



Sikh Marriage Ceremony



Preface

On the occasion of a sikh wedding in a local Gurdwara, a member of the Gurdwara committee approached me to ask if I could help some english guests understand what the hymns meant and how the guests were supposed to behave throughout the wedding ceremony. I did not like to refuse but I did not like the request either. Firstly because it would have meant my mental absence from the ceremony and secondary because my duty I was asked to perform was in fact the responsibility of the Gurdwara Committee.

After the wedding it came to my mind that a pamphlet should be produced and distributed to the english guests on such occasions.

There was another pressing reason for a booklet of this nature to be produced. Some sikhs youngsters also complained of boredom because most of the hymns were not intelligible to them either and they were embarrassed when their english friends asked them questions about the meanings of the hymns. This booklet was produced to meet this need and was offered to the local Gurdwara Committee for publication.

Management's changed, years elapsed, but the manuscript kept on gathering dust in the Gurdwara cupboard in spite of the fact that a resolution had been passed to publish it. I had almost forgotten this incident when a sikh gentleman once again impressed upon me the necessity of a booklet explaining the Lava and the procedures followed at a Sikh Wedding.

He was overjoyed to hear from me that a booklet was already waiting for him. He also offered to contribute towards meeting the cost for previous publications of this booklet. The booklet is now in your hands. The costs has been met through donations*.

Needless to say anything about the efficiency and policies of our Gurdwara management's or the efficiency of their methods of preaching Sikhism. The most important function of the Gurdwara is to preach Gurmat. We find that people of other religions not only publish books about their religious beliefs but also zealously distribute them from door to door.

Our Gurdwara management's seem to have learnt no lesson from them. Not many Gurdwaras are exploiting the media at present. It is time we think seriously about educating our next generation through publishing books that meet their needs. At least 50%, if not more, of the yearly Gurdwara income should be earmarked for publications and functions disseminating knowledge about Sikhism.

I owe a debt of gratitude to Principal Gurmukh Singh (Southall) for reading through the manuscript and for offering suggestions to improve the booklet.

Hopefully we will continue publishing similar booklets Sikh principles. We solicit donations and liberal financial help from everybody. Suggestions for the improvement of this booklet and for the production of similar booklets on other topics are welcome and will be gratefully acknowledged.

G.S.Sidhu
Nottingham
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The Sikh Marriage Ceremony

1. Introduction

According to Sikhism the goal of human life is the union of the individual with God. This is described in the Sikh scriptures as spiritual “marriage”. Another equally significant feature of Sikhism is that God-realisation is said to be easier achieved by living a family life. Emphasis on the family life is so strong that a woman has been described as “The Conscience of Man”. No wonder therefore, the Sikhs believe that marriage is not only an advancement of the human race but also a spiritual experience deserving careful understanding.

It was Guru Amar Das, the third Guru of the Sikhs, who explained the aforesaid spiritual union allegorically by saying that, “The husband and wife are always close to each other, separated only by their ego”. He made this analogy the basis of the Sikh marriage and declared that the fulfilment of a marriage consists in spiritual unity to weed out the ego with the joint effort. It was he who formally broke away from the Hindu tradition of marriage in 1552 and institutionalised the Sikh marriage which came to be performed amidst the singing of hymns to God rather than to the goddess of fire. He called it '**Anand Karaj**' (**The Ceremony of Bliss**).

Later Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs, elaborated the idea by composing four hymns which he named '**Lava**' and called upon his followers to sing them on the occasion of marriage. The word '**Lava**' literally means '**to unite**'. Symbolically a Sikh marriage is an attempt at uniting the individual soul to the Universal Soul. It is this reason that in Sikh parlance a wife came to be known as '**Ardhangi**' (one half) who is as incomplete as a man unless both are united to the other half. Guru Ram Das wrote,

“The woman develops the love of God in her heart during her upbringings at her parents but fulfilment comes when she is united in marriage”

Anand Karaj, as the Sikh marriage came to be known, was formally legalised by the British Government in 1909 by passing the **Anand Karaj Act**.

The first step in the marriage is the choice of a partner. The right of choice has long been exercised by parents alone but with the spread of education and the changing patterns of society, this right is now either shared by parents and their children or has been exclusively passed on to the individuals concerned. In choosing the partners, care is exercised to keep in view the couples compatibility in terms of age, temperament, social status, economic position, health, religion and educational attainment. Once the suitable partners have been found, the relatives, friends and families concerned do their level best to assist in achieving a successful relationship. Dating and pre-marital relations are looked upon as undesirable and irreligious. Although not absolutely necessary, a betrothal (engagement) ceremony is sometimes performed to signal the approval of the parties concerned. Some people prefer to perform the ceremony an hour or so before marriage.

2. Betrothal Ceremony

This ceremony may be performed in the Gurdwara or at the boys home. The bridegroom bows to the scriptures and sits down cross-legged in the presence of the Holy Guru Granth Sahib. The friends, relatives and the members of the two families form the congregation. When everybody has settled, the musicians sing the following hymns:-

Siri Ragg M:4

Kitaa lorye kamm so Har pai aakhiey
Kaaraj dey swar satgur sach saakhiey
Santaaan sang nidhaan Amrit chaakhiey
Bhai bhanjan meharvan daas ki rakhiey
Nanak Har gun gaey alakh Prabh lakhiey

Translation

Before the function is performed O Lord,
we seek your blessings
Be witness to it O Lord and make it a success
O Lord keep us in the company of the Holy and
bless us with thy remembrance
O kind and fear-dispelling Lord, bestow Your grace
on us, your slaves

Nanak says by singing Your praises O infinite Lord,
we seek to imbibe a glimpse of Your Greatness.



Suhi M:4

Sat santokh kar Bhao Kuram kurmaee Aaeyaa
balram jeo
Sant janaa kar mel gurbaani gawaeyaa balram jeo
Bani Gur gae oaramgat oaaee oanch milay
sohaaeyaa
Gyaa karodh mamta tan naathee paakhand bharam
gwaeyaa
Haumain per gae sukh paeyaa aarogat bhaiey
sareeraa
Gur parsadee braham pachaataa Nanak Gune
Gaheeraa

Translation

With truth, contentment and affection at heart, the girls father has approached to contract the betrothal. May the Almighty bless the occasion with His grace. May the devotees sing His eulogies. Blessed are those who sing the Lords praised. Graceful is the occasion whereon His praises are sung. Singing His praises we conquer ego, overcome cynicism, weed out sham and get rid of superstitions. With the ego gone we feel comfort and our body feels healthy. With the Gurus blessing we recognise the Lord and Nanak says that this transformation instills spiritual knowledge in our minds.

At this stage a short invocatory prayer is offered by the person officiating on the occasion. At the end of the prayer the Holy Guru Granth Sahib is opened at random and a hymn on the left page is read aloud. This is known as 'Vaak' or 'Hukamnama' (The Gurus Sanction).

The girls father (or in his absence, another near relative) approaches the boy. He places a rupee (here a pound, or a five or ten pound note) and some sweets in his sash. Then he offers a piece of sweet of chhuhara (dried currant) to the boy to eat. The members present on the occasion then offer flowers, money or other gifts.

The ceremony comes to an end with the distribution of the **Karah parsad** (The Holy food) unless this ceremony is immediately followed by the wedding proper.

3. The Wedding Day

The wedding may take place at the Gurdwara or at the brides home or at any other suitable place. Customarily **Aasaa di var** (An ode to the Almighty) is recited. At the appointed time the bridegroom and his party arrive. A short ceremony of Milni (meeting between the family members on both sides) is sometimes performed in the open after a short invocatory prayer. The relatives of the bride are introduced to the relatives of the bridegroom. Each meets the other with a small gift or simply a hug or a handshake.

All then to to the place where the Holy Guru Granth Sahib is placed and sit down cross-legged after due prostration. This marks the beginning of the wedding proper.

4. Welcome

The musicians sing the following (one, two or three) welcoming hymns.

Suhi M:1 page 764

Aawo sajjna haun dekhan darshan tera
Ghar aapanray kharee main takkan,
Main man chao ghanera,
Man chao ghanera sun Prabh mera,
Main tera bharwaasaa,
Darshan dekh bhaee nihkewal,
Sagli jot jaata tu soi,
Milya bhaaey subhaaya.
Nanak saajan jau bal jaaeey,
Saach milay har aaye.

Translation

Most welcome is my friend whose presence I enjoy most.
Like a love-lorn beloved I have keenly waited for his arrival. Bliss fills my mind and the news of his visit strengthens my heart.
Gods presence kills worries and dispels fear of transmigration.
The omnipresent Lord sanctifies the place where his love is manifest
O Nanak I am a sacrifice unto my friend.
His presence awakens Truth in me.

Suhi Chhant M:1 page 764

Ham ghar saajan aay,
Saachay mail milaaey,
Sahaj milaaey har man bhaey,
Panch milay sikh paaeyaa
Saaee wast prapat hoi,
Jis seti man laaeyaa.
Andin mail bhyaa man maanyaa,
ghar mandir sohaaey,
Panch shabad dhun anhad waajay,
Ham ghar saajan aay,
Aavo meet pyaarey,
Mangal gaavo naray,
Sach mangal gaavo taan prabh bhavo,
Sohilra jug chaarey,
Apnay Ghar aayeyaa thaana suhaaeya,
karaj shabd swaarey.
Gian maham ras netree anjan,
tribhawan roop dikhaaeya,
Sakhi milo mil mangal gaavo,
Ham ghar saajan aaya.



Translation

The True Lord has, in His sweet will brought our well wishers to us. With His grace may this union fructify into peace and amity.

The hearts desires are fulfilled. May the Lords benedictions shower day and night. May His bliss sanctify every nook and corner. In the midst of His glory come our visitors.

If time permits, a third hymn is also recited.

Suhi M:4 page 774

Har Prabh Thakar kaaj rachaeyaa Gurmukh Wiaahan aeyaa

Wiaahan aeyaa Gurmukh Har paeyaa saa dhan kant peyaaree

Sant janaa mil mangal gaey Har jeo aap swaaree

Sur nar gan gandharav mil aey apoorab janj banaae

Nanak Prabh paeyaa main saachaa na kadey marey na jaee

Translation

The Almighty has arranged the function and His devotee has attended for marriage. The devotee has approached for a spiritual marriage, with God at heart he seeks a beloved wife.

The devotees are singing hymns together and God Himself bestows blessings on the bride.

All the great souls present themselves in a body as if in marriage party.

Nanak says I have attained the True Lord who is beyond birth and death.

At the end of the hymns, the couple are asked to move to a seat in front of the Holy Guru Granth Sahib. They sit down cross-legged after due genuflections. The bridegroom sits on the right side. The bride and her retinue sit on the left. Now the musicians sing the following hymn.

Keeta loreay kamm so Har pai akhiey.....

(For translation refer to Hymn (a) under betrothal ceremony).

4. Invocation

The officiating person (A Granthi or a learned person) having made sure that the couple have agreed to the marriage requires them and their parents (or near relatives shouldering the responsibility) to stand up. The rest of the congregation remains seated. A short prayer is offered on behalf of the couple and the two families invoking Gods blessings for the wedding. At the end of the prayer the Vaak (The Gurus Blessing) is read out from the Holy Book.

(Note: Translation cannot be provided there and then unless requested but some Sikh Temple managements

supply a translation along with the original text to the couple after a day or two. The couple keep this as a memento for the rest of their life).

The officiating person now requests the brides father (in his absence, a near relative shouldering responsibility) to offer the bride in marriage. He offers the bride an end of the bridegrooms sash in her hand. As soon as this is done, the musicians begin to sing the following hymn :-

Salok M:5 page 936

Ustat ninda Nanak ji main habh wanjaaee chodeyaa habh kichh teyaagee

Habhey saak kuraawey dithey tau palley taindey laagee.

Translation

All praises and blame I forsake

Having seized your garment I re-dedicate myself

Relationships other than this one I consider temporary

May I remain close to you O Lord.

6. Instruction

The officiant imparts instruction to the couple. Usually it is a summary of the Sikh philosophy of marriage and married life. He asks the couple to aspire for a truly religious life devoted to God and to get initiated into the order of the Khalsa. Through the sweetness of their manners and behaviour they should ingratiate with their in-laws. Loyalty and fidelity to each other are the highest virtues. Adultery is strictly forbidden. Here the officiant recites Guru Gobind Singhs hymn which reads:-

“When I attained the age of puberty my Guru extracted the following promise from me: You will reserve all your love for your wife as long as you live. You will not think of any other woman even in your dream. Your love and fondness for your partner must grow every rising sun”

The Guru’s instruction must be followed in letter and spirit. Extra-marital relations are called by the 5th Guru as “an association with venomous vipers” in Raag Aasaa. Truth and openness should be practised in all circumstances. Nagging should be avoided and disagreements must be resolved through mutual understanding. To foster harmonious relationships



Shalok No. 127 of Baba Farid is quoted, it reads:-

“By which word, quality or incantation can I become imbued with my husband’s love?

By wearing which dress can I capture my husband’s attention?”

“Humility is the word my sister, forgiveness is the quality and sweet temper is the incantation.

“Practice these my sister and believe me this is the surest way to captivate your husband”.

Each partner should stand by the other through thick and thin. If serious disagreements should threaten to poison relationships where no partner gives way, we instruct the wife to relent and accept the husband’s point of view. The couple will not believe in magic, amulets, omens incantations, fasting and necromancy. They will not bow to or worship at graves.

Sati (burning of brides on the husband’s funeral pyre) is strictly forbidden. The husband must consult his wife in all matters and the wife must always offer sincere advice and assist in running the household.

This is punctuated with hymns from the Sikh scripture and ends up with two-oft-quoted passages from the writings of Guru Amar Dass.

- (a) O Nanak what are the distinguishing features of a truly wedded couple?
A pure heart, an equitable and fair relationship with all.
And hearts full of devotion to God.
(Var Suhi M.3-2)
- b) Physical contact alone does not make one a husband and wife. The truly wedded are only those, who though physically two, are spiritually one in spirit.
(Vah Suhi M.3-9).

The bride and the bridegroom bow to the Holy Guru Granth Sahib in acceptance of the above instruction.

7. Marriage

Four compositions are sung by the musicians at this stage. They are called Lava which is the plural of **Lav**. A **Lav** is a hymn associated with a reverential walk (clockwise) around the Holy Guru Granth Sahib. Each Lav is first read from the Holy Book and then recited by the musicians as the couple circumnambulate the Holy Book.

Suhi Chhant M: 4 page 773

(a) First ‘Lav’ (stanza 1)

Har pehlari lav parvirti karm darraeaa balram jeo.

Bani brahma ved dharam dirro paap tajaeya bal ram jeo.

Dharam dirro Har naam dhiaavo simrat naam dirraayeyaa.

Satgur Gur Puraa aaraadho sabh kilvikh paap gvaaeyaa.

Sehaj Gur Puraa aaraadho sabh kilvikh paap gvaaeyaa.

Jan kahay Nanak lav pahli aarambh kaaj rachaaeyaa.

The first ‘lav’ instructs you to lead a family life and seek God’s blessings.

Study scriptures, practice Truth and remember the Lord.

To wash away all your sins hold fast to righteousness and attune yourself to God through the true Guru. This is the essence of all scriptures. Meditation on God washes the soul clean.

A pure soul becomes serenely happy and craves for God.

Nanak says remember this first instruction which is the springboard for a spiritual flight.

(b) Second ‘Lav’ (stanza 2)

Har dujri lav Satgur Pirkh milaayeeaaa balram jeo.

Nibhau bhaey man hoey Haumen mael gawaeyaa balram jeo.

Nirmal Ghau paaeyaa Har Gun gaaeyaa Har weykhay Ram hadurey.

Har Atam Ram pasaaareyaa suaami sarb raheyaa bharpooray.

Antar bahar Har Prabh Eki mil Harjan manfal gaay.

Jan Nanak doohee lav vhalae anhad shabad wajaay.

At the second stage seek the company of a true spiritual Guide.

The God-imbued spiritual guide helps wash away ego and dispels fears.

Remember the Lord with devotion and pure heart.

Lord, the all soul, will appear pervading everywhere.

You will enjoy Him within and without.

Sing His praises in the company of the holy.

Nanak says this second step will lead you to inner bliss.



(c) Third 'Lav' (stanza 3)

Har teejri lav man chaao bhya baiaageeaa balram
 geo.
 Sant jana Har mel Har paeyaa wad Bhageeaa
 balram jeo.
 Nirmal Har paeyaa Har Gun gaeyaa mukh boli
 Har baanee.
 Sant janaa Wadbhagee paeyaa Har kathiey akath
 kahaani.
 Hirday Har Har dhun upjee Har japiey mastak
 bhaag jeo.
 Jan Nanak boley teejee lavai Har upjay man bairaag
 jeo.

At the third stage devotion surges forth from the heart. With God's grace undue worldly attachments dwindle away. The association of the holy leads to Good-realisation. The immaculate Lord fills the heart with His presence. The lips utter His praises day and night. Attempt is made to utter His unutterable greatness. With His grace the mind resounds with His praises. More and more spiritual merit is accumulated. Nanak says at this stage mind is filled with devotion and feels free of worldly entanglements.

(d) Fourth 'Lave' (stanza 4)

Har Chauthree lav man sehaj bheyaa Har paeyaa
 balram jeo.
 Furmukh mileyaa subhaeey Har man tan meethaa
 laeyaa balrem jeo.
 Har meetha laawyyaa mere Prabh bhaeeyaa andin
 Har liv laaee.
 Man chindyaa phal paeyaa suaami Har naam
 wajee wadhaae.
 Har Prabh Thaakur kaaj rachaeyaa dhan hirday
 naam wigaasee.
 Jan Nanak bolai chauthee lavai Har paeyaa Prabh
 abinashi.

At the **fourth stage** sehaj (equipoise) is achieved within. Now the union with the Lord is complete. The spontaneous union fills the heart and soul with sweetness. Sweetness leads to intense cravings for the Lord. Meditation on His name continues day and night. The heart's desires are fulfilled. The Lord's benedictions descend like a shower. God Himself causes such a spiritual marriage. He fills the bride's soul with His nectar-Name. The humble Nanak speaketh through the fourth Lav. The bride loses herself in the Eternal Lord.

8. Thanksgiving prayer:-

The musicians now sing the following hymns:-

Sri Raag M: 4 page 78

Wiaah hoa merey babula gurmukhay Har paeyaa.
 Agyaan andhera kateyaa Gur gian parchand
 bulaaeeyaa.
 Baleyaa Gur gyaaan andheraa binseyaa Har rattan
 padarath laadhaa.
 Haumain rog gyaa dukh laathaa aap aapey Gurmukh
 khaadhaa.
 Akaal murat war paeyaa abinashi naa kaday marey
 na jaaeyaa.
 Wiaah hoa mere babula Gurmukhay Har paeyaa.

Translation

The marriage is consummated O Father.
 I have met the Lord through the Guru's advice.
 The darkness of ignorance is gone.
 The light of knowledge has dawned enlightened with
 the Guru's instruction.
 I have discovered the pearls of God's grace.
 My ego has vanished and troubles have dwindled
 away.
 The Guru's advice has now become my sustenance.
 My spiritual husband is the timeless Lord who never
 dies and never takes birth.
 The marriage is truly solemnised O Father.
 The Guru's guidance has escorted me to the Lord.

Wadhans M: 5

Pooree Aasaa Ji Mansaa merey Ram.
 Mohe nirgun jeo sabh gun teyrey Ram.
 Sabh gun teyrey thakur meyrey kit mukh tudh
 saalahee.
 Gun avgun mera kichh na beechaareyaa baksh leea
 khin maahee.
 Nau nidh paaee wajee wadhaae waajey anhad
 toorey.
 Kauh Nanak main war ghar paeyaa meyrey laathey
 jee sagal wasoorey.

Translation

By your grace O Lord my heart's desire is fulfilled.
 There is no virtue in me that I can call mine.
 Virtues belong only to you alone.
 I cannot even claim to be able to sing Thy praises.
 In Thy mercy O Lord, overlook my faults and
 weaknesses.
 Bless me Lord, even though I little deserve it.
 May I reside in Thy glory and receive spiritual
 treasures.

Says Nanak, I have met my Lord and thus found
 a prop.
 My sorrows and disappointments have vanished.



9. Concluding prayer

Anand (Bliss)

Ramkali M: 3 page 917

Anand bheyaa meree maaey satguru main paaeyaa.
Satgur tan paaeyaa sehaj seti man wajeeaan
wadhaaeaaan.
Raag rattan parwaar pareean sabad gaavan aaeaaan.
Sabdo ta gaavo Hari keraa man jinee wasaaeyaa.
Kahay Nanak anand hoa satguru main paaeyaa.

O mother I have discovered the true Guru and I am overjoyed.
With songs of rejoicing in my heart I met Him spontaneously.
Heavenly musicians sing praises to my Lord.
The firmament resounds with melodies.
Those who enshrine the Lord in their hearts sing His praises forever.
Nanak says my heart is full of joy.
For I have encountered the True Guru.

Ay man meyeraa tun sada raho Har naaley.
Har naal taho tun man meyrey dookh sabh wisaarnaa.
Angeekaar oh karey tera kaaraj sabh swaarnaa.
Sanbhnaa gallan samrath suaamee so kion mano wisaarey.
Kahey Nanak man merey sadaa raho Har naaley.

O my mind abide with God for ever and ever.
Abide with God O mind and your sorrows will vanish.
Once you are accepted, He will conduct all your affairs.
He is omnipotent, why should you ever forget him?
Says Nanak O my mind abide with the Almighty forever.

Saachey saahibaa kia naheen ghar teyrey.
Ghar tan teyrey sabh kichh hai jis dehe so pawey.
Sadaa sift salaaho teyree naam man wAasaawey.
Naam jinkey man waseyaa waajey sabad ghaneyrey.
Kahay Nanak saachey sahibaa kiaa naaheen ghar terey.

O True Master can there be anything beyond your power?
Your power is limitless O Lord.
You shower your blessings on the choicest.
Whoever receives your benedictions praises Thy bounties and makes your praises his spiritual sustenance.
Heavenly music fills the hearts that crave for Thee.
Asks Nanak, O Lord can there be anything beyond your power?

Saachaa naam mera aadhaaro.
Saach naam aadhaar meyraa jin bhukhaan sabh gawaaeaaan.
Kar saant sukh man aaeey wasseyaa jin ichhaan sabh pujaaeaaan.
Sadaa kurbaan keeta Guru witon jis deaan eh wadiaaeaaan.
Kahay Nanak suno santo sabad dhara peyaaro.
Saachaa naam meyraa aadhaaro.

Your True Name is my sustenance.
Your sustenance of True Name has fulfilled my desires.
Peace and tranquillity prevail in my heart.
My mind is wandering no longer.
I am a sacrifice unto my Guru who has planted His virtues in me.
Nanak says, listen O saints put your faith in the Guru's word.
The True Name sustains me forever.

Waajey panch sabad tit ghar subhaagey.
Ghar subhaagey sabad waajey kalaa jit ghar dhaareeyaa.
Panch doot tudh wass keetey kaal kuntak maareyaa.
Dhur karam paaeyaa tudh jin kau sey naam Har key laagey.
Kahay nanak the sukh hoaa tit ghar anhad waajey.

Blessed is the house that resounds with His praises.
The house where He dwells resounds with music.
The five evil passions dare not enter it.
The fear of death does not come near.
Blessed are those who get attached to your Name O Lord.
Nanak says the blessed get filled with joy.
And their hearts echo with celestial melodies.

Aanand suno wad bhageeo sagal manorath purey.
Paarbraham Prabh paaeyaa utrey sagal wassoorey.
Dookh rog santaap utrey sunee saachee baanee.
Sant saajan bhaey sarsey puray gur tey jaanee.
Suntey puneet kahtey pawitt satgur raheyaa bharpoorey.
Binwant Nanak gurcharan lagey waajey anhad tooray.

Listen to the blissful word O fortunate people.
By listening to it your desires are fulfilled.
The Almighty manifests in His resplendent glory.
All your afflictions will fade away.
By listening to the True word grief, suffering and uncertainties depart.
Saints and holy men feel blessed on hearing the True Name.



They meditate on God through the Guru's instruction. Listeners to the work become pure. But purer still are those who concentrate on it. The True Guru fills the heart with divine knowledge. Nanak, heavenly trumpets sound for those who accept the Guru's work and submit to the Lord.

Shalok M.1

Pawn Guru Paanee pita maataa dharat mahat.
Divas raat doe daaee daaeyaa khely sagal jagat.
Changiaaeaan buriaaeaan waachey dharam hadoor.
Karmee aapo aapnee ke nerey ke door.
Jinee naam dhiaaeyaa gaey musakat ghaal.
Nanak tey mukh ujley keti chhutee naal.

Water, like a father assists creation.
Air, like a Guru fires it with the breath of life.
The earth sustains life like a mother.
Day and night act as if they were nurses.
Thus our life runs its course in this universe.
Our actions, good or bad, shall come to judgement.
The actions draw us closer to the Lord or lead us astray.
Those who worship the Lord, successfully end their toils.
Nanak says, they shall be honoured in His court and many others will benefit from their intercession.

At this stage the two families offer Romalas (cloth for the Holy book and money for charity). The cloth is ceremoniously used by the officiant to drape the Holy book. The congregation now rise up for Ardas (The congregational prayer).

10. Congregational prayer (Note here everybody must stand up)

ARDAS

God is unique. All victory to the wondrous Lord.

Having first remembered the Almighty, direct your attention to Guru Nanak.
May Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das shower their blessings.
May their spirits guide us to the Lord.
Concentrate on Guru Arjan, Guru Har Gobind and Guru Har Rai.
Meditate on the Holy Har Krishan Ji` whose sight dispelled all ailments.

Turn your thoughts to Guru Tegh Bahadue whose remembrance attracts spiritual treasures.
May our Gurus assist us everywhere.
May the spirit of the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh protect the faith and stand by us everywhere.
Now let the Khalsa turn their thoughts to the Holy Guru Granth Sahib wherein rests the spiritual wisdom

of our Masters and **(congregation repeats) Waheguru** (O Lord you are wonderful).

Think of the glorious deeds of the Five Beloved Ones. Think of (the Master's) four sons and the forty martyrs. Think of the righteous and steadfast members of our fraternity and **(congregation repeats) Waheguru** (O Lord you are wonderful).

Bring to mind those who kept the Lord's name in their hearts, who shared their honest earnings with others, who laid down their lives unflinchingly for righteousness, who practised charity and looked not at others faults, and **(congregation repeats) Waheguru** (O Lord you are wonderful).

Remember the resilient Sikh men and women who allowed themselves to be cut limb by limb, who had their scalps scraped off or were flayed alive, who skin was shredded on the toothed wheel or were sawed alive but did not waiver in their faith.

Think of those who preferred to lose their lives rather than allow even a hair to be removed from their bodies.

Derive inspiration from their sacrifices and **(congregation repeats) Waheguru** (O Lord you are wonderful).

Think of those who were shot, imprisoned, cut up or burnt alive but purged the Sikh Temples from the unscrupulous people.

Bring to mind the steadfastness of those who underwent such atrocities with sweet resignation and **(congregation repeats) Waheguru** (O Lord you are wonderful).

O Khalso turn your thoughts now to the five Takhats. Bring to mind the places sanctified by our Gurus and **(congregation repeats) Waheguru** (O Lord you are wonderful).

The congregation offers prayers O Lord.
May the wonderful Lord fill our hearts with His glory.
May the Khalso seek God's protection and His grace for all humanity.
May the Lord's dispensation prevail.
May the victory attend our charity and our might.
May the Lord guard the honour of His devotees.
May the Khalsa Panth always triumph.
Khalso **(congregation repeats) Waheguru** (O Lord you are wonderful).

O Lord confer on us the gift of Sikhism.
Equip us with your divine knowledge.
Bless us with faith and devotion.
Grant us the grit to be firm in faith.



Above all grant us the gift of your soul-stirring Name
 Bless us with a bath in spirituality.
 May the Sikh choirs, banners and mansions abide
 forever.
 May Thy Kingdom of justice come.
 May the Sikhs be united in Thy love.
 May their hearts be humble and their wisdom
 exalted.
 May the Lord sustain their wisdom and honour.
 O Khalso (**congregation repeats**) **Waheguru** (O Lord
 you are wonderful).

O Immortal One, we have sung your praises.
 We have listened to Your soul-stirring hymns.
 We have imbibed Your manifold blessings.
 May this awaken our gratitude and imprint Thy love
 in our hearts.
 May it draw our souls closer to Thee.
 Save us from lust, wrath, greed, undue attachment
 and pride.
 Keep us always attached to Your feet O Lord.

O Kind Benefactor, Loving Lord,
 You are the honour of the meek and prop of the
 helpless.
 We humbly offer this prayer at your feet.

O Wonderful Lord forgive us our sins and help us in
 keeping ourselves pure.
 O Kind Father, bring us into the fellowship of those
 who are devoted to you.

May we meditate on Thy Name with renewed
 dedication.

Dear Father accept our prayer and forgive us our
 errors and omissions.
 Dear Father, the son of
 Has been married to the daughter of

Shower your blessings on the couple and grant them
 a fruitful married life.

Through Nanak may Thy Name forever be on the
 increase.

May all mankind prosper by Thy grace.

Hail Khalso of the wonderful Lord.
 May all victories be to the Lord.

TE DEUM

Agyaa bhaee Akaal ki tabhi chalaayo panth.
 Sabh Sikhian ko hukam hai Furu maaneyo Granth.
 Guru Granth jee maaneyo pargat Guraan ki deh.
 Jo Prabh ko milbo chahaey knoj sabad men leh.
 Raaj karega Khalso aakee rahey na koe.
 Khawaar hoe sabh mileingey bacjay saran jo hoey.
 Waheguru Naam jahaaj hai charay so utray paar.
 Jo sardhaa kar sevday Guru paar utaraanhar.
 Khandaa jaa key haath mein kalghi sohay sees.
 So hamri rakhyaay karay Guru Kalghidhar jagdish.

By the grace of the Almighty the Khalso was created.
 The Sikhs are commanded to look upon the Holy
 Granth as their Guru.
 They shall respect the Granth like a living Guru.
 Pure hearts can find the Guru through His Word.
 The Khalso shall reign supreme and none shall live in
 subjugation.
 Those who have gone astray, shall return to the fold.
 Those who seek the Lord's protection shall be saved.

The word '**Waheguru**' is like a ship whose passengers
 safely cross the ocean.
 Those who serve others selflessly shall be blessed by
 the Guru.

May the spirit of the protector Guru who wore a
 plume and wielded a double-edged sword stand by
 us everywhere.

Bolay so Nihal (Respond and be blessed).

Everybody now says:

Sat Siri Akal (God is Truth).

At this stage a hymn (Final Hukamnaamaa) is read
 out randomly from the Holy Granth. Some couples
 note the page and later receive the text from the
 management and treasure it for life. In some Sikh
 temples this hymn, properly translated (if required)
 and framed is offered to the couple when they visit
 the Temple next.

The members of the immediate families of the couple
 and other friends and well-wishers may offer flowers
 or other gifts to the couple. This is usually initiated by
 the bride's mother who offers the bridegroom and the
 bride sweets to refresh them.

Thanks: -

Everybody present on the occasion is thanked and is
 invited to join in the community feast (**Langar**)
 arranged by the bride's father.



11. End of marriage ceremony

Karah parsad (the Holy food) is distributed to everybody. Usually it is first offered to the couple before the others offer any gifts or money.

Everybody is now free to move. People congratulate the couple and their parents.

GLOSSARY

Aasaa Di Var: A long composition of Guru Nanak interspersed with couplets of Guru Angad and the other Gurus. It is usually recited to the accompaniment of musical instruments an hour or so before sunrise on special occasions. The composition exposes hypocrisy and oppression and leads the devotees to spiritual heights.

Adi Granth: "The Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs. It was compiled and edited by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru in 1604 A.D. and was later reproduced and updated by Guru Gobind Singh shortly before his death in 1708. The book consists of 1430 pages in poetry. Over and above the writings of the Sikh Gurus, it also contains the writings of Hindu and Muslim saints. Its compiler, Guru Arjan Dev, called it "the abode of God" (page 1226). The Sikhs address the Holy Book as Guru Granth Sahib". The word 'Adi' (first) is used to distinguish it from an equally voluminous book written by Guru Gobind Singh and his devoted followers. This second book is called "The Dasam Granth" and has 1429 pages.

Anand: Literally it means 'Joy or bliss'. It is also the name of a long composition of Guru Amar Das running into 40 stanzas. Usually the first five stanzas and the last one are recited at the end of religious functions.

Anand Karaj: Literally it means "the function of bliss". It is the name given to Sikh wedding ceremony which was legalised under the British law in 1909.

Ardas: Sikh congregational prayer. The first stanza is the composition of Guru Gobind Singh. The rest of the prayer can be lengthened or shortened at will or to suit the occasion.

Ardhangi: Literally it means "incomplete female". The word is used by Sikhs for a housewife. Symbolically human life is thought to be meaningful only when soul (wife) meets The Lord (God).

Bolay So Nihal: It is a Sikh congregational greeting (known as Jaikara). One calls out, Bolay So Nihal and the others say 'Sat Sri Akal'. It means – All those who answer the Guru's call shall be blessed. The respondents agree by saying "I answer the Guru's call and I shall stand for Truth and Justice".

Chhuhara: A dry currant often used on occasions of contracting a relationship. It is also used in the preparation of a ketchup.

Five Beloved: The first five baptised Sikhs who received their baptism from Guru Gobind Singh on 30th March 1699. (The use of the Gregorian calendar shifted it to 13 April every year) and laid the foundation of the Khalsa. They stood by him to the last and laid down their lives.

Five Takhats: Five seats of authority whence edicts to the Sikhs are issued on important matters affecting the whole Sikh nation. They are:-

1. Sri Akal Takhat at Amritsar. 2. Sri Keshgarh Sahib at Anand Patna.
3. Sri Patna Sahib at Patna 4. Sri Damdama Sahib at Sabo Ki Talwandi.
5. Sri Hazur Sahib at Nander.

Forty Martyrs: Forty followers of Guru Gobind Singh who escaped from the besieged city of Anandpur in 1704 against his wishes but later laid down their lives at Mukatsar to forestall an attack on the Guru. They were led by a brave woman named Mai Bhago.

Guru: Literally it means "someone who dispels darkness and floods the mind with divine light". The term is reserved for the Sikh Holy Book and the ten Sikh Gurus.

Hindu Tradition:- The Hindus worship numerous gods and goddesses. Marriage was (and still is) solemnised by making the couple go round the burning fire (a Hindu fire-god Agnee) while the priest poured butter and other eatables into the fire. The time of the marriage was fixed to the nearest minute using astrological tables (called lagan). The bride's father must inter alia offer a cow in dowry.

Japuji: A long composition of Guru Nanak. It has 38 stanzas and is recited by the Sikhs everyday as their morning prayer.

Karah Parsad: Holy sweet pudding. It is prepared from equal quantities of sugar, butter, water and semolina (or wheat flour). It is distributed at the end of all Sikh religious functions. Non-Sikhs may, (if they do not want it) refuse to take it but it is considered a sacrilege to receive it and then throw it away.

Nothing is more offensive to the Sikhs than finding someone throwing it away or leaving it on the carpet.

Khalsa: The army of baptised Sikhs raised by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 to root out oppression and tyranny from India. The whole Sikh national is now called the Khalsa. They wear five Ks (Kangha, Kara, Kirpan, Kachla and Kesh).

Lava: Four marriage hymns composed by Guru Ram Das (4th Guru). Literally the word means "To unite or to bind together".

M.4: It is read as Mohallah Chauthja (Fourth Guru). Each hymn in the Sikh Holy Book bears the name of the Guru who wrote it. For example "Ramiali Mohallah 4 Chhant" means that the quotation is from the Chhant of Guru Ram Das (4th Guru) and is to be found in Raag Ramkali.

Master's sons: Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Jorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh. The first two died fighting in the battle of Chamkaur and the last two aged only 8 and 10 were bricked alive in a wall at Sirhind on 27 December 1704 under orders of the Mughal Government.

Milni: Literally "Introductory meeting". It is a way of socialisation of relatives before establishing convivial contacts. Milni is not necessary when the two families know each other intimately before the function.

Nectar Name: In Sikh theology it stands for God, His attributes and His praises.

Palla: Literally "The end of a garment". When held it implies the dependence or surrender of the holder in equal partnership. Symbolically the bride's father shifts his daughter's attachment from parents to the husband.

Panth: Literally it means "a path". The word is used for the Sikh Brotherhood. Khalsa (pure) Panth and Panth Khalsa are terms used interchangeably by the Sikhs.

Resilient men: This stanza in the prayer and the next refer to innumerable Sikh men, women and children massacred under orders from King Aurangzeb (1658-1707) and later his governors Yahia Khan (1743-1746) and Meer Mueen-Ud-Din (1746-1758) Governors of Lahore. An edict was issued in 1710 that "disciples of Nanak should be killed wherever they are found". Thousands were daily brought to Nakhas Chawk in Lahore and butchered in cold blood. Even babies were not spared. Some notable martyrs are Bhai Mati Das sawed alive in Delhi (December 1675), Bhai Dyal Das boiled alive in boiling water at Delhi (December 1675), Bhai Mani Singh cut limb by limb (November 7, 1737), Bhai Taru Singh. He scalp was scraped off (1738), Bhai Subeg Singh and Bhai Shahbaz Singh (father and son) broken on the wheel in 1734.

Rumala: A cloth covering for the Holy Book. The Book is covered with it between readings and is draped in it at the close of the day.

Rupee: A unit of the Indian currency roughly equivalent to 2 pence at present. At one time it was a silver coin of significant value when it began to be used for the engagement ceremony. Since, it has been devalued, notes are used instead.

Sehaj: A state of mind which facilitates union with God. The Sikhs believe that there are three instincts found in varying degrees in all human beings. They are:

- a) Rajas (Ambition) – it causes unsteadiness in character and restlessness in mind.
- b) Tamas (Passion) – it causes deterioration of mind, body and intellect which leads to laziness, sloth, negligence, error and forgetfulness.
- c) Satwa (Serenity) – Highly conducive to spiritual flights, but likely to degenerate into indifference to life. The Guru refers to yet another quality of mind which he names "Sehaj". It is the state of harmony, equipoise, tranquility and wisdom. In this state the three instincts of mind are so sublimated that none of them dominates the others and life becomes full of freedom, love, truth, goodness and devotion to God. The attainer of this state is called Brahm Giani (man of divine wisdom). The Guru explains this concept by saying:-

"Teen smaway chauthay waasaa, parnwat Nanak ham takay daasaa".

Translation: -

He who outgrows the three and abideth in the fourth (sehaj) of him I am a slave. Says Nanak.

Shalok: A stave in an ode. Most of the Shalokas are in the form of couplets. Baba Farid, Kabir and Guru Angad Dev (2nd Guru) are specially remembered for their pithy shalokas.

Sri Raag: An Indian musical metre. There are 31 Ragaas used in the Sikh Holy Book. Sri Raag is one of them. Suhi, Wadhans and Ramkali are some others mentioned in this book.

Vaak: Literally "The Guru's Counsel". The Holy Book is opened at random and a hymn on the left-hand page is read out aloud. A Vaak is read at the beginning and then at the end of a function. It is listened to in respectful silence.

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