



ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

One Absolute Manifest, Eternal Destroyer of darkness, Grace Incarnate

# Sikh Rehat Maryada



**Sikh Code of Conduct**  
**and Conventions**



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# What is the Rehat Maryada?

The Rehat Maryada is the Official Sikh Code of Conduct and Conventions. There were a number of unsuccessful attempts in the eighteenth century following the death of Guru Gobind Singh to produce an accurate portrayal of the Sikh conduct and customs. These attempts were contradictory and inconsistent with many of the principles of the Gurus and were not accepted by the majority of the Sikhs. Starting in 1931, an attempt was made by the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (S.G.P.C.) to produce a modern standard Rehat. These efforts involved the greatest Sikh scholars and theologians of this century who worked to produce the current version. The document produced has been accepted as the official version which provides guidelines against which all Sikh individuals and communities around the world can measure themselves. The Rehat Maryada is the only version authorized by the Akal Takht, the seat of supreme temporal authority for Sikhs. Its implementation has successfully achieved a high level of uniformity in the religious and social practices of Sikhism.

# Rehat Maryada: Section One

## Chapter I - Sikh Defined

### Article I – Definition of Sikh

Any human being who faithfully believes in:

- One Immortal Being
- Ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak Dev to Guru Gobind Singh
- The Guru Granth Sahib
- The utterances and teachings of the ten Gurus
- The baptism bequeathed by the tenth Guru, and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion, is a Sikh.

# Rehat Maryada: Section Two

## Chapter II – Aspects of Sikh Living

### Article II – Sikh Living

A Sikh's life has two aspects: individual or personal and corporate or Panthic.

## Chapter III – Individual Spirituality

### Article III – Sikh Personal Life

A Sikh's personal life should comprehend:

1. Meditation on Naam (Divine Substance) and the scriptures
2. Leading life according to the Gurus teachings and
3. Altruistic voluntary service.

### Article IV - Meditating on Naam (Divine Substance) and Scriptures

- a. A Sikh should wake up in the ambrosial hours (three hours before the dawn), take bath and, concentrate his/her thoughts on One Immortal being, repeat the name of '**Waheguru**' (Wondrous Destroyer of darkness).
- b. He/she should recite the following scriptural compositions every day:
  1. The Japji, the Jaapu and the Ten Sawayyas (Quartets) - beginning "Sarawag sudh" - in the morning.
  2. Sodar Rehras comprising the following compositions:
    - Nine hymns of the Guru Granth Sahib, occurring in the holy book after the Japuji Sahib, the first of which begins with "Sodar" and the last of which ends with "saran pare ki rakh sarma".
    - The Benti Chaupai of the tenth Guru (beginning "hamri karo hath dai rachha" and ending with "dusht dokh te leho bachai"
    - The Sawayya beginning with the words "pae geho jab te tumre"
    - The Dohira beginning with the words "sagal duar kau chhad kai"
    - The first five and the last pauris (stanzas) of Anand Sahib
    - And Mundawani and the Slok Mahla 5 beginning "tere kita jato nahi" in the evening after sunset.
  3. The Sohila - to be recited at night before going to bed

The morning and evening recitations should be concluded with Ardas (formal supplication litany).

c. Ardas:

1. The text of Ardas:

One Absolute Manifest; victory belongeth to the **Wondrous Destroyer of darkness**. May the might of the All-powerful help!

Ode to the might by the tenth lord.

Having first thought of the Almighty's prowess let us think of Guru Nanak. Then of Guru Angad, Amardas and Ramdas - may they be our rescuers! Remember then Arjan, Hargobind and Harirai. Meditate then on revered Hari Krishan on seeing whom all suffering vanishes. Think then of Tegh Bahadar, remembrance of whom brings all nine treasures. He comes to rescue everywhere. Then think of the tenth lord, revered Guru Gobind Singh, who comes to rescue everywhere. The embodiment of the light of all ten sovereign lordships, the Guru Granth Sahib - think of the view and reading of it and say, "**Waheguru (Wondrous Destroyer of darkness)**".

Meditating on the achievement of the dear and truthful ones, including the five beloved ones, the four sons of the tenth Guru, forty liberated ones, steadfast ones, constant repeaters of the Divine Name, those given to assiduous devotion, those who repeated the Naam, shared their fare with others, ran free kitchen, wielded the sword and ever looked faults and shortcomings, say "**Waheguru**", O Khalsa.

Meditating on the achievement of the male and female members of the Khalsa who laid down their lives in the cause of dharma (religion and righteousness), got their bodies dismembered bit by bit, got their skulls sawn off, got mounted on spiked wheels, got their bodies sawn, made sacrifices in the service of the shrines (gurdwaras), did not betray their faith, sustained their adherence to the Sikh faith with sacred unshorn hair up till their last breath, say, "**Wondrous Destroyer of darkness**", O Khalsa.

Thinking of the five thrones (seats of religious authority) and all gurdwaras, say, "Wondrous Destroyer of darkness", O Khalsa.

Now it is the prayer of the whole Khalsa. May the conscience of the whole Khalsa be informed by Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru and, in consequence of such remembrance, may total well-being obtain. Wherever there are communities of the Khalsa, may there be Divine protection and grace, and ascendance of the supply of needs and of the holy sword, protection of the tradition of grace, victory to the Panth, the succor of the holy sword, and ascendance of the Khalsa. Say, O Khalsa, "**Wondrous Destroyer of darkness**".

Unto the Sikhs the gift of the Sikh faith, the gift of the untrimmed hair, the gift of the disciple of their faith, the gift of sense of discrimination, the gift of truest, the gift of confidence, above all, the gift of meditation on the Divine and bath in the Amritsar (holy tank at Amritsar). May hymns-singing missionary parties, the flags, the hostels, abide from age to age. May righteousness reign supreme. Say, "**Wondrous Destroyer of darkness**".

May the Khalsa be imbued with humility and high wisdom! May Waheguru guard its understanding!

O Immortal Being, eternal helper of Thy Panth, benevolent Lord, bestow on the Khalsa the beneficence of unobstructed visit to the free management of Nankana Sahib and other shrines and places of the Guru from which the Panth have been separated.

O Thou, the honour of the humble, the strength of the weak, aid unto those who have none to rely on, True Father, **Wondrous Destroyer of darkness**, we humbly render to you ... (Mention here the name of the scriptural composition that has been recited or, in appropriate terms, the object for which the congregation has been held.). Pardon any impermissible accretions, omissions, errors, mistakes. Fulfill the purposes of all. Grant us the association of those dear ones, on meeting whom one is reminded of Your Name. O Nanak, may the Naam (Holy) be ever in ascendance! In Thy will may the good of all prevail!

2. On the conclusion of the Ardas, the entire congregation participating in the Ardas should respectfully genuflect before the revered Guru Granth, then stand up and call out, "**The Khalsa is of the Wondrous Destroyer of darkness; victory also is His**". The Congregation should, thereafter, raise the loud spirited chant of **Sat Sri Akal (True is the Timeless Being)**.

3. While the Ardas is being performed, all men and women in the congregation should stand with hands folded. The person in attendance of the Guru Granth should keep waving the whisk standing.

- 4.** The person who performs the Ardas should stand facing the Guru Granth with hands folded. If the Guru Granth is not there, the performing of the Ardas facing any direction is acceptable.
- 5.** When any special Ardas for and on behalf of one or more persons is offered, it is not necessary for persons in the congregation other than that person or those persons to stand up.



# Rehat Maryada: Section Three

## Chapter IV - Gurduwaras, Congregational Etiquette, Rites

### Article V - Joining the Congregation for understanding of and reflecting on Gurbani

- a.** One is more easily and deeply affected by gurbani (the holy bani bequeathed by the Gurus) participating in congregational gatherings. For this reason, it is necessary for a Sikh that he/she visit the places where the Sikhs congregate for worship and prayer (the gurduwaras), and joining the congregation, partake of the benefits that the study of the Holy Scriptures bestows.
- b.** The Guru Granth should be ceremonially opened in the gurdwara every day without fail. Except for special exigencies, when there is need to keep the Guru Granth open during the night, the Holy Book should not be kept open during the night. It should, generally, be closed ceremonially after the conclusion of the Rehras (evening scriptural recitation). The Holy Book should remain open so long as a granthi or attendant can remain in attendance, persons seeking darshan (seeking a view of or making obeisance to it) keep coming, or there is no risk of commission of irreverence towards it. Thereafter, it is advisable to close it ceremonially to avoid any disrespect to it.
- c.** The Guru Granth should be opened, read and closed ceremonially with reverence. The place where it is installed should be absolutely clean. An awning should be erected above. The Guru Granth Sahib should be placed on a cot measuring up to its size and overlaid with absolutely clean mattress and sheets. For proper installation and opening of the Guru Granth, there should be cushions/pillows of appropriate kind etc. and, for covering it, romalas (sheet covers of appropriate size). When the Guru Granth is not being read, it should remain covered with a romal. A whisk, too, should be there.
- d.** Anything except the a fore-mentioned reverential ceremonies, for instance, such practices as the arti with burning incense and lamps, offering of eatables to Guru Granth Sahib, burning of lights, beating of gongs, etc., is contrary to gurmata (the Guru's way). However, for the perfuming of the place, the use of flowers, incense and scent is not barred. For light inside the room, oil or butter-oil lamps, candles, electric lamps, kerosene oil lamps, etc. may be lighted.
- e.** No book should be installed like and at par with the Guru Granth. Worship of any idol or any ritual or activity should not be allowed to be conducted inside the gurdwara. Nor should the festival of any other faith be allowed to be celebrated inside the gurdwara. However, it will not be improper to use any occasion or gathering for the propagation of the gurmata (The Guru's way).
- f.** Pressing the legs of the cot on which the Guru Granth Sahib is installed, rubbing nose against walls and on platforms, held sacred, or massaging these, placing water below the Guru Granth Sahib's seat, making or installing statues, or idols inside the gurduwaras, bowing before the picture of the Sikh Gurus or elders - all these are irreligious self-willed egotism, contrary to gurmata (the Guru's way).
- g.** When the Guru Granth has to be taken from one place to another, the Ardas should be performed. He/she who carries the Guru Granth on his/her head should walk barefoot; but when the wearing of shoes is a necessity, no superstitions need be entertained.
- h.** The Guru Granth Sahib should be ceremonially opened after performing the Ardas. After the ceremonial opening, a hymn should be read from the Guru Granth Sahib.
- i.** Whenever the Guru Granth is brought, irrespective of whether or not another copy of the Guru Granth has already been installed at the concerned place, every Sikh should stand up to show respect.
- j.** While going into the gurdwara, one should take off the shoes and clean oneself up. If the feet are dirty or soiled, they should be washed with water.

**k.** No person, no matter which country, religion or cast he/she belongs to, is debarred from entering the gurdwara for darshan (seeing the holy shrine). However, he/she should not have on his/her person anything, such as tobacco or other intoxicants, which are tabooed by the Sikh religion.

**l.** The first thing a Sikh should do on entering the gurdwara is to do obeisance before the Guru Granth Sahib. He/she should, thereafter, having a glimpse of the congregation and bid in a low, quiet voice, **“Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh”**.

**m.** In the congregation, there should be no differentiation or discrimination between Sikh and non-Sikh, persons traditionally regarded as touchable and untouchable, the so called high and low caste persons, the high and the low.

**n.** Sitting on a cushion, a distinctive seat, a chair, a stool, a cot, etc. or in any distinctive position in the presence of the Guru Granth or within the congregation is contrary to gurnat (Guru's way).

**o.** No Sikh should sit bare-headed in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib or in the congregation. For Sikh women, joining the congregation with their persons uncomfortable draped and with veils drawn over their faces is contrary to gurnat (Guru's way).

**p.** There are five takhts (Seats of high authority) namely:

1. The holy Akal Takht Amritsar
2. The holy Takht, Patna Sahib
3. The holy Takht, Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur
4. The holy Takht Hazur Sahib, Nanded
5. The holy Takht Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo.

**q.** Only an Amritdhari (baptized) Sikh man or woman, who faithfully observes the discipline ordained for the baptized Sikhs, can enter the hallowed enclosures of the takhts. (Ardas for and on behalf of any Sikh or non-Sikh, except a fallen or punished (tankhahia) Sikh, can be offered at the takhts.

**r.** At a high-level site in every gurdwara should be installed the nishan sahib (Sikh flag). The cloth of the flag should be either of xanthic or of greyish blue colour and on top of the flag post, there should either be a spearhead or a Khanda (a straight dagger with convex side edges leading to slanting top edges ending in a vertex).

**s.** There should be a drum (nagara) in the gurdwara for beating on appropriate occasions.

## Chapter V - Kirtan

### Article VI - Kirtan (Devotional Hymn Singing by a Group or an individual)

- a. Only a Sikh may perform kirtan in a congregation.
- b. Kirtan means singing and scriptural compositions in traditional musical measures.
- c. In the congregation, kirtan only of Gurbani (Guru Granth's or Guru Gobind Singh's hymns) and, for its elaboration, of the compositions of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, may be performed.
- d. It is improper, while singing hymns to rhythmic folk tunes or to traditional musical measures, or in team singing, to induct into them improvised and extraneous refrains. Only a line from the hymn should be a refrain.

## Chapter VI – Taking Hukam

### Article VII – Taking Hukam

- a. Doing obeisance to the Guru Granth Sahib, respectfully, taking a glimpse of the congregation, an embodiment of the Guru's person, and taking the command: these together constitute the view of the Satguru (Immortal destroyer of darkness, the true guru). Raising the drapery covering the Guru Granth Sahib and merely taking a look or making others take a look at the exposed page, without taking the command (reading the prescribed hymn) is contrary to gurmat (Guru's way).
- b. In the course of the congregational sessions, only one thing should be done at a time: performing of kirtan, delivering of discourse, interpretative elaboration of the scriptures, or reading of the scriptures.
- c. Only a Sikh, man or woman, is entitled to be in attendance of the Guru Granth during the congregational session.
- d. Only a Sikh may read out from the Guru Granth for others. However, even a non-Sikh may read from it for himself/herself.
- e. For taking the command (Hukam), the hymn that is continuing on the top of the left page must be read from the beginning. If the hymn begins on the previous page, turn over the page and read the whole hymn from the beginning to the end. If the scriptural composition that is continuing on the top of the left hand page is a var (ode), then start from the first of the slokas preceding the pauri and read upto the end of the pauri. Conclude the reading at the end of the hymn with the line in which the name 'Nanak' occurs.
- f. Hukam must also be taken at the conclusion of the congregational session or after the Ardas.

## Chapter VII – Reading of the Guru Granth Sahib

### Article VIII - Sadharan Path (Completion of Normal Intermittent Reading of the Guru Granth Sahib)

- a.** Every Sikh should as far as possible, maintain a separate and exclusive place for the installation of Guru Granth Sahib, in his home.
- b.** Every Sikh man, woman, boy or girl, should learn Gurmukhi to be able to read the Guru Granth Sahib.
- c.** Every Sikh should take the Hukam (Command) of the Guru Granth in the ambrosial (early), hours of the morning before taking meal. If he/she fails to do that, he/she should read or listen to reading from the Guru Granth some time during the day. If he/she cannot do that either, during travel etc., or owing to any other impediment, he/she should not give in to a feeling of guilt.
- d.** It is desirable that every Sikh should carry on a continuous reading of the Guru Granth and complete a full reading in one or two months or over a longer period.
- e.** While undertaking a full reading of the Guru Granth, one should recite the Anand Sahib (the first five and the last stanzas) and perform the Ardas. One should, thereafter, read the Japuji. Akhand Path (Uninterrupted Non-stop Completion of the Reading of the Guru Granth Sahib)

### Article IX - Akhand Path: Uninterrupted-Non-Stop-Completion of the Reading of the Guru Granth Sahib

- a.** The non-stop reading of the Guru Granth is carried on at hard times or on occasions of elation or joy. It takes forty-eight hours. The non-stop reading implies continuous uninterrupted reading. The reading must be clear and correct. Reading too fast, so that the person listening in to it cannot follow the contents, amounts to irreverence to the Scriptures. The reading should be correct and clear, due to care being bestowed on consonant and vowel, even though that takes a little longer to complete.
- b.** Whichever family or congregation undertakes the non-stop reading should carry it out itself through its members, relatives, friends, etc., all together. The number of reciters is not prescribed.

If a person himself, cannot read, he should listen in to the reading by some competent reader. However, it should never be allowed to happen that the reader carries on the reading all by himself/herself and no member of the congregation or the family is listening in to the reading. The reader should be served with food and clothing to the best of the host's means.

- c.** Placing a pitcher, ceremonial clarified butted fed lamp, coconut, etc. around , during the course of the uninterrupted or any other reading of Guru Granth Sahib, or reading of other Scriptural texts side by side with or in the course of such reading is contrary to the gurmat (Guru's way).

### Article X - Commencing the Non-stop Reading

While undertaking the intermittent reading of the whole Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred pudding (Karah Prashad) for offering should be brought and after reciting the Anand Sahib (six stanzas) and offering Ardas, Hukam should be taken.

While beginning the unbroken reading, the sacred pudding should first be laid. Thereafter, after reciting the Anand Sahib (six stanzas), offering the Ardas and taking the Hukam, the reading should be commenced.

## Article XI - Concluding the Reading

- a.** The reading of the whole Guru Granth Sahib (intermittent or non-stop) may be concluded with the reading of the Mundawani or the Rag Mala according to the convention traditionally observed at the concerned place. (Since there is a difference of opinion within the Panth on this issue, nobody should dare to write or print a copy of the Guru Granth Sahib excluding the Rag Mala). Thereafter, after reciting the Anand Sahib, the Ardas of the conclusion of the reading should be offered and the sacred pudding (Karhah Prashad) distributed.
- b.** On the conclusion of the reading, offering of draperies, fly whisk and awning, having regard to the requirements of the Guru Granth Sahib, and of other things, for Panthic causes, should be made to the best of means.

## Chapter VIII – Making Offerings, Consecration and Distribution

### Article XII - Karhah Prasad (Sacred Pudding)

- a.** Only the sacred pudding which has been prepared or got prepared according to the prescribed method shall be acceptable in the congregation.
- b.** The method of preparing the Karhah Prashad is this: In a clean vessel, the three contents (wheat flour, pure sugar and clarified butter, in equal quantities) should be put and it should be made reciting the Scriptures. Then covered with a clean piece of cloth, it should be placed on a clean stool in front of the Guru Granth Sahib, the first five and the last stanza of the Anand Sahib should be recited aloud (so that the congregation can hear) [If another vessel of the sacred pudding is brought in after the recitation of the Anand, it is not necessary to repeat the recitation of the Anand Sahib. Offering of the pudding brought later to the sacred Kirpan is enough.], the Ardas, offered and the pudding tucked with the sacred Kirpan for acceptance.
- c.** After this, before the distribution to the congregation of the Karhah Prashad, the share of the five beloved ones should be set apart and given away. Thereafter, while commencing the general distribution, the share of the person in attendance of the Guru Granth Sahib should be put in a small bowl or vessel and handed over [Giving double share to the person in attendance constitutes improper discrimination]. The person who doles out the Karhah Prashad among the congregation should do so without any discrimination on the basis of personal regard or spite. He should dole out the Karhah Prashad equally to the Sikhs, the non-Sikhs or a person of high or low caste. While doling out the Karhah Prashad, no discrimination should be made on considerations of caste or ancestry or being regarded, by some, as untouchable, of persons within the congregation.
- d.** The offering of Karhah Prashad should be accompanied by at least two pice in cash.

## Chapter IX - Components of Gurdwara Service

### Article XIII - Exposition of Gurbani (Sikh Holy Scriptures)

- a. The exposition of the Gurbani in a congregational gathering should be carried out only by a Sikh.
- b. The object of the exposition should only be promoting the understanding of the Guru's tenets.
- c. The exposition can only be of the ten Gurus writings or utterances, Bhai Gurdas's writings, Bhai Nand Lal's writings or of any generally accepted Panthic book or of books of history (which are in agreement with the Guru's tenants) and not of a book of any other faith. However, for illustration, references to a holy person's teachings or those contained in a book may be made.

### Article XIV - Expository Discourse

No discourse contrary to the Guru's tenets should be delivered inside a gurdwara.

### Article XV - Gurdwara Service

In the gurdwara the schedule of the congregational service generally is:

Ceremonial opening of the Guru Granth Sahib, Kirtan, exposition of scriptures, expository discourses, recitation of Anand Sahib, the Ardas (see Article IV (3) (a) above), the raising of Fateh slogan and then the slogan Sat Sri Akal and taking the Hukam.

# Rehat Maryada: Section Four

## Chapter X - Beliefs, Observances, Duties, Taboos and Ceremonies

### Article XVI - Living in Consonance with Guru's Tenets

A Sikh's living, earning livelihood, thinking and conduct should accord with the Guru's tenets. The Guru's tenets are:

- a. Worship should be rendered only to the One Timeless Being and to no god or goddess.
- b. Regarding the ten Gurus, the Guru Granth and the ten Gurus word alone as saviors and holy objects of veneration.
- c. Regarding ten Gurus as the effulgence of one light and one single entity.
- d. Not believing in cast or descent, untouchability, magic, spells, incantation, omens, auspicious times, days and occasions, influence of start, horoscopic dispositions, **shradh** (ritual serving of food to priests for the salvation of ancestors on appointed days as per the lunar calendar), ancestor worship, **khiah** (ritual serving of food to priests - Brahmins - on the lunar anniversaries of the death of an ancestor), **pind** (offering of funeral barley cakes to the deceased's relatives), **patal** (ritual donation of food in the belief that that would satisfy the hunger of the departed soul), **diva** (the ceremony of keeping an oil lamp lit for 360 days after the death, in the belief that that lights the path of the deceased), ritual funeral acts, hom (lighting of ritual fire and pouring intermittently clarified butter, food grains etc. into it for propitiating gods for the fulfillment of a purpose) **jag** (religious ceremony involving presentation of oblations), **tarpan** (libation), **sikha-sut** (keeping a tuft of hair on the head and wearing thread), **bhadan** (shaving of head on the death of a parent), fasting on new or full moon or other days, wearing of frontal marks on the forehead, wearing thread, wearing of a necklace of the pieces of tulsii stalk [A plant with medicinal properties], veneration of any graves, of monuments erected to honour the memory of a deceased person or of cremation sites, idolatry and such like superstitious observances. [Most, though not all rituals and ritual or religious observances listed in this clause are Hindu rituals and observances. The reason is that the old rituals and practices, continued to be observed by large numbers of Sikhs even after their conversion from their old to the new faith and a large bulk of the Sikh novices were Hindu converts. Another reason for this phenomenon was the strangle-hold of the Brahmin priest on Hindus secular and religious life which the Brahmin priest managed to maintain even on those leaving the Hindu religious fold, by his astute mental dexterity and rare capacity for compromise. That the Sikh novitiates include a sizable number of Muslims is shown by inclusion in this clause of the taboos as to the sanctity of graves, shirni, etc.]

Not owning up or regarding as hallowed any place other than the Guru's place - such, for instance, as sacred spots or places of pilgrimage of other faiths.

Not believing in or according any authority to Muslim seers, Brahmins holiness, soothsayers, clairvoyants, oracles, promise of an offering on the fulfillment of a wish, offering of sweet loaves or rice pudding at graves on fulfillment of wishes, the Vedas, the Shastras, the Gayatri (Hindu scriptural prayer unto the sun), the Gita, the Quran, the Bible, etc.. However, the study of the books of other faiths for general self-education is admissible.

- e. The Khalsa should maintain its distinctiveness among the professors of different religions of the world, but should not hurt the sentiment of any person professing another religion.
- f. A Sikh should pray to God before launching off any task.
- g. Learning Gurmukhi (Punjabi in Gurmukhi script) is essential for a Sikh. He should pursue other studies also.

- h.** It is a Sikh's duty to get his children educated in Sikhism.
- i.** A Sikh should, in no way, harbour any antipathy to the hair of the head with which his child is born. He should not temper with the hair with which the child is born. He should add the suffix "Singh" to the name of his son. A Sikh should keep the hair of his sons and daughters intact.
- j.** A Sikh must not take hemp (cannabis), opium, liquor, tobacco, in short any intoxicant. His only routine intake should be food.
- k.** Piercing of the nose or ears for wearing ornaments is forbidden for Sikh men and women.
- l.** A Sikh should not kill his daughter, nor should he maintain any relationship with a killer of daughter.
- m.** The true Sikh of the Guru shall make an honest living by lawful work.
- n.** A Sikh shall regard a poor person's mouth as the Guru's cash offerings box.
- o.** A Sikh should not steal, form dubious associations or engage in gambling.
- p.** He who regards another man's daughter as his own daughter, regards another man's wife as his mother, has coition with his own wife alone, he alone is a truly disciplined Sikh of the Guru.
- q.** A Sikh shall observe the Sikh rules of conduct and conventions from his birth right up to the end of his life.
- r.** A Sikh, when he meets another Sikh, should greet him with **"Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh" [The Khalsa is Waheguru's; victory too is His!]**. This is ordained for Sikh men and women both.
- s.** It is not proper for a Sikh woman to wear a veil or keep her face hidden by veil or cover.
- t.** For a Sikh, there is no restriction or requirement as to dress except for he must wear Kachhehra [A drawer type garment fastened by a fitted string round the waist, very often worn as underwear] and turban. A Sikh woman may or may not tie turban.

## Chapter XI - Ceremonies pertaining to Social Occasions

### Article XVII - Ceremonies pertaining to Birth and Naming of Child

**a.** In a Sikh's household, as soon after the birth of a child as the mother becomes capable of moving about and taking bath (irrespective of the number of days which that takes), the family and relatives should go to a gurdwara with karhah prashad (sacred pudding) or get karhah prashad made in the gurdwara and recite in the holy presence of the Guru Granth Sahib such hymns as "**parmeshar dita bana**" (Sorath M. 5 ,Guru Granth Sahib p. 628 ), "**Satguru sache dia bhej**" (Asa M. 5 , Guru Granth Sahib p. 396 ) that are expressive of joy and thankfulness. Thereafter if a reading of the holy Guru Granth Sahib had been taken up, that should be concluded. Then the holy Hukam (command) should be taken. A name starting with the first letter of the hymn of the Hukam (command) should be proposed by the granthi (man in attendance of the holy book) and, after its acceptance by the congregation, the name should be announced by him. The boy's name must have the suffix "**Singh**" and the girl's, the suffix "**Kaur**".

After that the Anand Sahib (short version comprising six stanzas) should be recited and the Ardas in appropriate terms expressing joy over the naming ceremony be offered and the karhah prashad distributed.

**b.** The superstition as to the pollution of food and water in consequence of birth must not be subscribed to [There is a wide-spread belief among certain sections of Indian people that a birth in a household causes pollution (sutak) which is removed by the thorough bathing of the mother, the baby and persons attending on her as also by a thorough cleaning of the house, the utensils and the clothes, after prescribed periods of ten, twenty one and forty days.], for the holy writ is:

**"The birth and death are by His ordinance; coming and going is by His will. All food and water are, in principle, clean, for these life-sustaining substances are provided by Him."**



c. Making shirts or frocks for children out of the Holy Book's draperies is a sacrilege.

## Article XVIII - Anand Sanskar (Lit. Joyful Ceremony)

a. A Sikh man and woman should enter wedlock without giving thought to the prospective spouse's caste and descent.

b. A Sikh's daughter must be married to a Sikh.

c. A Sikh's marriage should be solemnized by Anand marriage rites.

d. Child marriage is taboo for Sikhs.

e. When a girl becomes marriageable, physically, emotionally and by virtue of maturity of character, a suitable Sikh match should be found and she be married to him by Anand marriage rites.

f. Marriage may not be preceded by engagement ceremony. But if an engagement ceremony is sought to be held, a congregational gathering should be held and, after offering the Ardas before the Guru Granth Sahib, a kirpan, a steel bangle and some sweets may be tendered to the boy.

g. Consulting horoscopes for determining which day or date is auspicious or otherwise for fixing the day of the marriage is a sacrilege. Any day that the parties find suitable by mutual consultation should be fixed.

h. Putting on floral or gilded face ornamentation, decorative headgear or red thread bands round the wrist, worshipping of ancestors, dripping feet in mild mixed with water, cutting a berry or jandi (*Prosopis spicigera*) bushes, filling pitcher, ceremony of retirement in feigned displeasure, reciting couplets, performing havans [sacrificial fire], installing vedi (a wooden canopy or pavilion under which Hindu marriages are performed), prostitutes dances, drinking liquor, are all sacrileges.

i. The marriage party should be as small a number of people as the girl's people desire. The two sides should greet each other singing sacred hymns and finally by the Sikh greeting of **Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh**.

j. For marriage, there should be a congregational gathering in the holy presence of Guru Granth Sahib. There should be hymn-singing by ragis or by the whole congregation. Then the girl and boy should be made to sit facing the Guru Granth Sahib. The girl should sit on the left side of the boy. After soliciting the congregation's permission, the master of the marriage ceremony (who may be a man or woman) should bid the boy and girl and their parents or guardians to stand and should offer the Ardas for the commencement of the Anand marriage ceremony.

The officiant should then appraise the boy and girl of the duties and obligations of conjugal life according to the Gurus tenets.

He should initially give to the two an exposition of their common mutual obligations. He should tell them how to model the husband-wife relationship on the love between the individual soul and the Supreme Soul in the light of the contents of circumambulation (lavan) hymns in the Suhi measure (rag) section of the Guru Granth Sahib.

He should explain to them the notion of the state of "**a single soul in two bodies**" to be achieved through love and make them see how they may attain union with the Immortal Being discharging duties and obligations of the householders life. Both of them, they should be told, have to make their conjugal union a means to the fulfillment of the purpose of the journey of human existence; both have to lead clean and Guru-oriented lives through the instrumentality of their union.

He should then explain to the boy and girl individually their respective conjugal duties as husband and wife.

The bridegroom should be told that the girl's people having chosen him as the fittest match from among a whole lot, he should regard his wife as his better half, accord to her unflinching love and share with her all that he has. In all situations, he should protect her person and honour, he should be completely loyal to her and he should show as much respect and consideration for her parents and relations as for his own.

The girl should be told that she has been joined in matrimony to her man in the hallowed presence of the Guru Granth Sahib and the congregation. She should ever harbour for him deferential solicitude, regard him the lord and master of her love and trust; she should remain firm in her loyalty to him and serve him in joy and sorrow and in every clime (native or foreign) and should show the same regard and consideration to his parents and relatives as she would, to her own parents and relatives.

The boy and girl should bow before the Guru Granth Sahib to betoken their acceptance of these instructions. Thereafter, the girl's father or the principal relation should make the girl grasp one end of the sash which the boy is wearing over his shoulders and the person in attendance of the Guru Granth Sahib should recite the matrimonial circumambulation stanzas (lavan of the fourth Guru in the Suhi musical measure section of the Guru Granth). After the conclusion of the recitation of each of the stanzas, the boy, followed by the girl holding the end of the sash, should go round the Guru Granth Sahib while the ragis or the congregation sing out the recited stanza.

The boy and girl, after every circumambulation, should bow before the Guru Granth Sahib in genuflexion, lowering their forehead to touch the ground and then stand up to listen to the recitation of the next stanza. There being four matrimonial circumambulation stanzas in the concerned hymn, the proceeding will comprise four circumambulations with the incidental singing of the stanza. After the fourth circumambulation, the boy and girl should, after bowing before the Guru Granth Sahib, sit down at the appointed place and the ragis or the person who has conducted the ceremony should recite the first five and the last stanza of the Anand Sahib. Thereafter, the Ardas should be offered to mark the conclusion of the Anand marriage ceremony and the sacred pudding distributed.

**k.** Persons professing faiths other than the Sikh faith cannot be joined in wedlock by the Anand Karaj ceremony.

**l.** No Sikh should accept a match for his/her son or daughter for monetary consideration.

**m.** If the girl's parents at any time or on any occasion visit their daughter's home and a meal is ready there, they should not hesitate to eat there. Abstaining from eating at the girl's home is a superstition. The Khalsa has been blessed with the boon of victuals and making others eat by the Guru and the Immortal Being. The girl's and boy's people should keep accepting each other's hospitality, because the Guru has joined them in relationship of equality.

**n.** If a woman's husband has died, she may, if she so wishes, finding a match suitable for her, remarry. For a Sikh man whose wife has died, similar ordinance obtains.

**o.** The remarriage may be solemnized in the same manner as the Anand marriage.

**p.** Generally, no Sikh should marry a second wife if the first wife is alive.

**q.** A baptized Sikh ought to get his wife baptized.

## Article XIX - Funeral Ceremonies

**a.** The body of a dying or dead person, if it is on a cot, must not be taken off the cot and put on the floor. Nor must a lit lamp be placed beside, or a cow got bestowed in donation by, him/her or for his/her good or any other ceremony, contrary to Guru's way, performed. Only Gurbani should be recited or "**Waheguru, Waheguru**" repeated by his/her side.

**b.** When some one shuffles the mortal coil, the survivors must not grieve or raise a hue and cry or indulge in breast beating. To induce a mood of resignation to God's will, it is desirable to recite Gurbani or repeat "**Waheguru**".

**c.** However young and deceased may be, the body should be cremated. However, where arrangements for cremation cannot be made, there should be no qualm about the body being immersed in flowing water or disposed of in any other manner.

**d.** As to the time of cremation, no consideration as to whether it should take place during day or night should weigh.

**e.** The dead body should be bathed and clothed in clean clothes. While that is done, the Sikh symbols - **comb, kachha, karha, kirpan** - should not be taken off. Thereafter, putting the body on a plank, Ardas about its being taken away for disposal be offered. The hearse should then be lifted and taken to the cremation ground; hymns that induce feeling of detachment should be recited. On reaching the cremation ground, the pyre should be laid. Then the Ardas for consigning the body to fire be offered. The dead body should then be placed on the pyre and the son or any other relation or friend of the deceased should set fire to it. The accompanying congregation should sit at a reasonable distance and listen to kirtan or carry on collective singing of hymns or recitation of detachment-inducing hymns. When the pyre is fully aflame, the Kirtan Sohila (prescribed pre-retirement night Scriptural prayer) should be recited and the Ardas offered. (Piercing the Skull half and hour or so after the pyre has been burning with a rod or something else in the belief that that will secure the release of the soul - kapal kriya - is contrary to the Guru's tenets). The congregation should then leave.

Coming back home, a reading of the Guru Granth Sahib should be commenced at home or in a nearby gurdwara, and after reciting the six stanzas of the Anand Sahib, the Ardas, offered and karhah prashad (sacred pudding) distributed. The reading of the Guru Granth Sahib should be completed on the tenth day. If the reading cannot, or is sought not to, be completed on the tenth day, some other day may be appointed for the conclusion of the reading having regard to the convenience of the relatives. The reading of the Guru Granth Sahib should be carried out by the members of the household of the deceased and relatives in cooperation. If possible, Kirtan may be held every night. No funeral ceremony remains to be performed after the "tenth day".

**f.** When the pyre is burnt out, the whole bulk of the ashes, including the burnt bones should be gathered up and immersed in flowing water or buried at that very place and the ground leveled. Raising a monument to the memory of the deceased at the place where his dead body is cremated is taboo.

**g.** Adh marg (the ceremony of breaking the pot used for bathing the dead body amid doleful cries half way towards the cremation ground), organized lamentation by women, foorhi (sitting on a straw mat in mourning for a certain period), diva (keeping an oil lamp lit for 360 days after the death in the belief that that will light the path of the deceased), pind (ritual donating of lumps of rice flour, oat flour, or solidified milk (khoa) for ten days after death), kirya (concluding the funeral proceedings ritualistically, serving meals and making offerings by way of shradh, budha marna (waving of whisk, over the hearse of an old person's dead body and decorating the hearse with festoons), etc. are contrary to the approved code. So too is the picking of the burnt bones from the ashes of the pyre for immersing in the Ganga, at Patalpuri (at Kiratpur), at Kartarpur Sahib or at any other such place.

## Article XX - Other Rites and Conventions

Apart from these rites and conventions, on every happy or sad occasion, such as moving into a new house, setting up a new business (shop), putting a child to school, etc., a Sikh should pray for God's help by performing the Ardas. The essential components of all rites and ceremonies in Sikhism are the recitation of the Gurbani (Sikh Scriptures) and the performing of the Ardas.

# Rehat Maryada: Section Five

## Chapter XII - Altruistic Work

### Article XXI - Voluntary Service

Voluntary service (Sewa) is a prominent part of Sikh religion. Illustrative models of voluntary service are organized, for imparting training, in the gurdwaras. Its simple forms are: sweeping and plastering the floors of the gurdwara [In olden times, buildings, particularly in rural areas had mud and not brick paved or cement floors. To give to these floors firmness and consistency, they were thinly plastered with a diluted compound of mud.], serving water to or fanning the congregation, offering provisions to and rendering any kind of service in the common kitchen-cum-eating house, dusting the shoes of the people visiting the gurdwara, etc.

**a.** Guru's kitchen-cum-Eating House. The philosophy behind the Guru's kitchen-cum-eating house is two fold: to provide training to the Sikhs in voluntary service and to help banish all distinction of high and low, touchable and untouchable from the Sikhs minds.

**b.** All human beings, high or low, and of any caste or colour may sit and eat in the Guru's kitchen-cum-eating house. No discrimination on grounds of the country of origin, colour, caste or religion must be made while making people sit in rows for eating. However, only baptized Sikhs can eat off one plate.

# Rehat Maryada: Section Six

## Chapter XIII - Panthic (Corporator Sikh) Life

### Article XXII - Facets of Corporate Sikh Life

The essential facets of Panthic life are:

1. Guru Panth (The Panth's Guru Status)
2. The ceremony of ambrosial initiation
3. The statute of chastisement for aberrations
4. The statute of collective resolution
5. The appeal against local decisions

### Article XXIII - Panth's Status of Guru-hood

The concept of service is not confined to fanning the congregation, service to and in the common kitchen-cum-eating house, etc. A Sikh's entire life is a life of benevolent exertion. The most fruitful service is the service that secures the optimum good by minimal endeavor. That can be achieved through organized collective action. A Sikh has, for this reason, to fulfill his Panthic obligations (obligations as a member of the corporate entity, the Panth), even as he/she performs his/her individual duties. This corporate entity is the Panth. Every Sikh has also to fulfill his obligations as a unit of the corporate body, the Panth.

a. The Guru Panth (Panth's status of Guruhood) means the whole body of committed baptized Sikhs. This body was fostered by all the ten Gurus and the tenth Guru gave it its final shape and invested it with Guruhood.

### Article XXIV - Ceremony of Baptism or Initiation

a. Ambrosial baptism should be held at an exclusive place away from common human traffic.

b. At the place where ambrosial baptism is to be administered, the holy Guru Granth Sahib should be installed and ceremonially opened. Also present should be six committed baptized Sikhs, one of whom should sit in attendance of the Guru Granth Sahib and the other five should be there to administer the ambrosial baptism. These six may even include Sikh women. All of them must have taken bath and washed their hair.

c. The five beloved ones who administer ambrosial baptism should not include a disabled person, such as a person who is blind or blind in one eye, lame, one with a broken or disabled limb, or one suffering from some chronic disease. The number should not include anyone who has committed a breach of the Sikh discipline and principles. All of them should be committed baptized Sikhs with appealing personalities.

d. Any man or woman of any country, religion or cast who embraces Sikhism and solemnly undertakes to abide by its principles is entitled to ambrosial baptism.

The person to be baptized should not be of very young age; he or she should have attained a plausible degree of discretion. The person to be baptized must have taken bath and washed the hair and must wear all **five K's** - **Kesh** (unshorn hair), strapped **Kirpan** (sword), **Kachhehra** (prescribed shorts), **Kanga** (Comb tucked in the tied up hair), **Karha** (Steel bracelet). He/she must not have on his/her person any token of any other faith. He/she must not have his/her head bare or be wearing a cap. He/she must not be wearing any ornaments piercing through any part of the body. The persons to be baptized must stand respectfully with hands folded facing the Guru Granth Sahib.

e. Anyone seeking to be re-baptized, having committed an aberration should be singled out and the five beloved ones should award chastisement to him/her in the presence of the congregation.

f. One from amongst the five beloved ones administering ambrosial baptism to persons seeking to be baptized should explain the principles of the Sikh religion to them:

The Sikh religion advocated the renunciation of the worship of any created thing, and rendering of worship and loving devotion to, and meditating on, the One Supreme Creator. For the fulfillment of such devotion and meditation, reflection on the contents of Gurbani and practicing of its tenets, participation in the congregational services, rendering service to the Panth, benevolent exertion (to promote the good of others), love of God's name (loving reflection on the experience of the Divine), living within the Sikh discipline after getting baptized etc. are the principal means.

He should conclude his exposition of the principles of Sikh religion with the query: Do you accept these willingly?

g. On an affirmative response from the seekers of baptism, one from amongst the five beloved ones should perform the Ardas for the preparation of baptism and take the holy Hukam (command). The five beloved ones should come close to the bowl for preparing the amrit (ambrosial nectar).

h. The bowl should be of pure steel and it should be placed on a clean steel ring or other clean support.

i. Clean water and sugar puffs should be put in the bowl and the five beloved ones should sit around it in bir posture [Sitting in bir posture comprises sitting resting the body on the right leg, the right calf and foot gathered inward and the left leg up to the shin kept in a vertical position.] and recite the under mentioned scriptural compositions.

j. The scriptural compositions to be recited are: The Japuji, the Jaap, The Ten Sawayyas (commencing with sarawag sud), The Bainti Chaupai (from "hamri karo hath dai rachha" to "susht dokh te leho bachai"), the first five and the last one stanza of the Anand Sahib.

k. Each of the five beloved ones who recite the scripture should hold the edge of the bowl with his left hand and keep stirring the water with a double-edged sword held in his right hand. He should do that with full concentration. The rest of the beloved ones should keep gripping the edge of the bowl with both hands concentrating their full attention on the ambrosial nectar.

l. After the conclusion of the recitation, one from amongst the beloved ones should perform the Ardas.

m. Only that person seeking to be baptized who has participated in the entire ceremony of ambrosial baptism can be baptized. One who has turned up while the ceremony was in progress cannot be baptized.

n. After the Ardas as per clause (1) above, thinking of our Father, the tenth Master, the wearer of the aigrette, every person seeking to be baptized should sit in bir posture, putting his/her right hand cupped on the left cupped hand and be made to drink the ambrosial mix five times, as the beloved one who pours the mix into his cupped hand exclaims: say, **Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh! (The Khalsa is of the Wondrous Destroyer of darkness; victory too, is His!)** The person being baptized should after imbibing the ambrosia, repeat: **Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh.** Then five handfuls of the ambrosial mix should be sprinkled into the eyes of the person being baptized and another five into his hair. Each such sprinkling should be accompanied by the beloved one administering baptism saying, "**Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji ki Fateh**", and the person being baptized repeating the chant. Whatever ambrosial mix is left over after the administration of the ambrosial baptism to all individual seekers, should be sipped by all (men and women) baptized, together.

o. After this the five beloved ones, all together in chorus, communicating the name of Waheguru to all who have been administered the ambrosial baptism, recite to them the mul mantar (basic creed, seminal chant) and make them repeat it aloud: **ik aunkar satnam karta purakh nirbhau nirwair akal murat ajuni saibhang gur prasad.**

p. After this, one from amongst the five beloved ones should explain to the initiates the discipline of the order: Today you are reborn in the true Guru's household, ending the cycle of migration, and joined the Khalsa Panth (order). Your spiritual father is now Guru Gobind Singh and, spiritual mother, Mata Sahib Kaur. Your place of birth is Kesgarh Sahib and your native place is Anandpur Sahib. You, being the sons

of one father, are, inter-se yourselves and other baptized Sikhs, spiritual brothers. You have become the pure Khalsa, having renounced your previous lineage, professional background, calling (occupation), beliefs, that is, having given up all connections with your caste, descent, birth, country, religion, etc.. You are to worship none except the One Timeless Being - no god, goddess, incarnation or prophet. You are not to think of anyone except the ten Gurus and anything except their gospel as your savior. You are supposed to know Gurmukhi (Punjabi alphabet). (If you do not, you must learn it). And recite, or listen in to the recitation of, the under mentioned scriptural compositions, the daily repetition of which is ordained, every day:

1. The Japuji Sahib
2. The Jaap Sahib
3. The Ten Sawayyas (Quatrains), beginning "sarawag sudh"
4. The Sodar Rahiras and the Sohila.

Besides, you should read from or listen in to the recitation from the Guru Granth. Have, on your person, all the time, the five K's: **The Keshas** (unshorn hair), **the Kirpan** (sheathed sword) [The length of the sword to be worn is not prescribed.], **the Kachhehra** [The Kachhehra (drawers like garment) may be made from any cloth, but its legs should not reach down to below the shins.], **the Kanga** (comb), **the Karha** (steel bracelet) [The karha should be of pure steel.].

The under mentioned four transgressions (tabooed practices) must be avoided:

1. Dishonoring the hair;
2. Eating the meat of an animal slaughtered the Muslim way;
3. Cohabiting with a person other than one's spouse;
4. Using tobacco.

In the event of the commission of any of these transgressions, the transgressor must get rebaptised. If a transgression is committed unintentionally and unknowingly, the transgressor shall not be liable to punishment. You must not associate with a Sikh who had uncut hair earlier and has cut it or a Sikh who smokes. You must ever be ready for the service of the Panth and of the gurdwaras (Sikh places of worship). You must tender one tenth of your earnings to the Guru. In short, you must act the Guru's way in all spheres of activity.

You must remain fully aligned to the Khalsa brotherhood in accordance with the principles of the Khalsa faith. If you commit transgression of the Khalsa discipline, you must present yourself before the congregation and beg pardon, accepting whatever punishment is awarded. You must also resolve to remain watchful against defaults in the future.

**q.** The following individuals shall be liable to chastisement involving automatic boycott:

1. Anyone maintaining relations or communion with elements antagonistic to the Panth including the minas (reprobates), the masands (agents once accredited to local Sikh communities as Guru's representatives, sine discredited for their faults and aberrations), followers of Dhirmal or Ram Rai, etc. users of tobacco or killers of female infants.
2. One who eats/drinks leftovers of the unbaptised or the fallen Sikhs
3. One who dyes his beard
4. One who gives off son or daughter in matrimony for a price or reward
5. Users of intoxicant (hemp, opium, liquor, narcotics, cocaine, etc.)
6. One holding, or being a party to, ceremonies or practices contrary to the Guru's way
7. One who defaults in the maintenance of Sikh discipline

**r.** After this sermon, one from among the five beloved ones should perform the Ardas.

**s.** Thereafter, the Sikh sitting in attendance of the Guru Granth Sahib should take the Hukam. If anyone from amongst those who have received the ambrosial baptism had not earlier been named in accordance with the Sikh naming ceremony, he should renounce his previous name and be given a new name beginning with the first letter of the Hukam now taken.

**t.** And finally, the karhah prashad should be distributed. All the newly launched Sikh men and women should eat the karhah prashad together off the same bowl.



## Article XXV - Method of Imposing Chastisement

- a.** Any Sikh who has committed any default in the observance of the Sikh discipline should approach the nearby Sikh congregation and make a confession of his lapse standing before the congregation.
- b.** The congregation should then, in the holy presence of Guru Granth Sahib, elect from among themselves five beloved ones who should ponder over the suppliant's fault and propose the chastisement (punishment) for it.
- c.** The congregation should not take an obdurate stand in granting pardon. Nor should the defaulter argue about the chastisement. The punishment that is imposed should be some kind of service, especially some service that can be performed with hands.
- d.** And finally an Ardas for correction should be performed.

## Article XXVI - Method of Adopting Gurmatta

- a.** The Gurmatta can only be on a subject that affects the fundamental principles of Sikh religion and for their upholding, such as the questions affecting the maintenance of the status of the Gurus or the Guru Granth Sahib or the inviolability of the Guru Granth Sahib, ambrosial baptism, Sikh discipline and way of life, the identity and structural framework of the Panth. Ordinary issues of religious, educational, social or political nature can be dealt with only in a Matta [resolution].
- b.** A Gurmatta [Holy resolution] can be adopted only by a select primary Panthic group or a representative gathering of the Panth.

## Article XXVII - Appeals against Local Decisions

An appeal can be made to the Akal Takht against a local congregation's decision.