

The Naming of a Gurdwara

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I have visited many magnificent Gurdwaras in the UK, and the USA, besides the ones in Punjab. These Gurdwaras are named after Gurus, Sikh saints, Sikh organizations, places of Sikh significance, Sikh martyrs, and so on. Then there are others which are simply named "Sikh Temple" or "Sikh Center". These names imply personal motives, self-interest, even greed (lobh) in Sikh affairs, which could possibly end up with adverse publicity and consequences. It is possible there will probably be "Sikh Church" or "Sikh Masjid"* in the near future as communication technology overshadows the basic knowledge of people. Therefore, there is a need for a standard to naming a Gurdwara.

The Sikhs are the first religionists (followers of a religion) to select the word Guru for their teachers so whenever people mention the word Guru, Sikh religion and their Gurus come to their minds. Similar is the case with the utterance of the word Gurdwara.

There are several compound words in Punjabi. For example, Gobind consists of of two words- "Go" and "Bind". "Go" means earth or universe and "Bind" means God, so "Gobind" means "God of earth or universe". Gurdwara is a Punjabi word and consists of two words - "Guru" and "Dwara". Guru consists of "Gu" and "Ru". "Gu" means "darkness" and "Ru" means "Light". Thus, "Guru" means "Light which removes darkness" - that is God. Other analysis is "Gu" means "earth" and "Ru" means "one who brings it up". Hence, "Guru" means "one who brings up the earth" which is God Himself. Thus, Guru and God are synonymous in Sikh Religion. "Dwara" means "place" or "home". Therefore, "Gurdwara" means "place or home of God".

It is better to follow a standard for naming a Gurdwara. As word "Guru" appears before the names of all Gurus, the word "Gurdwara" should appear before the names of all the Gurdwaras. For example, first the word "Gurdwara" should appear before any other name, then the name of the honoree, and then the name of the city.

Such as:

- Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, Punjab
- Gurdwara Guru Nanak Parkash, Fresno, CA
- Gurdwara Singh Sahib, Alhambra, Ca
- Gurdwara Baba Deep Singh, Amritsar, Punjab

It is still significant to name only with the name of a city whenever necessary, such as:

- Gurdwara San Jose, California
- Gurdwara Los Angles, California

Some Sikhs want only one Gurdwara in their city and they should be highly appreciated in their endeavor. However, certain Sikhs set up more Gurdwaras in their cities, thus creating friction among themselves, such as in Bakersfield. They should still be appreciated for successfully running their respective Gurdwaras.

Same name with word 'Gurdwara' as a prefix should appear in the telephone directory of that city. It will be easier for a traveler to find a Gurdwara in a town by just looking for the word Gurdwara in the telephone directory. The post office address will be according to the local laws.

However, I must mention that, under freedom of choice, the local sangat can accept any name. As I really don't mean to block the forward thinking of a Sikh pertaining to changing times, SGPC or Alkal Takht need not draft a resolution or Hukamnama to force any Sikh to

follow this procedure in naming a Gurdawara.

Without attaching the word 'Gurdwara', the management committee or the person in charge shows that the purpose of the created building might be quite different. Once the building is set up it can be used for purposes other than a Gurdwara, such as it can be used for a party hall in the evening. Hence the funds donated by Sikh sangat to create a building for Gurdwara are liable to be diverted to create a party hall.

The Sikhs donating large amount of funds for the Gurdwara must find out the name of the Gurdwara in the land deed. Also, they must check whose name is on the deed. The deed can be obtained from the local county office. Land records are public records and anybody can check them. The street number will help the county clerk to find parcel number for the lot on which the building stands. Such verification will help Sikhs to stop future problems of ownership of the Gurdwara property, to use a legal term.

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