

Kirtan in the Sikh Faith and its importance

Kirtan refers to the intensity of love for Waheguru (God) shown by singing his praises. Singing and music go hand in hand and allows for emotions to be expressed more effectively and this essential for all humans.



Most of the **Guru Grant Sahib Ji**, the Sikh scripture, is written as poetry. With the exception of the very first Eight Angs (pages) the remaining 1422 Angs are composed as poems. This means that Sikhs can sing them as part of their worship.

Often this singing is accompanied by a small portable **harmonium** invented by a Frenchman in mid 1800s which was used by Christian missionaries. It was later introduced to India by the Christian missionaries during the British Raj before India gained its independence in 1947.

This type of harmonium has been adopted by many people across the world, but particularly by Sikhs Hindus and Sufi Muslims.

This has now become an instrument of choice due its portability and how quickly a person can master it. In Sikh worship it is always accompanied by a **Tabla** (pair of drums) and sometimes a **Dholki**



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(single drum). There would always be a minimum of two people performing Kirtan. Sometimes there are two harmonium players, the main artist and supporting artist. Other instruments often used include the **Dilruba** and **Rabab** (both stringed instruments played with a bow). It was the Rabab that was played by Bhai Mardana Ji, who for 54 years was the faithful companion of Guru Nanak (founder of the Sikh faith born in 1469).

The Sangat (congregation) usually join in the singing the praise and in wonderment of Waheguru (God).

The practise of **Kirtan** also breaks down all the barriers of language as we can all appreciate the music without having to understand the language being used to sing.

An extract from Jap Ji Sahib reads as follows.

ਗਾਵੀਐ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਮਨਿ ਰਖੀਐ ਭਾਉ ॥

Sing, and listen, and let your mind be filled with love.

ਦੁਖੁ ਪਰਹਰਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਘਰਿ ਲੈ ਜਾਇ ॥

Your pain shall be sent far away, and peace shall come to your home.

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਨਾਦੰ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਵੇਦੰ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਈ ॥

The Guru's Word is the Sound-current of the Naad - the Guru's Word is the Wisdom of the Vedas - the Guru's Word is all-pervading.

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