

SANT NIRANKARI MISSION
CELEBRATES



Nothing Less than
Oneness

A VISITORS GUIDE TO THE CONGREGATIONS (SAMAGAMS) OF THE SANT NIRANKARI MISSION

History and Ideology

The Sant Nirankari Mission (SNM), founded in 1929, is neither a religion nor sect of an existing religion, but rather an all embracing spiritual movement to propagate the knowledge of one God, qualities of humanity and feelings of oneness and love amongst mankind by cutting across all divisions of caste, color, and creed.

Baba Buta Singh Ji, the founder and first Satguru ("teacher of truth") of the Sant Nirankari Mission, recognized that adhering to rites and rituals does not enable humans to realize God. That can happen only with the grace of a God-realized soul. In 1929, Baba Buta Singh Ji began to show the path of uniting with God.

The pursuit of Truth is a universal phenomenon. Religious faiths all across the world proclaim to preach it, and amongst them they agree that there is no greater Truth than the Supreme Being, the Creator of the Universe, the Almighty Formless One - Nirankar. The many and varied names for God all represent an omnipresent, all-pervasive, omniscient, and Supreme Entity.

All the sages, seers, saints, gurus and prophets through out all ages and cultures have, therefore, preached the same Ultimate Truth; God. The approach, however, might have been different. The various Holy Scriptures are the milestones representing the flow of Divine Thought. These writings and teachings were meant to reveal the Ultimate Truth. History, however, shows that rituals and dogmas overwhelmed the essential Truth behind these teachings, creating confusion and division between religions, sects, and communities.

The Mission seeks to reveal God, also known as Nirankar, to all human beings irrespective of their religious faith, sect, or community and thus liberate them from the shackles of ignorance, superstition, ritualism, and dogmatism in the name of devotion to God. It firmly believes that the realization of God is the real objective of human life and this can be achieved only through the benevolence of the living true master: the Satguru. The Satguru tradition states that God-realization is possible only through the Satguru, the teacher of God Knowledge. The mission of the Satguru is eternal, for there is always another candle to light, another life to transform.

The realization of God not only maintains a balance between spirituality and materialism in day to day life, but also takes a person to the cherished achievement of brotherhood of mankind which leads to a peaceful coexistence.

****A regular congregation (every Sunday from 11 am to 1 pm) is held in the Washington DC Metro Area in our Spiritual Center in Chantilly: 4501 Pleasant Valley Road, Chantilly, VA 20151. For more information visit our website: www.nirankari.org/washingtondc**



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We offer you a warm welcome to the congregation (samagam) of the Sant Nirankari Mission(SNM). If this is your first visit, this leaflet is an attempt to guide you throughout the course of the program; and also, to outline some of the practices you may observe being performed or followed by members of the mission. It is hoped that this will help you enjoy the time you spend with us.

Entering the Congregation Hall

Upon entering the congregation hall, you may be welcomed by volunteers called “Sewadal”; the men are dressed in navy blue and grey; the ladies will be wearing sky blue and white uniforms. The “Sewadal” are volunteers performing various duties to ensure the proper and smooth flow of the service.

Devotees Greet

You may notice that as devotees meet one another, they bow down at each others’ feet, touching the feet with the hand and then putting that hand on their forehead. This action holds great significance in a Nirankari devotee’s life. It is a method by which God-realized devotees acknowledges that Formless God resides in each human being; thus, humbly bowing to God within each person. As each devotee bows down, they cheerfully praise God by saying “Dhan Nirankar”, meaning God is Great!

Removal of Shoes

When the congregation is held in the Bhawan (Mission’s center), devotees will remove their shoes prior to entering the congregation hall. This makes it easier to sit on the floor and keep the white sheets from being soiled. These sheets are used to maintain a pure and serene atmosphere.

Structure of the Congregation

The Congregation hall has a main stage at the front of the hall where the spiritual leader of the SNM, His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji delivers the final sermon. Of course, His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji cannot be physically present at every congregation across the world; and thus, for regular Sunday services, a God-realized devotee will sit upon the Chair to represent His Holiness and deliver the concluding message of the service.

Adjacent to the main stage, there is a devotee referred to as a “Stage Secretary”. His duty is to call out singers and speakers to the main podium. These members of the mission come forth to share their experiences on matters of spirituality or sing spiritual hymns. The stage secretary is usually accompanied by musicians on the stage who will participate when members sing spiritual hymns.

Nimaskar

As devotees enter the congregation hall, they walk toward the main stage approaching the devotee upon the chair. Devotees will place their head or folded hands at the feet of the devotee upon the Chair and pray with the words, “Dhan Nirankar”. This is called doing “Nimaskar”. It has the same meaning as the touching of the feet with the hand; however, as the devotee is seated on a stage, it is easier and practical to touch the feet with the head rather than the hand. The head is seen as the highest part of the body where intellect and ego reside; whereas, the feet are the lowest part of the body. The bowing toward the feet represent the surrendering of oneself and one’s ego to God, who is supreme. It must be noted, that Nimaskar does not represent praising the devotee on the stage or worshipping that person, but rather represents the worshipping and bowing to the God that resides within the devotee. Hence, there is no problem of elders bowing at the feet of those younger or vice versa, as devotees see beyond the ‘physical’. Upon approaching the stage, there is a donation box where devotees may place their offerings. Although this is optional, all devotees are happy to donate as this is used for the upkeep and maintenance of the bhawans as well as for charitable and social welfare activities (free classes, blood donation camps, health fairs, etc).

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Seating

After Nimaskar, men and women will sit on different sides of the hall. This method of seating derives from the traditional sense of sitting in Congregations which began in India. It is of no further significance and Congregations have been held in which seating has been mixed. You may notice that some devotees may sit on chairs in the Congregation hall. This is usually for devotees who for health reasons are not able to sit on the floor with the rest of the congregation.

The Congregation (“Sangat”)

The Stage Secretary conducts the stage in an organized manner by calling upon different devotees to share their thoughts by means of poems, songs, and speeches. All Congregations are usually multi-lingual (English, Punjabi, Hindi). All devotees will begin speaking by asking the rest of the Congregation to praise God with them. They may typically say, “Saints, please say with one voice (or with love) Dhan Nirankar”. Similarly, at the end of their song, poem, or speech, the same may be said. This helps the devotees to focus on the remembrance and praise of God.

Before the final sermon, a prayer called the “Manglacharan” is sung in the Punjabi language. The english equivalent is: *“Almighty Formless Nirankar, Creator of the Universe you are, You Manifest in one and all, You alone are the origin of all, You are timeless, truth eternal, And all creation is temporal, You dwell in every living being, Immortal Creator, O lord, With and without form you are, Universe sustainer Nirankar, You are beyond praise and intellect, Your children we are our Lord, Shower your blessings on every being.”*

The last half hour of the Congregation is allocated for the concluding sermon. It is delivered by the devotee in Chair on the stage. The sermon is focuses on how a devotee can lead a prosperous spiritual life. Often times, a verse is taken and expanded upon from the “Sampuran Avtar Bani”(a book of spiritual verses written in 1957 and published in 1965 by the second leader of the SNM, His Holiness Baba Avtar Singh Ji).

After the final sermon, another prayer is recited/sung. This is called the “Dhuni”. The english equivalent is: *“My body and mind I devote, with your support and grace to thee. May I sing praises says Avtar, night and day of thee. One thou formless O Lord, to the errors I am prone. You are Lord of forgiveness, don’t dwell on my faults. You manifest in us all, shower your blessings on all. My prayer is this O Lord. One thou formless O Lord, to the errors I am prone. You are Lord of forgiveness, don’t dwell on my faults. My faith in you may never falter, bless thy love, devotion favour. May I honor all your saints. One thou formless O Lord, to the errors I am prone. You are Lord of forgiveness, don’t dwell on my faults.”*

Prayer (“Simran”)

Some congregations conclude the service with “Simran”. This is a prayer given to devotees to help them connect to and remember God. They recite these 3 phrases

“Tuhi Nirankar” - You are the Formless Lord

“Mein Teri Sharan ha” - I am under your divine protection

“Menu Bakshalo” - Please forgive me for my faults

After Congregation

Devotees will praise God by touching the feet of those sitting next to them and say “Dhan Nirankar”.

Community Meal (“Langar”)

“Langar” is a community meal which is served before devotees return home. It is prepared with love and a selfless service offered to all those present. The significance of eating together is important as devotees from different backgrounds and walks of life will sit and eat as ‘one’ universal family without any distinction.

