at the back of your mind:
 - (1) What do the people want to know about Sikhism? e.g. Sikh view on Sexuality
 - (2) What would best help to expand the people's knowledge on Sikhism? e.g. Continue the discussion for another week
 - (3) What other ranges of media and sources of information could be used to give the people this knowledge? e.g. Video or Bring in a Specialist Speaker
 6. **Be Creative** - Feel free to experiment with different systems and schedules. Also, if you find something that really works, then please feel free to let us know and we can submit it on our website to share with everyone.
 7. **If No One Turns Up, Continue** - Even if no one turns up, continue your discussion as planned, even if that means you're talking to yourself. As far as you're concerned, you're here to have a workshop and although it may seem silly, but the intention of doing the workshop anyway will make your workshop more magnetic. The universe will recognise your intentions and send people to you. Don't be sad if no one turns up, they will eventually.
 8. **Naming your Discussion Workshop** - We would recommend you call the discussion workshop "The Sikh Discussion Workshop" or "The Sikh Discussion Forum", but really you can call it whatever you like! We discourage the use of "Project Naad" as part of the name of the discussion workshop, simple because we cannot regulate its use. If you would like to use "Project Naad" as part of the name of the discussion, please contact us and so long as we know, it's perfectly fine.
 9. **Referring Back to Project Naad** - We would encourage you to let all your discussion attendees know about the website www.projectnaad.com and that all the discussion material is available there, along with leaflets, presentations, articles, posters and much, much more. This is so that our website can serve more people and gain more awareness amongst people.
 10. **Let Us Know You Exist** - If you are planning on setting up a discussion workshop or any other workshop, let us know! We have many resources to help you along your way and will also advertise your workshop location, date and times on our website too! We would love to hear from you and serve you.

7 How to Effectively Advertise and Promote

Effective advertising and promotion is a skill which requires three main ingredients: (1) Effective communication (2) Effective location (3) Effective anticipation. Let's go through each of these quickly in regards to promoting the Sikhism discussion workshop.

7.1 Effective Communication

Effective communication means both you being proactive and effective with getting the message out that a new discussion workshop is starting up, but also, it's about effectively communicating the message of the Sikhism discussion workshop through the advertising literature and posters that you produce. The posters should be welcoming to all people irrespective of age, caste, religion, sexual orientation and any other divisions, because Sikhism goes beyond divisions. The posters should also reflect the open-mindedness, freedom of opinion and warmth of discussing Sikhism in a group environment. You should also use a range of posters which you can stick up in prominent locations and small A5 flyers to give to people as they walk in and out of the Gurdwara or street. This helps people to remember the date and time of the workshop. The more you flyer, the more chance you have of good numbers attending.

7.2 Effective Location

Effective location is about finding the right place to promote the workshop. The right place also can include the right media of promotion. The most effective place of advertising is indeed the local Gurdwara, but why stop there? You can always go into the street in town centre and advertise there too! You should also use the internet effectively. Get your launch of your workshop posted on the BOSS website (www.boss-uk.org) and SikhNet (www.sikhnet.com). If you send the launch date to us, we will also endeavour to put up your event on our website.

7.3 Effective Anticipation

Effective anticipation means you use your intuition and look ahead to see how many flyers you may need and also the best days to flyer. You don't want lots of leftover flyers, and you don't want too little. You also don't want to flyer on a day where there's no people in the streets or at the Gurdwara. Try to anticipate major events and get a presence at those events. Anticipate well and you will not go too far wrong.

8 Sources of Good Information for Research

- SikhNet (<http://www.sikhnet.com>)
- MrSikhnet (<http://www.mrsikhnet.com>)
- ProjectNaad (<http://www.projectnaad.com>)
- Gurbani (<http://www.gurbani.org/>)
- SriGranth (<http://www.srigranth.org/>)
- SearchGurbani (<http://www.searchgurbani.com/>)
- AllAboutSikhs (<http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/>)
- EK Ong Kaar Kaur Khalsa (<http://ekongkaar.blogspot.com/>)