

Meaning and Importance of Chaur Sewa

The Chaur is found next to the Manji where the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is placed during the day within the Gurdwara's Main Hall. Chaur is used to fan Guru Granth Sahib Ji as a sign of reverence and respect for the scriptures. The Sevadar (volunteer) respectfully waves Chaur above the Guru Sahib as a sign of respect and dedication. Further, when the Sevadar waves the Chaur, he or she would silently recite the Gurbani. So, one not only performs seva but also undertakes. Chaur Seva is just one of those central traditions that the Sikhs practice to honor their Guru with the high regard and respect that Gurbani deserves. The Sikhs do not worship any living or non-living thing, this is forbidden in Sikhi. During earlier periods, Chaur was made of peacock feather or wood and canvas and created a good airflow when waved. These days, Chaur is usually constructed from yak hair mounted in a wooden or metal handle.

History: It is a well-known fact in Indian civilization that Chaur was waved over the saints and kings for hundreds and thousands of years as a symbol of royalty and respect. The Gurus emphasized that the true kings are those who love God and help others to do the same. They are the rulers of the hearts of the people. The political kings are temporary kings, and their authority ends with their death. The Guru is the true king. During the time of the first ten Gurus, the Sangat and Sevadar volunteers who came from afar to see the Gurus wanted to be close to the Gurus and listen to their advice and guidance (Shabad). So they would sit near the Guru and listen to the words of wisdom from the Guru and do Chaur Seva for the Guru. This seva was done turn by turn by many members of the Sangat to be as close to their Guru as possible. Guru Granth Sahib Ji is our living eternal Guru and has the same Jot (Supreme Spirit) as of Guru Nanak Sahib Ji to Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Now for Sikhs Chaur is used to honor the king of kings, Guru Granth Sahib Ji. No other scripture is worshiped in the Gurdwara with similar respect. Doing Chaur we express our regards and respect for our Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the True King.

Guru Sahib says: Dhivus rain thaerae paa puloso, kaes chuvur kar faeree

Meaning: Day and night, I keep touching your feet gently, Lord; I wave my hair as the chaur.

There are other ceremonial decorations that go along with Chaur in the service of our Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Guru Granth Sahib Ji seats majestically on a throne (Manji) with pillows all around, Palkaans on the sides and a Rumaala over the top. A canopy (Chandoaa) is placed above in the same way as it was placed over the crown of a king while he attended his court. During the session (Diwaan), a person, with Chaur in his hand, is always in attendance doing seva of waving Chaur.

The Chaur is respectfully waved over Sri Guru Granth sahib Ji to signify:

- Sovereignty
- Royal authority
- Utmost respect for Guru Sahib and to be in Guru's seva

How to perform this seva:

- Wash your feet and hands before entering the Gurdwara. Wash hands again before performing this seva.
- Keep your head covered; make sure your clothes are clean, comfortable, and appropriate.
- Bow to Guru Granth Sahib Ji before doing the seva asking the Guru to grant permission to do so.
- Put hazaaria around your neck and respectfully take Chaur in your hand.
- Touch the Chaur with your forehead and start waving it over Guru Ji, side to side.
- Do it slowly and steadily and make sure the Chaur does not touch Guru Sahib Ji or the Paalki.
- When finished, hand over the Chaur to the next sevadaar or place it at the designated spot.
- Matha tek to Guru Granth Sahib Ji and ask for forgiveness for any mistakes during the seva.

Do not:

- Let the Chaur touch Guru Sahib or the Palki
- Stare at Sangat or at a particular person
- Laugh, make funny faces, or make any unusual body gestures
- Unnecessarily touch any part of the body