

SIKH REHAT MARYADA

(THE OFFICIAL SIKH CODE OF CONDUCT DOCUMENT)

Easy to Read Version

INTRODUCTION

The Sikh Rehat Maryada is the guiding document that establishes the foundational code for both personal conduct and community life among Sikhs. The standards set forth in this document are observed at Sri Akal Takht Sahib, the supreme Sikh authority, and upheld by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), the principal representative body of Sikhs in Punjab and worldwide. The SGPC manages major historical Gurdwaras and serves as the authoritative voice on Sikh matters. The Sikh Rehat Maryada document is also recognized and widely referenced by Sikh institutions and Gurdwaras across the globe.

It should be understood that the Sikh Rehat Maryada offers a foundational framework rather than a comprehensive account of Sikh discipline. The lived discipline of many Sikhs, rooted in the Guru's guidance, extends beyond this written code. Additional practices arise from the conduct imparted to initiates during the Amrit ceremony, as well as from the unwritten *Gurmat*-based disciplines that remain vibrant within Sikh tradition. For any code or practice to be regarded as *Gurmat*, or in accordance with the Guru's teachings, it must rest upon the principles enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and never contradict them. This ensures continuity between the written code and the living tradition.

The Sikh Rehat Maryada was first published and implemented at Sri Akal Takht Sahib, and in all Gurdwaras managed by the SGPC, in 1936. It has since been refined through subsequent amendments. Today, it continues to be implemented at Sri Akal Takht Sahib and propagated by its custodians. Whenever matters of Sikh conduct arise, this document, together with rulings issued from time to time by Sri Akal Takht Sahib, serves as a central point of reference for Sikhs internationally, alongside the eternal teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

CONTENTS

DEFINITION OF A SIKH	3
SPIRITUAL MEDITATIONAL PRACTICE: NAAM & BANI	3
GURDWARA: SPIRITUAL CENTRE OF LEARNING	6
KIRTAN: SINGING & MUSICAL WORSHIP	9
TAKING HUKAM: A READING FOR DIVINE GUIDANCE	10
SCRIPTURAL READINGS (PAATHS): SEHAJ & AKHAND	11
KARAH PRASHAAD: GURU'S SWEET BLESSING	12
DELIVERING SERMONS: KATHA OF GURBANI	13
GURMAT BASED LIFESTYLE: GURMAT REHNI	14
BIRTH & NAMING CEREMONY: JANAM & NAAM SANSKAAR.....	17
MARRIAGE CEREMONY: ANAND SANSKAAR.....	18
DEATH CEREMONY: MIRTAK SANSKAAR	21
OTHER CEREMONIES	23
SEVA: SELFLESS SERVICE	24
COMMUNAL AUTHORITY: GUR-SANGAT & GURU PANTH.....	24
INITIATION CEREMONY: AMRIT SANSKAAR.....	25
DISCIPLINARIES & RESOLUTIONS: TANKHAH & GURMATTA.....	29

DEFINITION OF A SIKH

A Sikh is any man or woman who:

- Believes in the One Eternal Supreme Being (Akaal Purakh)
 - Accepts the Eternal Guru as revealed in the Ten human forms (Guru Nanak Dev Ji to Guru Gobind Singh Ji) and Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji
 - Honors the *Bani* (Sacred Word) and teachings of all Ten forms of the Guru
 - Recognizes the importance and necessity of *Amrit* as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh Ji
 - Does not hold belief in or affiliation with other religious traditions
-

SPIRITUAL MEDITATIONAL PRACTICE: NAAM & BANIS

1. Amrit Vela (Early Morning Discipline)

A Sikh should wake up during *Amrit Vela* (the last quarter of the night before sunrise), take a bath (*ishnaan*), and focus their mind on the One Eternal Supreme Being (Akaal Purakh), while repeating the Divine-Name “*Vaheguru*”.

2. Nitnem (Daily Scriptural Prayers)

They should then recite the daily set of prayers, known as *Nitnem*. *Nitnem* consists of the following scriptural prayers (*Banis*):

- Morning Prayers:** (i) *Japji Sahib*, (ii) *Jaap Sahib*, (iii) Ten *Svaiyye* (starting at ‘*sraavag sudh*’), (vi) *Benti Chaupai*, and (v) *Anand Sahib*.
- Evening Prayers (After sunset):** *Sodar Rehraas*. The core text consists of:
 - Nine *Shabads* (sacred hymns) from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (from “*so dar*” to “*saran parey kee raakh’hu sarmaa*”)
 - *Benti Chaupai* written by Guru Gobind Singh Ji (from “*hamree karo haath dai rachhaa*” to “*dush’tt dokh tey lehu bachaaee*”)
 - The *Svaiyya* (beginning “*paa’n’eh gehey jab tey tumrey*”) and *Dohra* (beginning “*sagal duaar kau chhaad kai*”)
 - The first five and final *pauris* (verses) of *Anand Sahib*
 - *Mundaavani* and *Salok Mahalla 5* beginning “*teraa keetaa jaato naahee.*”
- Night Prayer (Before going to bed):** *Sohila Sahib*.

3. Ardaas (Formal Standing Prayer)

- a. After completing the morning and evening *Nitnem*, it is important to perform a formal standing *Ardaas* (a prayer asking Vaheguru for guidance, protection, and blessings).

The text of the *Ardaas* is as follows:

ik o'ann-kaar, vaahe'guroo jee kee fateh.

siree bhagautee jee sahaa'e.

vaar siree bhagautee jee kee. paat'shaahee dasveeⁿ.

There is One Supreme Being, through whose Sound all creation flows. All victory belongs to Vaheguru. May the Supreme Power help us! The Tenth Master's heroic divine poem.

pritham bhagautee simar kai, gur naa'nak leyeeⁿ dhiyaa'e. fir angad gur, te amar'daas, raam'daasai ho'eeⁿ sahaa'e. arjan hargobind noo, sim'rau siree har-aa'e. siree har-krishan dhiyaaee'yai, jis ditth'ai sabh dukh jaa'e. teg bahaadar simree'yai, ghar nau nidh aavai dhaa'e. sabh thaaeeⁿ ho'e sahaa'e.

First, I meditate on the Supreme Divine Power (Vaheguru), then I focus my thoughts on Guru Nanak Ji. I then seek the blessings of Guru Angad Ji, Guru Amar Das Ji, and Guru Ram Das Ji. I meditate on Guru Arjan Ji, Guru Hargobind Ji, and Guru Har Rai Ji. I remember Guru Har Krishan Ji, whose graceful sight removes all suffering. I remember Guru Tegh Bahadar Ji, whose remembrance brings divine treasures. May their power assist us everywhere.

dasvaaⁿ paat'shaah, siree guroo gobind singh saahib jee! sabh thaa'eeⁿ ho'e sahaa'e. dasaaⁿ paat'shaahee'aaⁿ dee jot, siree guroo granth saahib jee de paatth dee'daar daa dhiyaan dhar key, bolo jee vaahe'guroo!

Tenth Master, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, may your power assist us everywhere. Focusing on Sacred reading and blessed sight of the Guru's Word of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji— the eternal Divine Light of all Ten embodiments of the Guru, say: Vaheguru!

panjaaⁿ piyaariaaⁿ, chau'haaⁿ saahib'zaadiyaaⁿ, chaalee'yaaⁿ muk'tiyaaⁿ, hatthee'aaⁿ - japee'aaⁿ - tapee'aaⁿ, jin'haaⁿ naam japiyaa - vand chhakiyaa, degg chala'ee - teg vaahee, dekh key an'ditth keetaa, tin'haaⁿ piyaariaaⁿ, sachiyaariaaⁿ dee kamaaee daa dhiyaan dhar key, bolo jee, vaahe'guroo!

Seeking inspiration and strength from the Panj Piaare (Five Beloved Ones), the four Sahibzaade (sons of the Tenth Guru), the Forty Mukte (Liberated Ones), those who had enduring devotion that they put their bodies in discomfort & remained chanting, those who repeated the Holy Name and shared their blessings with others, those who provided food and protection of righteousness for all, those who overlooked other's faults in service to humanity, O Khalsa spirit, chant: "Vaheguru!"

jin'haaⁿ singhaaⁿ singhnee'aaⁿ ney dharam hey't sees dittey, bann'd bann'd kattaa'e, khopree'aaⁿ luhaaee'aaⁿ, charkee'aaⁿ tey charr'hey, aariyaaⁿ naal chiraa'e gaye,

**gur'duaariyaaⁿ dee sevaa leyee kurbaanee'aaⁿ keetee'aaⁿ, dharam nehee haariyaa, sikhee
su'aaasaaⁿ naal nibhaa'ee, tin'haaⁿ dee kamaa'ee daa dhiyaan dhar key bolo jee,
vaahe'guroo!**

Seeking inspiration and strength from the acts of devotion of Sikh men & women who gave their lives for their faith; those who were hacked to pieces (but refused to give in); those who had their scalps removed (but refused to cut their holy hair); those who were tortured in wheels (but never let their love for Sikhi be crushed); those who were sawn alive (but refused to part with the Guru); those who gave up their lives in the service of Gurdwaras; those who never gave up the Path of the Guru; and upheld Sikh values with each hair and breath, O Khalsa spirit, chant: "Vaheguru!"

panjaaⁿ takh'taaⁿ, sarbat gur'duaariyaaⁿ daa dhiyaan dhar key, bolo jee, vaahe'guroo!
Seeking inspiration from thinking of all the five Takhts (the symbols of our bestowed kingship) and all Gurdwaras, say: "Vaheguru!"

**prith'mey sarbat khaalsaa jee kee ardaas hai jee, sarbat khaalsaa jee ko vaahe'guroo -
vaahe'guroo - vaahe'guroo - chit aa'vai, chit aa'van ka sad'kaa sarab sukh hovey. jahaaⁿ jahaaⁿ
khaalsaa jee saahib, taa'haaⁿ taa'haaⁿ rachhiyaa riyaa'et, deg - teg - fateh, panth kee jeet,
siree saahib jee sahaa'e, khaalsaa jee key bol baaley, bolo jee vaahe'guroo!!**

Now the prayer of the entire Khalsa is that may it first always remember "Vaheguru" (in thought), "Vaheguru" (in word), "Vaheguru" (in deed) that brings peace & happiness to all. Wherever the Khalsa goes, may its honour be protected; may it be successful in providing food and protecting justice for all; may its loving nature be honoured; may the Panth (the Path) be glorious; may the holy sword of peace always be of assistance; and may the Khalsa's reach & influence be universal. Chant: "Vaheguru!"

**sikhaaⁿ noo sikhee daan, kes daan, rehat daan, bibek daan, visaah daan, bharosaa daan,
daanaaⁿ sir daan - naam daan, siree amritsar jee de ish'naan, chaunkee'aaⁿ - jhann'ddey -
bunn'gey - jugo jug attal, dharam kaa jai'kaar, bolo jee vaahe'guroo!!!**

Grant Sikhs with the gift of Sikhi, gift of Kes (hair – divine form), Rehat (divine discipline), the gift of Bibek (divine wisdom); the gift of Bharosa (divine faith); the gift of Visaah (divine trust) & the greatest gift of Naam. May they be blessed with bathing in the holy waters of Sri Amritsar. May the Sikh traditions, flags & spiritual learning centres stand strong forever; and righteousness remain victorious. Say: "Vaheguru!"

sikhaaⁿ daa man nee'vaaⁿ, mat uchee, mat daa raa'khaa aap vaahe'guroo!
May the minds of Sikhs remain humble, and their wisdom rise. O Vaheguru, protector of wisdom, guide us!

**hey a'kaal purakh, aap'ney panth dey sadaa sahaa'ee daa'taar jee'o! siree nan'kaanaa saahib
tey hor gur'duaariyaaⁿ gur'dhaamaaⁿ dey, jin'haaⁿ toh panth noo vichhoriyaaⁿ gayaa hai,
khul'hey darshan dee'daar tey sevaa samm'bhaal daa daan khaalsaa jee noo bakh'sho!**
O Akaal Purakh! Constant Helper of Your Panth! Bless the Khalsa with the gift of freely visiting and managing Sri Nankana Sahib and all the other Gurdwaras and Sikh shrines that have become

separated from the Sikh Panth (nation).

**hey nimaaniyaaⁿ dey maan, nitaaniyaaⁿ dey taan, ni'ottiyaaⁿ dee oh'tt, sachey pitaa,
vaahe'guroo! aap dey hazoor dee ardaas hai jee!**

*O True Father, Vaheguru! Honour of the honourless, Power of the helpless ones, Shelter of the
shelterless! Before you the humble prayer is.....*

akhar vaadhaa ghaattaa bhul chuk maaf karnee. sarbat dey kaaraj raas karney.

Forgive our mistakes & shortcomings. Kindly help everyone to fulfill their divine assigned tasks.

seyee piyaare mey'l, jin'haaⁿ miliyaa teraa naam chit aavey.

naa'nak naam charh'dee kalaa, tere bhaaney sarbat da bhallaa.

May we be blessed with the company of those by meeting whom, we remember Your Holy Name.

O Guru Nanak! May Naam lead to rising spirits, and may all humanity prosper in Your Will.

Conclusion of Ardaas

At the conclusion of the *Ardaas*, the entire *Sangat* (congregation) participating should respectfully *matha tek* (bow by touching the forehead to the floor) before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, then stand up and say, “*Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh*” (“The Khalsa belongs to Vaheguru, and all victories/achievements belong to Vaheguru”). The *Sangat* should then raise the spirited chant of “*Sat Siree Akaal*” (“Vaheguru is Eternal and True”).

Posture and Conduct During Ardaas

- a. During the *Ardaas*, all men and women present should stand with folded hands (palms of their hands pressed together). The person sitting behind Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji should also stand and respectfully wave the *Chaur Sahib* (the royal whisk).
- b. The person leading the *Ardaas* should stand in front of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, with folded hands (palms of their hands pressed together). If Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is not present, it is acceptable for them to face any suitable direction and offer the *Ardaas*.
- c. When a personal *Ardaas* is offered for a specific individual or group, it is not required for the rest of the *Sangat* (congregation) to stand.

GURDWARA: SPIRITUAL CENTRE OF LEARNING

Importance of Saadh Sangat

- a. The influence of *Gurbani* (the Guru’s Word) is most effectively experienced in the presence of the *Saadh Sangat* (the holy congregation). For this reason, it is considered appropriate and beneficial for

Sikhs to attend *Gurdwaras*—places where the Sikh community gathers—and to engage with *Gurbani* by sitting among the *Saadh Sangat*.

Respectful Care of Guru Sahib

- b. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji should be respectfully enthroned (*Parkash*) in the Gurdwara daily. Unless there is a specific reason requiring otherwise, Guru Sahib should not remain in *Parkash* during the night. As per tradition, after the evening recitation of Rehraas Sahib, Guru Sahib is respectfully retired (*Sukh Aasan*). However, *Parkash* may be maintained for longer if a *Granthi* (appointed scripture reader), *Sevadaar* (volunteer), or members of the *Sangat* are present, or if there is a concern regarding the potential for disrespect. Following this, it is proper to respectfully perform *Sukh Aasan*, in order to prevent any possibility of disrespect toward Guru Sahib.
- c. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji must always be enthroned (*Parkash*), read, and cared for with deep respect. The area should be clean, and a cloth-canopy (*Chandowa Sahib*) should be respectfully suspended above Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as a mark of royal honour. *Parkash* (enthronement) of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji should be performed on the *Manji Sahib* (the special raised platform or throne for the Guru) after clean and tidy cloths have been respectfully laid out. Soft supports such as cushions should be used to carefully position the physical form of Guru Sahib during *Parkash*, and a *Rumala Sahib* (decorative cloth covering of appropriate size) should be placed over the top. When Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is not being read, Guru Sahib should remain covered with a *Rumala Sahib*. A *Chaur Sahib* (ceremonial whisk-fan) should also be present during *Parkash*.
- d. Apart from the respectful items mentioned above, practices such as burning incense or lamps (*deevay*) to perform *Aarti* (worship involving the waving of lighted lamps), ritualistically offering food items to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (in belief that Guru Sahib becomes hungry or requires feeding), lighting symbolic flames (*jotaaⁿ*) for the purpose of worship, ringing bells (*tal*) as a means of invoking or awakening the Divine, and other similar acts are not in accordance with *Gurmat* (the Guru's teachings). However, the use of flowers, incense, or other natural fragrances to keep the space pleasant is not prohibited. For lighting within the room, appropriate sources such as oil lamps, ghee lamps, candles, electric lights, or other practical lighting should be used.
- e. No book (*pustak*) should ever be placed at the same level or in the position of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. There should be no idol worship or any other practice or ceremony that goes against *Gurmat* (the Guru's teachings) in the Gurdwara, nor should any festivals of another faith be celebrated. It is, however, not inappropriate to use an occasion or gathering to share and teach *Gurmat* (the Guru's teachings).
- f. Actions such as pressing the legs of the cot that Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji lays rest as an act of flattery, rubbing one's nose on walls or platforms that mark a sacred place to seek blessings, placing water underneath the *Manji Sahib* (the platform where Guru Sahib is seated), making or keeping idols or

statues (*murtis*) in Gurdwaras, or bowing before pictures depicting any of the Sikh Gurus or respected Sikh elders — all these practices are considered *Manmat* (self-created beliefs that go against the Guru's teachings).

Conduct During Parkash and Ardaas

- g. When Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is being taken from one place to another, an *Ardaas* should be performed. The person carrying Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji on their head should walk barefoot. However, if it is necessary to wear shoes due to a situation, there is no need to have any doubts or reservations.
- h. *Parkash* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji should be done after performing *Ardaas*. After *Parkash*, a *Vaak* (holy command) of a *Shabad* should be read from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.
- i. Whenever Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is being carried into a place, every Sikh present should stand up out of respect, even if a *Saroop* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji is already *Parkash* (enthroned) there.

Entering and Behaviour in the Gurdwara

- j. When entering a *Gurdwara*, shoes, including socks, must be removed outside, and ensure they are clean. If the feet are dirty, they should be washed with water. While walking around (performing *Parkarmaa* of) Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji or the Gurdwara, one should keep them on their right side as a sign of respect.
- k. No one is forbidden from entering a Gurdwara for darshan (viewing or paying respects), regardless of their country, religion, or caste — but they should not bring anything that goes against Sikh principles, such as tobacco.
- l. Upon entering the Gurdwara, a Sikh's first act should be to humbly bow before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Afterward, they should respectfully greet the *Guru-roop Sangat* (the congregation that embodies the Guru's presence) by saying '*Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh*' in a discreet and quiet manner (so as not to disturb or draw attention from others).
- m. There should be no discrimination or prejudice when it comes to sitting in the *Sangat* (congregation) — whether someone is Sikh or non-Sikh, or based on caste, social status, or Brahminical beliefs that classify people as high or low, touchable or untouchable by birth.
- n. It is *Manmat* (self-created beliefs that are contrary to the Guru's teachings) for anyone to sit in the *sangat* (congregation) or in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, when *Parkash* (enthroned), on a cushion, elevated seat, chair, stool, or in any manner that suggests special distinction, status, or pride.

- o. No Sikh should sit bare-headed in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji or the Sangat. It is against *Gurmat* (the Guru's teachings) for Sikh women to practice veiling (*pardah*) or cover their faces (*ghund* or *jhund*) in the *Sangat*.

Centres of Authority and Traditions

- p. There are five *Takhats* (recognised places of authority):
- i. Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, Amritsar
 - ii. Takhat Sri Harmandar Ji, Sri Patna Sahib
 - iii. Takhat Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur
 - iv. Takhat Sri Hazoor Sahib, Nanded
 - v. Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo.
- q. Only an *Amritdhari* (fully initiated) Sikh man or woman, who strictly observes the *Rehat* (code of conduct), is permitted to enter the designated sacred areas within the *Takhats*. *Ardaas* (prayer) may be offered at the *Takhats* for any individual, Sikh or non-Sikh, except for those who are *Patit* (apostates) or *Tankhaiya* (those guilty of religious misconduct or under religious penalty).
- r. Every Gurdwara must have a *Nishan Sahib* (Sikh flag) installed at a prominent and elevated location. The cloth covering the *Nishan Sahib* should be either *Basanti* (bright spring-yellow) or *Surmaee* (dark blue), and the top of the flagpole should be adorned with either a *Sarbloh* (pure iron) spearhead (*bhaalaa*) or a *Sarbloh Khanda* (double-edged sword made of pure-iron).
- s. A *Nagaara* (traditional large ceremonial royal victory drum) should be present in the Gurdwara and played at appropriate times, representing Sikh sovereignty and awakening the spirit warrior within.

KIRTAN: SINGING & MUSICAL WORSHIP

Who May Perform

- a. Only a Sikh is permitted to lead or formally perform *Kirtan* in the presence of the *Sangat* (congregation).

Nature of Kirtan

- b. *Kirtan* refers to the singing of *Gurbani* to melodic frameworks (*Raags*).
- c. In the *Sangat* (congregational setting), *Kirtan* must consist solely of *Gurbani* or the acknowledged writings of Bhai Gurdas Ji and Bhai Nand Lal Ji, which are recognised as interpretive extensions of *Gurbani*.

Respect for Gurbani

- d. It is not permissible to add made-up words or lines to *Shabads* when singing *Gurbani*, whether it is performed as collective group singing (*jotteaaa*) in simple folk tunes (*dhaarna*) or in traditional *Raag*. Only the original lines of the *Shabad* may be repeated during the singing.

TAKING HUKAM: A READING FOR DIVINE GUIDANCE

Reverence and Proper Practice

- a. *Matha tekna* (bowing by touching the forehead to the floor) before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, respectfully taking darshan (the holy glimpse) of the *Guru-roop Sangat* (the congregation that embodies the Guru's presence) and taking a *Vaak* (holy edict): these together constitute having darshan (a glimpse) of *Satguru* (the True Guru). Raising the *Rumala Sahib* (drapery) covering Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and merely taking a look or making others take a look in this manner without taking a *Vaak* is *Manmat* (a self-created belief that is contrary to the Guru's Way).

Discipline in the Sangat

- b. In the *Sangat*, at any one given time, only one thing should be done, whether it is performing *Kirtan*, delivering *Katha* (discourse), interpreting *Gurbani* or reading *Gurbani*.

Eligibility and Roles

- c. Only a Sikh (man or woman) is entitled to be in attendance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji during a *Divaan* (congregational session).
- d. Only a Sikh may read out *Gurbani* for the *Sangat*. However, a non-Sikh may read *Gurbani* for themselves.

Procedure for Taking Hukam

- e. When taking the *Hukam* (holy edict), the on-going *Shabad* on the top left-hand *Ang* (sacred page) must be read from the beginning. If the *Shabad* begins on the previous *Ang*, turn over the *Ang* and read the whole *Shabad* from the beginning to the end. If the on-going scriptural composition on the top left-hand *Ang* (sacred page) is a *vaar* (ode), then start from the first of the *saloks* that comes before the *pauri* and read up to the end of the *pauri*. Conclude the reading at the last line of the *Shabad*, where the name 'Nanak' for example occurs.
- f. Hukam must be taken at the end of the *Divaan* (congregational session) or after the *Ardaas* for *Bhog* (completion).

SCRIPTURAL READINGS (PAATHS): SEHAJ & AKHAND

Sehaj / Sadhaaran Paath (non-continuous complete scriptural reading)

- a. Every Sikh should as far as possible, maintain a separate and exclusive place for the *Parkaash* (installation) of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji in their home.
- b. Every Sikh man, woman, boy or girl, should learn *Gurmukhi* to be able to read Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.
- c. Every Sikh should take a *Hukam* from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji at *Amrit Vela*, the early hours of the morning before dawn, before taking a meal. If there are any difficulties in doing this, then one should read or listen to a reading from Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji sometime during the day. If one cannot do that either, during travel etc., or owing to any other difficulty, one should not feel guilty.
- d. It would be good for every Sikh to continue a personal *Sehaj Paath* (non-continuous complete reading of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji) and complete the full reading in one or two months (or however long it takes).
- e. When undertaking a full reading of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, one should recite *Anand Sahib* (the first five and the last *pauris*), followed by an *Ardaas*. One should, thereafter, read *Japji Sahib*.

Akhand Paath (continuous complete scriptural reading)

- a. An *Akhand Paath* (a non-stop reading of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji) is carried out during times of hardship or encouragement. It usually takes around 48 hours. The reading is done non-stop without interruption. The reading must be clear and correct. It is disrespectful to *Gurbani* if the reading is done too fast, so that the person listening to it cannot understand the reading. The reading should be correct and clear, with due care given to the letters and sounds, even if it takes a little longer to complete.
- b. Whichever family or *Sangat* undertakes an *Akhand Paath*, they should complete it through its members, relatives, friends, etc., all together. The number of *Paathis* (reciters) is not prescribed. If a person cannot read themselves, then they should listen to the reading by any competent *Paathi* (reader). However, it should never be allowed to happen that the reader carries on the reading all by themselves and no member of the *Sangat* or the family are listening to the reading. The *Paathi* should be served with food and clothing to the best of the host's means.
- c. It is *Manmat*, a self-created belief contrary to the Guru's Way, to place a *Kumb* (a ritualistic pot), *Jyot* (a venerated ritualistic flame for purpose of being worshipped), a ritual coconut etc. during an *Akhand Paath*, or to read another *Paath* (scriptural reading) side by side or during the *Akhand Paath*.

Commencing a Sehaj / Sadhaaran Paath or Akhand Paath

When a *Sadhaaran Paath* is to be started, *Prashad* should be presented and then Anand Sahib (six *pauris*) should be recited. This should be followed by offering an *Ardaas* and then taking a *Hukam*. During an *Akhand Paath*, *Karah Prashad* should be present, and then after reciting Anand Sahib (six *pauris*) *Ardaas* should be offered. After taking a *Hukam* the reading of the *Akhand Paath* should begin.

Bhog: Concluding the Scriptural Reading

- a. The complete reading of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (*Sadhaaran* or *Akhand*) should be followed by the reading of 'Mundaavani.' The appended text of 'Raagmala' may or may not be recited according to the local custom or according to the wishes of the person(s) who arranged the reading (*Paath*).
- b. Anand Sahib should then be read, followed by the final *Ardaas* and *Hukam* reading. At the end, *Karah Prashad* should be distributed to the congregation.
- c. At the time of *Akhand Paath* it is usual to give donations for the upkeep of the gurdwara, for example, a *Rumala Sahib* (respected draperies), *Chaur Sahib* (royal whisk), *Chandowa Sahib* (royal awning), or anything else for the furtherance of the Sikh *Panth*. This should be given in accordance with one's means.

KARAH PRASHAAD: GURU'S SWEET BLESSING

Acceptability and Preparation

- a. Only the *Karah Prashad* (sacred blessed pudding) prepared as per the prescribed method is acceptable in the *Sangat*.
- b. The method of preparing *Karah Prashad* is this: Equal quantities of wheat flour, pure sugar and clarified butter should be cooked in a clean pure-iron vessel whilst reciting *Gurbani*. Then covered with a clean piece of cloth, it should be placed on a clean stool in front of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the first five and the last *pauris* (stanzas) of Anand Sahib should be recited aloud (so that the *Sangat* can hear). *Ardaas* should be done and for the acceptance of the *Karah Prashad* it should be touched with a *Kirpan*.

Distribution Protocol

- c. After this, before *Karah Prashad* is distributed to the *Sangat*, the share of the *Panj Piaare* (Five Beloved Ones) should be set apart and given away. The person(s) distributing the *Prashad* should 'tyaar-bar-tyaar' (adhering to full *Rehat*). When distributing the *Karah Prashad* to the Five representing the *Khalsa*, the *Sevadaar* should not ask when giving to the Five whether or not they observe full

Rehat. Instead the *Sevadaar* should use their own personal judgement on who is *tyaar-bar-tyaar* (fully observes *Rehat*) in the *Sangat*.

If there are less than five (which can include the Amrit-dhari sitting in attendance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji) then the *Karah Prashad* (of the Five Singhs) should be distributed to however many they are and then mix the remaining *Karah Prashad* back into the *baatta* (iron bowl) for distributing to the rest of the *Sangat*.

Thereafter, when distributing amongst the *Sangat*, first *Karah Prashad* should be put in a small bowl or vessel and given to the person sitting in attendance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and then continue to distribute amongst the rest of the *Sangat*. The person who gives out the *Karah Prashad* to the *Sangat* should do so without any discrimination based on personal regard or spite. *Karah Prashad* should be given equally irrespective of one being a Sikh, non-Sikh, or a person of so-called high or low caste. While giving out *Karah Prashad* to the *Sangat*, no discrimination should be made on considerations of caste, ancestry, or being regarded, by some, as untouchable.

Offering Karah Parshad with Ardaas

- d. When *Karah Prashad* is being presented for an *Ardaas*, it should be accompanied by at least a small sum cash offering (for the betterment of *Panthic* or humanitarian causes).

DELIVERING SERMONS: KATHA OF GURBANI

Eligibility for Delivering Katha

- a. *Katha* of *Gurbani* (discourse of the Guru's Word) within the *Sangat* (congregation) can only be done by a Sikh.

Purpose of Katha

- b. The objective of *Katha* should only be to promote the understanding of *Gurmat* (the Guru's teachings).

Acceptable Sources for Katha

- c. *Katha* can only be done of the writings or utterances of the Ten Guru-forms, Bhai Gurdas Ji's writings, Bhai Nand Lal Ji's writings or of any generally accepted *Panthic* book, or of books of history (which are in agreement with *Gurmat*), 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.

Prohibition of Anti-Gurmat Teachings

- d. No lecture contrary to *Gurmat* should be delivered inside a Gurdwara.

Usual Gurdwara Sangat Schedule

- e. The usual schedule of the Sangat in the Gurdwara is generally the following: *Prakaash* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (ceremonial opening and enthronement for the commencement of the morning congressional session), *Kirtan*, *Katha*, lecture, reciting of Anand Sahib, *Ardaas*, the raising of the *Fateh* slogan and then the slogan 'Sat Siree Akaal' followed by the *Hukam* reading.

GURMAT BASED LIFESTYLE: GURMAT REHNI

A Sikh's everyday lifestyle, work, and social behaviour should be in accordance with *Gurmat*. *Gurmat* is the following:

Foundations of Sikh Belief

- a. Only worshipping the One Supreme Timeless Being (Akaal Purakh) and not following or worshipping any other deity.
- b. Accepting as one's sole spiritual Saviour and Guide: The One Guru revealed in all ten human forms, Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, and the sacred utterances of all the ten forms of the Guru.
- c. Regarding the Ten Forms of the Guru as a single entity and the embodiment of the one Vaheguru on earth as the Divine-Guiding Light (*Jyot*).

Rejection of Superstitions, Rituals, and Non-Gurmat Practices

- d. Accepting no faith or belief in:
 - Caste divisions (*jaat-paat*)
 - Caste-based exclusion and untouchability (*chhhoot-chhaat*)
 - Mystical devices, diagrams, spells, or texts used to invoke magic (*jantar-mantar-tantar*)
 - Auspicious rituals or omens for good luck (*shagan*)
 - Days considered auspicious (*tithh*)
 - Moments considered auspicious (*mahoorat*)
 - Planets believed to bring good or bad luck (*greh*)
 - Horoscope-based astrology (*raash*)
 - Ritual feeding of priests for the salvation of ancestors (*sharaadh*)
 - Worship of dead ancestors (*pittar*)

- Ritual feeding of Brahmin priests on lunar death anniversaries (*khiaah*)
- Funeral rites of offering barley flour balls on leaves to Brahmins for the deliverance of the dead (*pind-pattal*)
- Keeping an oil lamp lit for 360 days after death in the belief it lights the path of the deceased (*deeva*)
- Hindu funeral acts performed to ensure salvation of the deceased (*kiriya-karam*)
- Ritual fire offerings with clarified butter and grains to please gods (*hom*)
- Fire sacrifices seeking blessings (*jag*)
- Ritual offering of water to gods and ancestors (*tarpan*)
- Ritual shaving of the head while keeping a tuft of hair and wearing a thread (*sikha-soot*)
- Ceremonial shaving of the head on the death of a parent (*bhadan*)
- Fasting on new or full moon or other days
- Ritual forehead marking (*tilak*)
- Wearing of the sacred thread symbolising caste (*janjhu*)
- Wearing of a necklace of Tulsi wood considered sacred (*tulsee-mala*)
- Graves of the dead (*gor*)
- Shrines dedicated to the dead (*matth*)
- Memorials at cremation sites (*marrhee*)
- Idol worship (*moortee-pooja*)
- Pilgrimage sites or shrines of other religions (except those linked to the Guru)
- Muslim seers (*Peers*)
- Hindu priests (*Brahmins*)
- Fortune-telling (*puchhnaa*)
- Ego-driven conditional wishes (*sukhnaa*)
- Offerings of sweet loaves or rice pudding at graves upon fulfilment of wishes (*sheernee*)
- Religious texts of other faiths: the Vedas-Shastras, the Gayatri Hindu prayer to the Sun, the Gita, the Quran and the Bible, etc.

Study of the books of other faiths is acceptable only for general self-education.

Distinct Identity, Prayer, and Education

- e. Although the Khalsa shines above all other religions, with truth no one can equal, one must never intentionally cause pain to the heart of any non-believer.
- f. A Sikh should always perform Ardaas (offer a prayer) to Vaheguru before beginning any task.
- g. Learning *Gurmukhi* (Panjabi in the *Gurmukhi* script) is essential for a Sikh, while also pursuing other subjects of study.

Raising Children in Gursikhi

- h. It is the duty of parents to ensure their children are brought up and educated in the Guru's Sikhi.
- i. Do not wish harm upon your child's hair (*kes*). Their sacred hair must be kept intact, i.e. uncut, and respectfully maintained. A son's first name should be followed by "Singh," and a daughter's by "Kaur." A Sikh is duty-bound to preserve the hair of both sons and daughters as a sacred trust.

Prohibitions on Intoxicants and Body Alteration

- j. A Sikh must not consume intoxicants, whether cannabis (*bhang*), opium, alcohol, tobacco, or any other form of intoxicating substance. One should sustain themselves only through food.
- k. Piercing of the nose, ears, etc., is forbidden for both Sikh men and women.

Moral Conduct and Social Responsibility

- l. A Sikh of the Guru must never kill a daughter, nor commit abortion, nor associate with those who do. To intentionally destroy any unborn or newborn child is against *Gurmat*.
- m. The true Sikh of the Guru shall earn an honest and righteous living.
- n. A Sikh shall regard the mouth of a poor person as the Guru's *Golak* (offerings box).
- o. A Sikh must not commit theft, engage in immoral relationships, or gamble.

Discipline in Relationships

- p. "*par bey'ttee ko bey'ttee jaa'nai. par istree ko maat bakhaa'nai. ap'nee istree so rat ho'ee. rehat'vaan singh hai so'ee.*" - "He who regards another man's daughter as his own daughter, regards another man's wife as his mother, has an intimate relationship with his own wife alone — he alone is a truly disciplined Sikh of the Guru." (Rehat-nama: Bhai Desa Singh Ji, pp. 128–129)

In the same spirit, women should regard those elder than them as their father, those of the same age as their brother, and those younger as their sons, while maintaining an intimate relationship only with their husband.

Daily Conduct, Greetings, and Dress

- q. A Sikh should observe the Guru's *Maryada* (code of conduct) from birth until the end of life.
- r. When meeting another Sikh, one should greet them with "*Vaheguru Jee Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Jee Kee Fateh.*" This is ordained for both Sikh men and women.
- s. It is not proper for a Sikh woman to keep her face hidden by a veil or cover.
- t. A Sikh is required to wear the *Kachhera* (the holy shorts of modesty) and *Dastaar* (the holy turban of responsibility); beyond these, there are no prescribed restrictions on dress, provided it remains modest and dignified. It is proper for Sikh women to wear the *Dastaar*, yet those who do not are also acknowledged.

BIRTH & NAMING CEREMONY: JANAM & NAAM SANSKAAR

Birth Rituals

- a. When, by the grace of Vaheguru, a child is born into a Sikh family, the cultural *Gurrtee* ceremony (making the newborn taste something sweet) should be replaced with recitation of the *Mool Mantar*.
 - *Pataase* (sugar wafers) are mixed into water in a *Sarbloh* (pure iron) bowl, stirred with a *Sarbloh* Kirpan.
 - A few drops of this sanctified water are placed into the baby's mouth using the tip of the *Kirpan*, and the remainder is consumed by the mother.
 - In accordance with the *Gurvaak* (sacred verse): "*maa'ee baap putar sabh har key kee'ey*" ("Mother, father and sons are all made by Vaheguru" – Raag Goojree M:4, Ang 494), an Ardaas should be offered in thanksgiving to Vaheguru and for the health of the mother.

Naming Ceremony

- b. Once the mother is well enough to sit and bathe (no fixed number of days prescribed), the family should prepare *Karah Prashad* and take it to the Gurdwara, or have it prepared there.
 - In the presence of Guru Sahib, *Shabads* of joy and gratitude should be recited, such as "*par'mesar dittaa bann'aa*" – "Vaheguru has given me its support." (Raag Sorath M:5, Ang 627-628), and "*satgur saa'cahi dee'aa bhej*" – "The True Guru has truly given a child." (Raag Aasa M:5, Ang 396)
 - If a *Paath* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji has been held, the *Bhog* (concluding ceremony) should be performed.
 - A *Hukam* (holy verse taken at random) should then be taken. From the first letter of the first word of the *Hukam*, the *Granthi* should suggest a name.

- With *Sangat*'s approval, the name is formally announced. The name of a boy should be followed by the word "Singh," and the name of a girl should be followed by the word "Kaur."
- Afterwards, Anand Sahib (six *Pauris* – first five and last) should be recited, followed by Ardaas of thanksgiving, and distribution of *Karah Prashad*.

Rejection of Superstitions

- c. Superstitious beliefs about ritual pollution of food and water after childbirth must not be followed. *Gurbani* teaches:
- "*jamman mar'naa hukam hai, bhaa'nai aa'vai jaa'e. khaanaa peenaa pavitr hai, de'ton rijjak samm'baaeh.*" - "Birth and death are subject to Hukam (the Divine Law); by the Divine Will, we come and leave. All food and water are pure, for these life-sustaining substances are provided by Vaheguru." (Raag Aasa M:1, Ang 472)

Respect for Guru Sahib

- d. Using the *Rumala Sahib* (the special clothing used to drape Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji) to make clothing for a child as part of a ritual or superstition is considered *Manmat* (a self-created belief, contrary to Guru's Way).

MARRIAGE CEREMONY: ANAND SANSKAAR

Principles of Sikh Marriage

- The marriage between a Sikh man and Sikh woman should take place without consideration of caste, clan, or lineage.
- A Sikh must only marry a Sikh.
- A Sikh's marriage should be conducted through the *Anand* marriage ceremony (*Anand Kaaraj*), the Sikh religious marriage ceremony.
- The marriage of children, an underage boy or girl, is strictly prohibited.
- When a girl is mature physically, mentally, and in character, she may be married through the *Anand* marriage ceremony to a suitable Sikh.

Pre-Wedding Customs

- The *Kurmaae* (engagement ceremony) is not required before the *Anand* marriage ceremony. However, if one chooses to do hold it, the bride's family should arrange for the *Sangat* (congregation) to gather in

the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, offer an *Ardaas* (prayer), and respectfully place a *Kirpan* (sword), a sarbloh *Karra* (bangle made of pure iron) and some sweets in the groom's *Pallaa* (scarf) or hand.

- g. It is against Sikh principles to consult astrology, horoscopes, or search for good luck dates when setting the wedding day. Instead, a date should be selected by mutual agreement between both families, based on practical convenience.
- h. The following customs are strictly prohibited in a Sikh wedding as they are rooted in superstition or stem from non-Sikh traditions, and are therefore considered *Manmat* (a self-created belief, contrary to the Guru's Way). These include:
 - i. The groom wearing a *Sehra* (a decorated veil covering the groom's face)
 - ii. Wearing a *Mukutt* (a non-Sikh ornamental headgear over the turban)
 - iii. Tying red thread bands around the wrist
 - iv. Worship of ancestral spirits
 - v. Placing the groom's feet in watered-down milk (*kachee lassee*) for good luck
 - vi. The ritual cutting of tree branches such as *janddee*
 - vii. Fetching and filling a water vessel (*gharolee*) as a supposed blessing
 - viii. Pretending to leave in anger (*rus ke jaanaa*)
 - ix. Singing teasing folk songs (*chhands*) to the groom
 - x. Performing fire rituals (*havan*)
 - xi. Installing a *vedi* (a ceremonial pavilion used in Hindu weddings)
 - xii. Having female dancers or entertainers perform before men
 - xiii. Serving or consuming alcohol — among other such customs

All the above are considered *Manmat* (self-created practices contrary to Sikh teachings).

Arrival and Wedding Gathering

- i. The groom should arrive with no more guests than the number invited by the bride's side, keeping the gathering modest and considerate. Upon arrival, both sides should sing *Shabads* (sacred hymns) from Gurbani and greet one another with the traditional Sikh greeting: "*Vaheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Ji Ki Fateh.*"
- j. During the wedding, a *divaan* (religious gathering) should take place in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. *Raagis* (skilled Sikh devotional musicians) or the *Sangat* (congregation) should lead *Kirtan* (the

musical singing of *Gurbani*). The bride and groom should be seated before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, with the bride seated to the groom's left.

After seeking permission of the *Sangat* (congregation), the person conducting the *Anand* ceremony (whether a man or woman) should invite the bride, groom, and their parents or guardians to stand, and offer an opening Ardaas (prayer) for the commencement of the marriage ceremony. Then the marriage ceremony facilitator should explain to both the bride and groom their duties and responsibilities relating to living a spiritual married life in accordance with *Gurmat*:

- First, shared guidance is given to both the bride and groom together. This should explain that, according to the meanings of the *Laavaa*ⁿ (the four marriage verses) found in the chapter of *Raag Soohee* in Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the relationship between husband and wife is to be modeled on the love between the soul-mind (*jeev*) and the Divine (*Parmatma*).
- The couple is taught to become “one light in two bodies” through mutual love. In this way, while living a married family life together, they are to be encouraged to ultimately connect and unite with their shared Love, Vaheguru. This union should be understood as a means to fulfill the purpose of human life. Through this sacred bond, both are to live a pure and *Gurmukh*-centered spiritual life.

After this, the bride and groom are individually explained their duties of a husband and as a wife:

- The groom should be told that the bride's family has chosen him as the most suitable match. He must regard his wife as his better half and love her equally in all stages of life and always share and enjoy what he has with her. He is to be the loving guardian ensuring her physical safety and protect her honour, remain firmly committed to the discipline of a faithful husband, and show respect to her parents and relatives as he would to his own.
- The bride should be told that, in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and the *Saadh Sangat* (holy company), she is being joined in union with this honourable man. Possessing pure-hearted, respectful love (*nirmal bhau*), regard him as the master of her love and devotion. In times of joy and hardship, whether at home or away, she should remain firm in her loyalty to him and serve him with commitment. She should honour his parents and relatives as her own.

The bride and groom bow before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji to show their acceptance of the teachings and guidance that has just been shared. Then, the bride's father or a senior relative should place the groom's *pallaa* (wedding scarf) into the bride's hand. The *Granthi* or appointed religious individual leading the religious service, seated behind Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, should then recite the *Laavaa*ⁿ (marriage hymns), which begin with the title '*Soohee Mahalla 4*'.

After each *Laav* (marriage verse) is recited, the groom, followed by the bride who holds the groom's *Pallaa*, should complete one *Parkarmaa* — that is, a reverential walk around Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji to express devotion and acknowledge Guru Sahib as the spiritual centre of their union. In total, four *Parkarmaas* are performed, one after each *Laav* (marriage verse). During each *Parkarmaa*, the *Raagis* (skilled Sikh devotional musicians) or the *Sangat* (congregation) should sing the corresponding *Laav* in

musical tune (*sur*), following the correct sequence of the sacred verses. After completing each *Parkarmaa*, the couple should bow before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and then stand respectfully to listen to the next *Laav* being recited.

Afterwards, the bride and groom should bow before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and then return to sit in their designated space on the floor. The *Raagi Singh* (skilled Sikh devotional musician), or the person appointed religious individual leading the *Anand* marriage ceremony, then recites the first five *Pauris* (stanzas) and the final *Pauri* of *Anand Sahib*. Following this, the concluding *Ardaas* (prayer) of the *Anand* marriage ceremony is offered, and *Karah Prashad* is distributed.

Faith and Social Conduct

- k. Individuals who do not accept or follow the Sikh faith, cannot be married through the Sikh marriage ceremony.
- l. The marriage of a son or daughter should not be arranged in exchange for money or any form of dowry.
- m. “If, there is any occasion or time, the daughter’s parents visit her marital home and are offered a meal, they should accept and partake without hesitation. To refuse food at the daughter’s home due to superstition is a false belief rooted in spiritual ignorance. The practice of feeding one another is a blessing upon the Khalsa by the Guru and Akaal Purakh. Those united through the marriage of their children should share meals together. Why? Because the Guru has joined both families as one.” (Rehat-nama: Bhai Chaupa Singh Ji)

Remarriage

- n. If a woman’s husband passes away, she may, if she chooses, remarry a suitable partner. The same applies if a Sikh man’s wife passes away.
- o. The ceremony for remarriage should follow the same *Anand* marriage ceremony already described.
- p. Under normal circumstances, a Sikh should not remarry while their first spouse is still alive.

Spiritual Commitment

- q. An *Amrit-dhari* Sikh should ensure that their spouse is or becomes *Amrit-dhari*.

DEATH CEREMONY: MIRTAK SANSKAAR

At the Time of Death

- a. At the time of death, if the person is on a bed, they should not be taken off the bed and placed on the

floor, as some traditions mistakenly believe this prevents the soul from remaining in the house. Rituals such as lighting a lamp in the belief it guides the soul in the afterlife (*deeva vattee*), donating a cow in the belief it aids the soul's journey, or any other practices that are *Manmat* (self-created, contrary to the Guru's Way) must not be performed. Instead, *Gurbani* should be recited or “*Vaheguru, Vaheguru*” repeated.

Mourning Practices

- b. When someone passes away, no loud crying (*dhaah maarnee*), no beating of the body (*pittnaa*), and no ritualised mourning (*siaapa*) should be done. To accept Vaheguru's Will (*razzaa*), *Gurbani* or “*Vaheguru*” repetition is recommended.

Funeral Rites

- c. Regardless of age, even the youngest child must be given funeral rites (*saskaar*). Where cremation is not possible, immersion in flowing water (*jal pravaah*) or another respectful method should be used.
- d. There should be no superstition about choosing day or night for cremation.

Preparation and Cremation

- e. The body should be bathed, dressed in clean clothes, and the *Kakkaars* must not be removed. Then the body should be placed on a bier/coffin, *Ardaas* offered, and carried to the cremation ground while reciting *Shabads* reflecting the feeling of *bairaaag* (worldly detachment).

At the cremation site:

- The pyre should be prepared and *Ardaas* offered.
- A close relative or friend should light the fire.
- The *Sangat* should sit at some distance, doing *Kirtan* or reciting *Shabads* of *bairaaag*.
- Practices that are *Manmat* (self-created, contrary to the Guru's Way) such as *kapaal kiriya* (breaking the skull) are forbidden.
- Instead, *Sohila Sahib* should be recited, *Ardaas* offered, and the *Sangat* should return.

After returning home or to the *Gurdwara*:

- A reading of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji should begin.
- After six *pauris* of *Anand Sahib*, *Ardaas* is offered and *Karah Prashaad* distributed.
- The reading should be completed on the tenth day, or on another convenient day that allows the family appropriate time to process their bereavement.
- Household members and relatives should hold *Kirtan*, if possible, each night.

- After the tenth day, no further ceremony is required, as this period provides sufficient support to the bereaved family.

Ashes and Remains

- f. When the pyre has cooled, ashes and remains should be collected and immersed in flowing water or buried, with the ground levelled. No memorial should be constructed at the cremation site.

Prohibited Customs

- g. The undermentioned practices and similar customs are prohibited as they are *Manmat* (self-created beliefs, contrary to the Guru's Way):
 - Breaking the pot amid doleful cries halfway to the cremation ground (*Adh Marg*) – the ritual of breaking the pot used for bathing the body.
 - Ritualised mourning displays by women (*Siaapa*).
 - Sitting on a straw mat in mourning for a set period (*Foorhee*).
 - Keeping an oil lamp lit for 360 days after death in the belief it lights the soul's path (*Deeva*).
 - Donating lumps of rice flour, oat flour, or solidified milk for ten days after death (*Pind*).
 - Post-funeral rituals directed by a Hindu priest (*Kiriya*).
 - Serving food to priests for the salvation of ancestors on lunar calendar dates (*Sharaadh*).
 - Making pomp and show to celebrate old-age death (*Buddha Marnaa*).

Likewise, collecting burnt bones from the pyre and taking them to the Ganges, Patalpuri (at Kiratpur Sahib), Kartarpur Sahib, or any other such place, in the belief that the soul of the deceased will attain peace or salvation by doing so, is also *Manmat* (self-created, contrary to Guru's Way).

OTHER CEREMONIES

Beyond the prescribed rites of passage, on every occasion of joy or sorrow—such as moving into a new home, opening a business, or enrolling a child in school—a Sikh should offer *Ardaas* to seek Vaheguru's guidance and blessing. In Sikhi, the essential element of all rites and ceremonies is the recitation of *Gurbani* and the offering of *Ardaas*.

SEVA: SELFLESS SERVICE

Seva: Selfless Service

Seva (voluntary selfless service) is a central principle of the Sikh faith. It is organised, practised, and taught in *Gurdwaras*. Common forms of *Seva* include sweeping and plastering the floors of the *Gurdwara*, serving water, or fanning the *Sangat*, contributing provisions, and performing any service in the *Langar* (Guru Nanak's kitchen), and cleaning the shoes of those who visit the *Gurdwara*.

Guru ka Langar (Guru's Langar)

- a. The institution of the *Guru ka Langar* (Guru's *Langar*) rests on two purposes: first, to train Sikhs in the spirit of *Seva*; and second, to eliminate all distinctions of high and low, touchable, and untouchable, within society.

Supplying and Cooking Langar

- b. Anyone may help provide the ingredients or funding for the Guru's *Langar*. However, the actual cooking of the *Langar* is to be done only by a practising Sikh.

Equality in Pangat

- c. All human beings—regardless of caste, colour, or social status—may sit together and partake of the Guru's *Langar*. No discrimination on the basis of nationality, colour, caste, or religion is permitted when arranging *Pangat* (the practice of sitting in rows on the floor). However, sharing food from a single plate is reserved for *Amrit-dhari* Sikhs.

COMMUNAL AUTHORITY: GUR-SANGAT & GURU PANTH

The concept of *Seva* is not limited to fanning the *Sangat* or serving in the *Langar*. A Sikh's entire life is meant to be one of '*par-upkaar*', meaning selfless service and doing good for others. The most fruitful *Seva* is that which secures the greatest benefit with the least effort, and this is best achieved through organised collective action. For this reason, while fulfilling individual religious duties, every Sikh must also fulfil their *Panthic* responsibilities. This collective body is the *Panth*. Each Sikh is to recognise themselves as part of the *Panth* and discharge their obligations accordingly.

Guru-Panth (Panth's Status of Guruhood)

- a. The *Guru-Panth* refers to the entire body of committed *tyaar-bar-tyaar* (always ready and prepared) *Amrit-dhari* Sikhs. The Ten Guru-forms nurtured and shaped this *Panth*, with the Tenth Guru-form, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, giving it its final form and investing it with Guruship.

Gur-Sangat

- b. Wherever even a small number of Sikhs gather, they form a *Gur-Sangat*. The larger the gathering, the better. Where at least five *tyaar-bar-tyaar* (fully disciplined) *Amrit-dharis* are present in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, it is formally recognised as *Gur-Sangat*.

Saadh Sangat and Other Sikh Gatherings

- c. Apart from the *Gur-Sangat*, the *Saadh Sangat* (holy congregation) and other Sikh gatherings may include individuals who are not *Amrit-dharis*.

INITIATION CEREMONY: AMRIT SANSKAAR

Preparing the Space and the Panj Piaare

- a. An exclusive place that is away from common human traffic should be arranged for administering *Amrit*.
- b. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (in its complete original form) should be *Parkash* (present) there. There should be at least six committed *tyaar-bar-tyaar* Singhs, one of whom should sit in attendance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji and the other five should be there to administer *Amrit*. Sikh women can participate in *Seva* roles that relate to the ceremony. All of them must have had a *kesi-ishnaan* (a full body bath that includes the hair).
- c. To properly fulfil the duty of administering *Amrit*, none of the *Panj Piaare* should have physical disabilities, such as being blind in one or both eyes, crippled (i.e. walks with a limp), have a broken or disabled limb, or be suffering from any chronic disease. None of them should be a *Tankhahiya* (a religious offender who has committed a breach in *Rehat*). All of them should be Singhs who are committed (*tyaar-bar-tyaar*) and with spiritually appealing persona (*darshani Singhs*).

Eligibility and Conduct of Candidates

- d. Any man or woman from any country, religion, or caste who embraces Sikhi and solemnly undertakes to abide by its principles is entitled to receive *Amrit*. The person should not be of very young age; he or she should possess sufficient maturity and awareness. Everyone should have taken a full body wash that includes the hair (*kesi-ishnaan*) and be wearing the *Panj Kakkaar* (sacred unshorn hair covered with the holy turban, the holy sword secured in a *Gatra*-body strap, the knee-length holy white-coloured shorts, the holy wooden comb, and the holy iron bangle). They must not have on them any symbol of another faith, must not have a bare head or wear a cap, and must not be wearing any form of jewellery or make-up. All should stand respectfully before Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji with folded hands.
- e. If anyone seeks to re-take *Amrit* because they have committed a *Kurehat*, they should be singled out

and the *Panj Piaare* should award them *Tankhah* in the presence of the *Sangat*.

Initial Instructions and Preparation of Amrit

- f. One of the *Panj Piaare* should explain the principles of the Sikh religion to the *Abhilaakhis* (candidates for *Amrit*).
- g. On receiving an affirmative response, one of the *Panj Piaare* should perform *Ardaas* for the preparation of *Amrit* and take the *Hukam*. The *Panj Piaare* should come close to the *baatta* (bowl vessel).
- h. The *baatta* (bowl vessel) should be of *sarbloh* (pure-iron) and placed on a clean *sarbloh* ring or other clean support.
- i. Clean water and *pataase* (home-made organic hardened sugar candy discs) should be put in the *baatta* and the *Panj Piaare* should sit around it in *bir-aasan* posture.
- j. The following *Banis* (prayers) should be recited for preparing the *Amrit*: (i) *Japji Sahib*, (ii) *Jaap Sahib*, (iii) *Ten Svaiyye*, (iv) *Benti Chaupai*, and (v) *Anand Sahib*.
- k. Each of the *Panj Piaare*, when reciting, should hold the edge of the *baatta* with their left hand and stir the water with a *sarbloh khanda* (double-edged sword made of pure-iron) in their right hand, with full concentration. The rest should grip the *baatta* with both hands.
- l. After the conclusion of the recitation, one of the *Panj Piaare* should perform *Ardaas*.

Administering the Amrit

- m. Only those initiation candidates (*Abhilaakhis*) who participated in the entire ceremony can receive *Amrit*. Anyone arriving mid-ceremony cannot receive *Amrit*.
- n. Each person should sit in the traditional warrior-sitting posture (*bir-aasan*), with the left knee raised and the right knee lowered, cup their hands, and be given *Amrit* to drink five times while repeating “*Vaheguru Jee Ka Khalsa, Vaheguru Jee Kee Fateh*.” Five handfuls of *Amrit* should then be sprinkled into the eyes and five into the *Kes*, each time repeating the *Fateh*. Any remaining *Amrit* should be drunk together by all who have received *Amrit*.
- o. The *Panj Piaare* should then collectively bestow the Divine-Name “*Vaheguru*” and recite the *Mool Mantar*, having the candidates repeat it aloud:

*“ik o'ann-kaar, sat, naam, kar'taa purakh, nir'bho, nir'vair,
a'kaal moorat, a'joonee, sai-bhunn, gur prasaad.”*

Teaching the Rehat

- p. After this, one of the *Panj Piaare* should explain the *Rehat* (code of discipline):

“Today you have joined the *Khalsa Panth* and have attained what *Gurbani* describes as "*satgur kai jan'mey gavan mittayaa*" — "Being reborn in the House of the True Guru, you are freed from the cycle of reincarnation" (*Raag Raamkalee* M:1, *Ang* 939). Your spiritual father is now Guru Gobind Singh Ji and your spiritual mother is Mata Sahib Kaur Ji. Your place of birth is Kesgarh Sahib and your residence is Anandpur Sahib. As the children of one Father, you and all other *Amrit-dharis* are spiritual siblings. Having renounced your previous labels of lineage (*kul*), labels of occupation (*kirat*), karma/behaviour (*karam*), and religious beliefs (*dharam*)—that is, having set aside all consideration of previous caste, descent, birth, country, religion, etc.—you have now become pure *Khalsa*.

Except for the One Akaal Purakh, you are not to worship any gods, goddesses, *avtaars* (incarnations), or prophets. You are not to consider anyone other than one Eternal True Guru revealed as Ten human forms of the Guru and their *Bani* (revealed Word) as your sole saviour and redeemer.

You are expected to know *Gurmukhi* script, and if you do not, you should take steps to learn it. You are to read or listen daily to the *Nitnem Banis*:

- **Morning:** *Japji Sahib*, *Jaap Sahib*, the Ten *Svaiyye* (beginning 'sraavag sudh'), *Benti Chaupai*, *Anand Sahib*.
- **Evening:** *Sodar Rehraas*
- **Bedtime:** *Sohila Sahib*.

You should read from, or listen to, the recitation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji.

At all times you must keep the *Panj Kakkaar* (mandatory spiritual uniform) — the sacred unshorn hair covered with the holy turban, the holy sword worn in a *gatra*-body strap, the holy shorts, the holy wooden comb, and the holy iron bangle.

The following four Kurehats (acts of apostacy) must not be committed:

- Disloyalty in dishonouring one's sacred hair in any form (e.g., cutting, shaving, or removing hair).
- Cruelty in eating animals mercilessly and unnecessarily slaughtered (*Kutthaa*).
- Immorality in engaging in any form of sexual behaviour with anyone outside the relationship of marriage.
- Defilement in violating one's sacred body by using tobacco or other similar intoxicants (e.g., smoking, vaping, alcohol, etc.).

If any of these *Kurehats* (acts of apostacy) are committed, one must re-take *Amrit*. If a *Kurehat* is committed innocently or against one's will, then one must still present themselves for re-taking *Amrit* but no punishment (*danddh*) is liable when presenting oneself to the *Panj Piaare*.

You must avoid associating with those who, while being Sikhs violate core Sikh principles, values and identity i.e. those who have cut or shaved their sacred hair (*sir-gumm*), smoke or vape (*narree-maar*), or those who kill/abort their child for gender, financial or other ego-driven reasons (*kurree-maar*). You

must remain ever ready to serve the *Panth* and the *Gurdwaras*. You must give *dasvandh* (one-tenth of your net earnings) to support or further the Guru's causes. In short, you must conduct all aspects of your life in accordance with *Gurmat* (the Guru's Teachings).

You must remain fully aligned with the *Khalsa* according to the principles of the *Khalsa* faith. If you commit a mistake in *Rehat* (code of discipline), you must present yourself in the *Divaan* (holy court) of the *Khalsa* and humbly request a *Tankhah* (religious penalty in the form of being allotted a community service and extra prayers). In future, you must remain alert not to repeat the same mistake.”

Religious Offenders (Tankhahiyas)

- q. The following are deemed to be a religious offender (Tankhahiya) — an individual who has committed a breach of Sikh religious discipline and are therefore subject to non-association, in other words religious as well community-based boycott within the *Khalsa*:

1. Anyone who maintains close social relations, which includes establishing relations with them via marriage or consuming any food or drink from their hands:

(i) **Groups historically hostile or oppose the Guru or the *Khalsa*** — such as (i) followers of Baba Prithi Chand (the eldest son of Guru Ramdas Ji who, driven by jealousy, set himself up as a rival to Guru Arjan Dev Ji), (ii) the *Masands* (corrupt officials who misused donations and harmed the Sikh community), (iii) followers of Dheer Mal (the elder brother of Guru Har Rai Ji who declared himself a false Guru and opposed Guru Teg Bahadur Ji), (iv) followers of Baba Ram Rai (the son of Guru Har Rai Ji whose corrupt officials later murdered him and established a rival leadership), (v) other anti-*Panthic* individuals or groups (those who oppose the teachings, authority, or unity of the Sikh *Panth*).

(ii) **Anyone who violates the fundamental principles or identity of Sikhi** — such as consuming tobacco, cutting their hair, or committing acts of cruelty like killing daughters or aborting unborn children.

2. Breakers of the *Khalsa* dietary rule - consume food or drink prepared or served by those not living by the *Khalsa*'s divine standards of conduct, morals and spiritual as well as physical purity — i.e. non-*Amritdharis* and *Patits* (apostates)

3. Distorters of the sacred Sikh identity - those who dye their hair or remove grey hairs

4. Misusers of sacred matrimony - those who commodify relationships by arranging their child's marriage in exchange for financial gain

5. Indulgers of intoxicants - those who use substances like cannabis (*bhang*), opium (*afeem*), alcohol (*sharaab*), poppy-based drugs (*posat*), cocaine (*kukeen*), etc., to intoxicate.

6. Practitioner of anti-*Gurmat* ceremonies - Anyone who performs or participates in ceremonies that contradict *Gurmat* (the Guru's teachings)

7. Amrit vow breakers - those who intentionally fail to uphold the *Rehat* (discipline) and standards

they accepted at the time of *Amrit* initiation.

Conclusion of the Ceremony

- r. After giving this sermon, one of the *Panj Piaare* should offer *Ardaas*.
- s. The *Granthi* (scriptural reader) sitting in attendance of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji should take the *Hukam*. Anyone who has taken *Amrit* but did not previously receive a name from *Gurbani* should be given a new name according to Sikh tradition.
- t. Finally, *Karah Prashad* should be distributed. All newly initiated Sikhs should eat *Karah Prashad* together from the same *baatta* (bowl vessel).

DISCIPLINARIES & RESOLUTIONS: TANKHAH & GURMATTA

Method of Imposing Tankhah (Religious Disciplinary)

- a. If a Sikh commits any mistake in *Rehat*, they should present themselves before the nearest *Gur-Sangat* (in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, having at least five *tyaar-bar-tyaar* (fully disciplined) *Amrit-dharis* present as the physical representation of Guru Sahib) and openly confess their error in front of the congregation.
- b. Within the *Gur-Sangat*, in the presence of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, *Panj Piaare* should be appointed. They should deliberate upon the individual's mistake and, before the *Sangat*, propose an appropriate *Tankhah* (disciplinary service).
- c. The *Sangat* should not be obstinate in withholding forgiveness, nor should the individual receiving *Tankhah* dispute the discipline prescribed. The *Tankhah* should take the form of *Seva* (community service), preferably a task performed with one's hands.
- d. Finally, an *Ardaas* should be offered for correction (*sodh*) and spiritual guidance.

Method of Passing a Gurmatta (Guru-Based Resolution)

- a. A *Gurmatta*—a decision taken in the name of the Guru that embodies the collective will of the *Khalsa* in accordance with the Guru's teachings—may only be passed on matters that affirm and safeguard the fundamental principles of the Sikh faith. These include issues relating to the status of the Ten human Guru-forms and Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the authenticity of a *Bir* (sacred scriptural volume), *Amrit*, the Sikh *Rehat* and way of life, and the structure of the *Panth*. Questions of an ordinary nature—whether religious, educational, social, or political—are to be addressed through a *Matta* (resolution), not a *Gurmatta*.

- b. A *Gurmatta* may be passed either by the supreme institution appointed by the *Guru-Panth* or by a duly representative gathering of the *Guru-Panth*.

Appeals Against Local Decisions

An appeal may be submitted to Sri Akal Takhat Sahib against any decision rendered by a local *Gur-Sangat*.
