

ANAND KARAJ

SIKH MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Prepared for those who take part in the congregation of a
"Sikh Marriage Ceremony"

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Siri Raag Mahala 5

The One Who gives peace. Who destroys fear

Before Him say your prayer

To those whom The Merciful Master shows His mercy

Have their tasks successfully concluded.

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Gurudwara: Etiquette and Protocol

By: Dr. Pritam Singh

Welcome to Gurudwara (the name given to the Sikh's place of worship). The term Gurudwara literally means "the door" or "the gate way to the Guru". It is a place where the Guru Granth Sahib (our "holy Scripture") is present. It is open to every one regardless of age, sex, caste, or creed and is the centre for congregational worship of Sikhism. It also plays a socio-economic role in the Sikh community; attached to every Gurudwara is a free kitchen where the Langar is prepared and served.

This section is prepared for the benefit of the first time visitor to the Gurudwara. We hope this explanation of etiquette and protocol outlined below is helpful to you.

This pattern of worship consists of:

Kirtan, the singing of the hymns on instruments (generally Harmonium and Tabla).

Katha/GurbaniVichar, the reading of the Holy Hymns, followed by explanation or a sermon or talk appropriate for the occasion.

Ardaas, the congregational prayer, at the end.

The following etiquette should be observed in the Gurudwara:

Before entering the hall

Take off your shoes

Wash your hands

Cover your head

Think of the Guru

Upon entering the hall (where the Guru Granth Sahib is present)

Fold both your hands and walk slowly.

Bow humbly and touch your forehead to the ground out of respect for the Guru Granth Sahib.

As you bow, place your offering respectfully before the Guru, it maybe money, a flower, or a word of thanks. Any sincere expression of gratitude is equally acceptable to the Guru.

After bowing and offering, sit in the "Sangat" (the congregation) quietly without disturbing others.

Usually men sit on one side and women on the other side.

Sit comfortably and peacefully, the cross-legged position is commonly used, but do not point your feet in the direction of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Do not talk or chew gum.

The usual sequence of events (service) in the Gurudwara is:

Kirtan: The singing of the Holy Hymns - Gurbani.

Katha/GurbaniVichar: The reading of the Holy Hymns followed by explanation or a sermon appropriate for the occasion.

Recitation portions of a scripture the "Anand Sahib".

"The Ardaas"

To join in the Ardaas.

Stand straight with folded hands and think of the Guru.

Sing together "Too Thakur Tum Peh Ardaas"

After the Ardaas, continue standing, and sing, "Aage--aa bha-ee Akal kee, Tabhee Chala-io Panth".

The Ardaas concludes with the Jaikara. "Boley So Neehal...Sat Sri Akal".

Then sit quietly. The person sitting behind the Guru Granth Sahib will read the Hukam, the Guru's message or "Order" to the Sangat.

Upon completion of the Hukam, Karah Parsad is distributed to the Sangat. (This is a sweet pudding made of flour, sugar and clarified butter that is offered as ceremonial food.)

Finally Langar (food from the Guru's kitchen) may be served.

FOREWORD

What is Anand Marriage?

The Anand form of marriage, which was given a statutory recognition in 1909, under the Anand Marriage Act, has been observed since the early days of Sikhism. Sikh boys and girls are married according to this form when they are grown-up and fit to undertake matrimonial responsibilities. Marriages are generally arranged and assisted by parents though there is no bar to the boy and the girl fixing it on their own.

The marriage ceremony is simple but impressive. The bride and the bridegroom along with their relatives and friends form a congregation with the **Granth Sahib** in their midst. The couple and their parents stand up and an **Ardas** is offered seeking God's blessings. The person in charge of the function addresses the bride and the bridegroom individually and explains to them their duties in the new life they are about to enter. Anand marriage is a sacrament. The Guru is a witness to the marriage. No writing or document is necessary. The bridegroom is to vow fidelity to the wife - **Istribrat Dharam**, while the bride is to vow fidelity to her husband - **Patibrat Dharam**. The husband is to protect the life and honour of his wife while she to remain content with the lot of her husband and the treatment in the husband's house.

The couple signify their consent by bowing before **Guru Granth Sahib**. Then the scarf of the bridegroom is placed in the hands of the bride. The **Granthi** or the officiating person reads the **lavan** - the epithalamium of Guru Ramdas. Each stanza explains in detail a stage in the development of a life of love. The first stage is the performance of duties of the family and the community. The second stage is that of selfless love and holy fear, which provide opportunities for devoted service and sacrifice - the discipline needed to facilitate the feeling of one spirit in two bodies. This stage is that of love, of yearning and enthusiasm. Even troubles provide opportunities for service and sacrifice, and are therefore helpful to love. The third stage is that of detachment: **Vairag**. Human love is superseded by divine love. The fourth stage is that of harmony and union. The bride and bridegroom are completely identified with each other.

After the reading of each stanza, the couple goes round the **Granth Sahib**, the bridegroom leading the bride, while the stanza is sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. After the reading of **lavan**, **Anand Sahib** is read. After **Ardas**, **Karah Parsad** is distributed to all present. Monogamy is practiced by the Sikhs.

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A Wedding Sermon

By: Bhayee Shaib of Bagrian
December 14, 1959.

All the Sikh ceremonies are very simple. They are based primarily on the principle:

Jalo aisi reet jit main piyara visrai

Set fire to such rituals and ceremonies that lead me away from my Beloved

The ceremony of marriage is also very simple. It consists of prayer and vow. All ceremonies, in fact, whether of joy or of sorrow, begin and end with prayer. As the Guru has said:

Kita Loriye kam so har pai akhiye

Whenever there is any work on hand, address God about it

A lecture or sermon is no part of the ceremony. Even singing of hymns is no part of it. Music and Kirtan create a proper atmosphere. The essential part is only prayer. But it is proper and always advisable to know and understand the laws and procedure of the court to the jurisdiction of which you submit. Now that you are here in the august and sacred court of the Lord, it is but proper and necessary that you understand what the Guru's teachings and ideals are in this connection and what he means and expects of us. This I will try to explain briefly.

Sikhism is not a way of renunciation. For our salvation, realization of Truth, for attainment of and to find God, we do not have to give up our homes and hearths and wander in the woods and wilderness to seek the Lord who pervades in us all and in whom we all exist. The Guru says:

Kahe re ban khojan jae, Sarb nivasee Sada alepa tohee Sang samaee

Why go and seek Him in the woods; the Omnipotent and Eternal Pure is inseparably within you.

The comforts and pleasures of the world of the world are worth enjoying. The Lord has brought the much-dreaded **Maya** to our feet and turning it into a useful instrument of service. The only thing is that we must not ourselves become its slaves. In the Sukhmani - the Psalm of Peace of Guru Arjan Dev - it is enjoined that while enjoying dainty dishes, anointing our bodies with perfumes, living in comfortable houses and cozy beds happily with our families, wearing jewels, silks and satins, riding horses and elephants, (and now cars and airplanes), bear always the Supreme Lord in mind and sing His praises in gratefulness for His boundless bounties, mercies, and graces. Even while drinking pure and clear water, thank Him, for there are those too who are not fortunate enough even to receive this grace of His.

Jis da ditta khavna tis kahiye sabas.

Gratefully thank the Great Giver.

Sikhism is a way of life (Jivan Siksha), in which we have to discharge our duty - Dharam - towards the Creator and towards this world where He has been pleased to send us, and in which we realize Him. It teaches us to control and correct the attitude of our mind and attune our individual souls with the Divine Will of the Universal Soul. We have to live such a life that when we ultimately face the Master, we do so with an untarnished and bright face and a clear conscience.

In Sikhism therefore family way of life (Grihasth Ashram) is the superior most and natural way of life, in which we have to live like a lotus and a swan, unaffected by the turbulent tides and waves of the waters, yet living and enjoying in them.

I draw your attention, and particularly the attention of the Bride and the Bridegroom, who are today stepping into this way of family life, to the words of the Guru in the hymns that will be sung and the four Lavan (the marriage Hymns) which will be read and sung when the couple goes round the Holy Book.

I may here point out that these hymns composed by Guru Ramdas, the Fourth Guru, were not written particularly for the marriage ceremony, as Anand was not written by the third Guru for the distribution of Karah Parshad (sacrament). These were written to celebrate the wedding of the Individual Soul - the Atma - with the Great Spouse, the Universal Soul - the Parmatma. There are four stages in the progress of man towards his union with the Lord. They are

Fear, Love, Restraint and Harmony. The Sat Guru wishes that our married life should also be molded on the ideal laid down for our union with the Parmatma.

Our conjugal relations are designed not merely to promote worldly comfort or to perpetuate the human race, but to provide the best means of approaching God and cultivating our lives in such a manner as to make them most useful and fruitful. Marriage is not a mere contract, to be repudiated at will; it is a sacrament, a holy union consecrated in accordance with the Divine Will.

Some people who believe like us that marriage is made in accordance with the Master's Will, draw lines on the ground to represent the nine Grahas or Stars. We invoke the Lord's presence by holding a holy congregation, with Guru Granth Sahib in our midst as witness. This holy congregation (Sangat) incorporates the presence of the Almighty, as the Guru has said:

Vich Sangat Har Prabh Vassai Jio

God resides in the congregation

So, Ladies and Gentlemen, you are supposed to be sitting here with the consciousness of God's presence in your midst. And the Bride and Bridegroom are sitting in the lap of God, the source of all love and affection, and the blessings of the whole congregation are with them. As they move round the Holy Granth, they should do so with a feeling and faith that they are walking, in the course of joint life to make themselves inseparably one, to make their united life but a union, physical, intellectual and spiritual.

The Guru's own words are:

Dhan pir eh na akhiyan behn ikatthe hoe.

Ek jot doey murti, dhan pir kahiye soe.

They are not to be called husband and wife who only sit together; rather they are husband and wife who have one spirit in two bodies.

This life of union has also four stages of development. One is of Fear, the other of Love, the other of Restraint and the last of Harmony or perfect at-oneness.

The first is of Fear. This might sound strange to some of us who feel that love should come first and then marriage. With us, marriage comes first, then fear and Love. Why? We celebrate Spring when the branches of trees are still naked and flowers have not yet come. We celebrate Spring in anticipation of the coming flowers. So we celebrate our marriage on the promise and anticipation of Love, which when it comes gradually out of mutual contact and understanding, exchange of thoughts and feelings and opportunities to serve each other more and more, it is always deep rooted and everlasting. But before Love comes, there is a stage of Fear, not slavish Fear, but "Nirmal bhao", Fear which dispels all fear and it is the fear of the unknown around the corner. It also means discipline.

Jin bhao tin nahen bhao much bhao nibhviah.

Those who fear the Lord have nothing else to fear; but those who do not fear Him have much fear in store for them.

Both the husband and wife are to tread gently towards each other, fearing each other, but not being afraid of each other. Love is a delicate thing. It may be injured by the slightest departure from truth or sincerity. Any, the least adverse reference to one's parents might wound feelings. It is a great art, as difficult and as delicate as life itself - to make a strange and unknown individual to feel at home with new people and new environment, with new elders and new relations. Great sensitive art, loving tact and patient sympathy are required to make two strange lives grow into one. This moral sensitivity, this accommodating sympathy, is called Fear by the Guru.

Out of this grows Love, which is the next stage. The word for Love used by the Guru is Chao, which means enthusiasm, eagerness tinged with hope and optimistic pleasure. For what is that Love which has no enthusiasm, no yearning in it? Usually enthusiasm in marriage wears off in a few years, and then everything appears stale and monotonous. How to keep up enthusiasm in married life, is the question and the problem. Nobody can maintain youth and beauty forever. Age and illness invade our lives, and with the wearing off of freshness our attachments also grow stale and drab. Then how to keep up freshness? The Creator knew what sort of man He was creating. He knew man's weakness that he could not keep himself constant and fresh. He therefore provided an element in man's nature, which would keep up freshness of relationship, even though youth and beauty might depart. This element was love, which knows no staleness, no growing old. Is not God the oldest being,

more old and antiquated than any man or woman could be? And yet His lovers say:

Sahib mera neet nawan

My Lord is ever new and fresh

The secret of keeping the relationship young and fresh is not cosmetics, but Love, unchanging love, love in all conditions, all troubles and all diseases. Troubles are a nuisance. But to a loving heart, they provide opportunities for service and sacrifice and are therefore conducive to love.

Next comes the third stage. The words in the Lawan are:

Man chao bhaya bairagiya balram jio.

Love comes into the heart, which withdraws itself from all other affections.

The affection of the parents, of brothers and sisters, friends and companions, give place to one overpowering love and knows no rival. Just a few minutes ago, the Bride was so totally a part of her parental home. Now after this ceremony she will have to withdraw from it. All her relatives will become strangers and their sweetness will disappear, in comparison with the supreme sweetness of the new relation:

Habhe sak kurave ditthe tao palle tainde lagi.

When all relations appeared imperfect, I sought thy hand.

But she looks forward, with complacent joy and new **chao**, towards the new life with the protector of her life and honour of whom she could be proud. But this **chao** is **bairagiya**, full of **vairag** or sadness. Her lips are smiling, but her eyes are full of tears. This is the happiest occasion of her life, but also the saddest. It gives her a new home, but it also plucks her out of her moorings. The last line of **Lavan** mentions only the **Vairag** stage. In the beginning Love is immediate and compelling, and can stand no separation or absence. But constant association and understanding develop constraint and self-control, that make affections sedate and calm. Then absence is no absence. This is **Vairag**.

Last of all comes the stage of Sehaj, which is of complete oneness, of perfect balance, which knows no separation, no mistrust. This is the stage in which effort is eliminated. The Bride's past and present become the Bridegroom's past and present. Her present becomes his and his becomes hers. They feel and think alike and both are completely identified with each other; that is, they become "**Ek jot doey murati**", one spirit in two bodies.

Anand marriage is as much spiritual as temporal and legal. Hence some formalities have to be gone through. Before the ceremony is begun, these are a few points to ponder on:

1. With us, husband and wife have an equal status. They are the two wheels of the chariot of life. Family life called Grehasth is the most sacred and highest order in Sikhism. Patibrat Dharam, fidelity, of wife to the husband, is as much essential as Istibrat Dharam, fidelity of husband to his wife.

2. While I advise you, the bride, to be content and pleased with the treatment, behaviour and lot of your husband, I enjoin upon you, the groom, to remember that from now on you have to protect her life and honour and provide her with every possible comfort and necessity of life

Hymns from Sri Guru Granth Shaib

ASA, Vth GURU

Become the handmaiden of the saints. Learn thou this conduct.

The sublimest virtue of all the virtues is not to see thy Spouse afar.

Dye this beautiful soul of thine with the matter of God's Name, O bride.

Abandon cleverness and cunningness and know thou that the World-cherisher is with thee.

What the Spouse says, act thou on that. Make this thy embellishment.

Forget the love of another. Chew thou this betel, O bride.

Make this Gurbani* thy lamp and spread the couch of chastity.

All the daylong remain standing with clasped hands.

Then shall the Sovereign Lord meet thee, O bride.

She alone possesses discretion and all the decorations and she is of matchless beauty.

She alone is the true wife, O Nanak who is pleasing to the Creator.

*Guru's teaching

Whatever work thou desire to do, tell that to the Lord.

He shall accomplish thy affair.

The True Guru bears true testimony to it.

By the company of saints, thou shall taste the treasure of Name Nectar.

SLOK, Vth GURU

From my mind, O Nanak, I have wholly banished praising and slandering others and have forsaken and abandoned all otherworldly affairs.

I have seen all the kinsmen to be false; then I have attached myself to Thy skirt, O my Lord.

Lavan: Wedding Hymns

Har pehlree laav parvirtee
 Karam drirraya balram jeo.
 Bani Brahama Ved dharm drirro
 Paap tjaya balram jeo.
 Dharam drirro Harnam dhiavo
 Simrat naam drirraya.
 Satgur Gur poora aarodho
 Sabh Kilvikh paap gavayaa.
 Sehaj anand hoa vadbhagi
 Mun har har mitha laiyya.
 Jan kaheh Nanak laav pehlee
 Arambh kaaj rachayaa. || 1 ||

Proceeding forth into the first nuptial round.

The Lord presents before you His instruction for the daily duties of marital life:

Rather than the Vedas or Brahma,

You are to recite the hymns of the Guru,

And be constant in the performance of your duty.

Thus the errors of the past shall be washed away.

Be confirmed in righteousness and

Repeat the Lord's Name.

The practice of the Name has been urged in the Smritis as well.

Reflect upon the True Guru, who is ever perfect.

And all your sins and misdeeds will leave you.

By the greatest good fortune the mind
 And thoughts of the Lord are soothing to the mind.
 Slave Nanak proclaims that in this first round.
 The marriage ceremony has begun.

Har doojree laav Satgur purkh
 Milaya balram jeo.
 Nirbhao bhey mun hoey
 Haomay meil gaviya balram jeo.
 Nirmal bhao paya Har goon gaya
 Har vekheh Ram hadooreh.
 Har aatam Ram pasarial Suami
 Sarab rihya bharpooray
 Antar bahar Har Prabh eko
 Mil Har jan mangal gaaeh
 Jan Nanak dooji laav chlaaee
 Unhudh Sabad vajaan. || 2 ||

Comes the second nuptial round.

And the Lord has made you to meet the True Guru.
 With your heart bound by the fear of the Fearless God.
 All sense of pride has been washed from the mind.
 Knowing the fear of God and singing His praises,
 You behold His presence before you.
 God, the Lord Master is the soul of the creation;
 He pervades everywhere and fills all places with His Being.
 Know then that there is One God, within us and without.

And His songs of rejoicing are heard in the company of His servants.
Nanak proclaims, that in this second nuptial round, the Divine Music is heard.

Har teejrree laav man chao bhiya
 Bairagia balram jeo
 Sant jana Har mail Har paiya
 Vadbhagia balram jeo
 Nirmal Har paayia Hargoon gaiya
 Mukh boli Har bani
 Sant jina vadbhagi paaya
 Har kathieh akath kahaani
 Hirdai Har Har Har dhoon oopji
 Har japieh mustak bhaag jeo
 Jan Nanak boley tiji laaveh
 Har oopjay mun bairaag jeo || 3 ||

In the third round the praises of the Lord fill my mind.

By the greatest good fortune you have come to meet the Lord God in the company of the holy.

Singing His praises and speaking the Divine Word, the Immaculate Lord is found.

It is by very great fortune

That the pious attain to the Lord

And tell that story which can never be told!

The music of God resounds within and we contemplate the Lord God:

For we have been blessed with a great destiny written upon our foreheads.

Slave Nanak proclaims that in this third round, the love of God has been awakened in the heart.

Har chaothree laav mun sehaj bhiya
 Har paaiyua balram jeo.
 Gurmukh milia Subhaey Har Mun
 Tun mitha laaya balram jeo.
 Har mitha laaya mereh Prabh bhaya
 Undin Har livlaee.
 Mun chindia phal paaya suami
 Har Nam vaji vadhaee.
 Har prabh Thakur kaaj rachaiya
 Dhun hirdey Nam vigasee.
 Jan Nanak boley chaoteh laaveh
 Har paaiya Prabh avnaasee. || 4 || 2 ||

In this fourth round,

The mind grasps the knowledge of the Divine,
 And God is realized within.
 By the Guru's Grace, we have reached the Lord with ease;
 Our bodies and our souls are filled
 With the tender delight of the Beloved.
 I am a sacrifice unto my Lord.
 God seems sweet to me and I have become pleasing to my Master.
 He fills my thoughts all night and day.
 I have obtained the object of my heart's desire - my Lord.
 By praising His name I have gained the highest praise.
 While the heart of the bride blooms and flowers with His Holy Name.

Slave Nanak proclaims, that in the fourth round we have found the Eternal Lord.

Post Wedding Hymn: Wiyah Hooa Mere Babla

My marriage is performed, O' my father! By Guru's instruction I have obtained God.

The darkness of my ignorance is removed. The Guru has blazed the very bright light of Divine knowledge.

The Guru given Divine knowledge is shedding lustre and the darkness is dispelled. I have therefore found the priceless gem of God's Name.

My malady of ego has departed and my anguish is over.

Under Guru's instruction I myself have eaten up my self-conceit.

I have obtained God of immortal form, as my spouse. He is imperishable and so dies or goes not. The marriage has been solemnized, O' my father! and by Guru's instruction, I have found God.