

Gurdwara, accommodation info now a mouse-click away

KOMAL AMIT GERA
Chandigarh

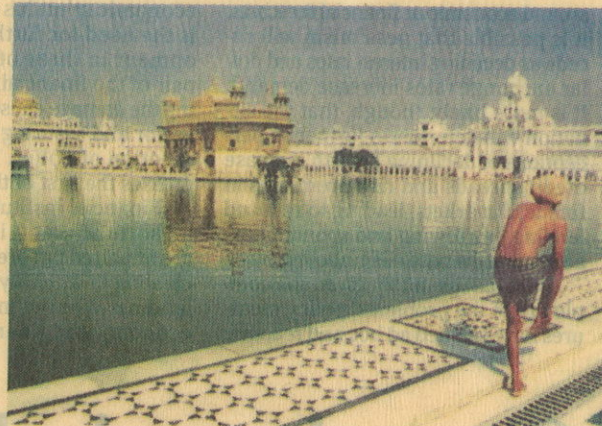
Most pilgrims face disappointment when they fail to seek accommodation at the Golden Temple in Amritsar but very few of them know that there are more than a dozen *sarai* (inns) in the town which have decent facilities for the religious visitors.

One lakh visitors pay their obeisance everyday at Golden Temple, Amritsar, and the town does not have sufficient infrastructure to accommodate outstation visitors, many of whom are non-resident Indians.

Confronted with the same situation, Amritpal Singh, an NRI based in Singapore, realised the need to serve his community with the information on the arrangements offered by other gurdwaras.

Singh travelled across India and gathered information of more than 500 gurdwaras with pictures. "It took me about four years to collect first-hand information on gurdwaras in every nook and corner of India and the task is still incomplete", said Singh. Singh hired professionals to create the website *saraibooking.com*. It gives information on location, contact numbers of the persons concerned, room tariff and the historical backgrounds of different gurdwaras with pictures.

With the help of this website, the travellers can pre-arrange their stay or can plan their itinerary according to the availability of



A new website gives detailed information on the arrangements offered by gurdwaras all over the country

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accommodation, said Singh.

Singh is now in the process of tapping information on overseas gurdwaras that would facilitate Indians to get a microcosm of the Indian diaspora in the alien land.

There are umpteen number of gurdwaras managed privately and by SGPC (Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhankat Committee) across India and abroad but there is no consolidated record of that information. Singh's website is an endeavour to unite the people who have faith in the teachings of gurus, he says.

A post graduate in Business Administration from Patiala, Singh decided to invest into this venture without expecting any profits when he realised that due to non-transparency in the gurdwara management, many pilgrims were denied boarding.

"During my visits to

gurdwaras, I also realised that the young boys on the payrolls of gurdwara managing committees were allured by the unscrupulous travel agents for jobs in overseas gurdwaras". He said he mobilised his sources in other countries to get information on gurdwaras located there and the website *gurdwarajobs.com* was designed. With the help of these sites, young Sikhs can register themselves for jobs and through the contact numbers of the officials they can contact them or mail them directly.

"I am in the process of updating the information on both the sites. Due to poverty, the boys in Punjab even persuade their families to dispose off their fixed assets in order to settle abroad. I want to create a direct link between the employers and the candidates to save them and their families from frustration", tells Singh.