



Sikh Birth and naming ceremonies

The Sikh Ceremonies: Birth and Naming

Ceremonies pertaining to Birth and Naming of Child

The Sikh naming or christening ceremony is well established and it takes place in a *Gurudwaras* in the presence of relatives and friends. The family offers donations, *Karah Parshad* and a *Rumala*, which is a covering for *Guru Granth Sahib*, made of high quality silk, cotton or embroidered cloth. Prayers are offered asking for a special blessing of good health, long life and the Sikh way of life, *Gursikhi* for the child.

After reciting *Ardas*, *Guru Granth Sahib* is opened at random. The first letter of the first word of the hymn on the page is selected as the first letter of the child's name. The given name is common for either sex. The word *Kaur* meaning 'princess' is added after a girl's name and the name *Singh* meaning 'lion' after a boy's. For example, if the first letter is "P", the male child may be given a name like Partap Singh, Pritam Singh or Puran Singh or any other such name beginning with the letter "P". If the newly born is a girl the name would like wise be, Partap Kaur, Pritam Kaur or Puran Kaur.

When the name is selected by the family, the congregation gives approval by a holy cheer or *Jaikara*: '*Bolay So Nihal! Sat Siri Akal!*' The ceremony ends with the distribution of *Karah Prasad*, and the placing of the *Rumala* over *Guru Granth Sahib*. Sometimes, sweets or *Langar*, free food from the Guru's kitchen, is served but this is not a part of the ceremony.



- 1 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} (The Almighty Lord has granted support. [Sorath M. 5, Guru Granth Sahib P. 628]), "Satguru sache dia bhej" {Asa M. 5} (The true Lord has sent this gift. [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 Shabad of the Hukam (command) should be proposed by the Granthi (man in attendance of Guru Granth Sahib) 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.

- 2 The superstition as to the pollution of food and water in consequence of birth must not be subscribed to, 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."
- 3 Making shirts or frocks for children out of Guru Granth Sahib 's draperies is a sacrilege. Phenomenon of birth is in the hands of Almighty God. Birth results from mixing of a drop of male semen with egg of the female. Human birth is a process of around nine months from the date of conception. Procreation is a continuing process since creation of human beings.

Guru Nanak Dev says,

This body is made from blood and semen and shall be consigned to fire.

ਰਕਤੁ ਬਿੰਦੁ ਕਾ ਇਹੁ ਤਨੋ ਓਗਨੀ ਪਾਸਿ ਪਿਰਾਣੁ ਛ

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.63)

Bhagat Kabir says,

Kabir, difficult to obtain is the human birth. It comes not again and again, just as the ripe fruit, which falls from tree to the ground, attaches not again to the branch.

ਕਬੀਰ ਮਾਨਸ ਜਨਮੁ ਦੁਲੰਭੁ ਹੈ ਹੋਇ ਨ ਬਾਰੈ ਬਾਰ ਛ

ਜਿਉ ਬਨ ਫਲ ਪਾਕੇ ਭੁਇ ਗਿਰਹਿ ਬਹੁਰਿ ਨ ਲਾਗਹਿ ਡਾਰ ਛ

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.1366)

There is no special ceremony at the time of the birth of a child except that the blessings of God are sought through Ardas. Every Sikh is required to start any function, project, ceremony or any other opening in life by performing Ardas.

ਓਰਦਾਸ ਬਿਨਾ ਜੋ ਕਾਜ ਸਿਧਾਵੈ ਛ
ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਵਹ ਸਿਖ ਨ ਭਾਵੈ ਛ
(Tankhah Nama Bhai Nand Lal)

Few days after birth, the child is taken to the Gurdwara for naming. This ceremony is very simple. The family accompanies the child and mother to the Gurdwara. Karah Parsad is prepared. Ardas is recited. Vak is taken from Sri Guru Granth Sahib by opening it at random. The first letter of the continuing Shabad from the top of left page is used as the first letter of the name of the child. Either the parents announce the name of the child there and then or announce it after consulting other members of the family. The name selected by the family is affirmed with a Jaikara by the congregation as a mark of approval by the Sangat. The ceremony ends with distribution of Karah Parsad. All the Sikh males must use the title of Singh and females that of Kaur after their first name.

Start of Naming Ceremony

Once a Sikh named Shia was blessed by God with a son. He took the child to Guru Angad and begged for his blessing. The Guru recited Japji, sprinkled (holy) water on his eyes, face and head and selected a letter at random from the Japji to name the child. This was the start of the Sikh tradition. The Guru said that henceforth Sikhs would perform all their ceremonies in the Sikh temple.

(The Life, Teachings and Hymns of Guru Angad Dev by S.S. Kapoor, p.54)

Meaning of Names

All the names have special meaning in Sikhism. Parents choose the best name according to their wish. A child is normally named in the spirit what the parents want the child to be. Singh means lion and Kaur means lioness. Tegh Bahadur means, brave swordsman, Amar Singh means, Eternal Lion, Diljit Kaur means, Heart winning lioness and so on.

The following Shabads are often recited at the time of birth:

- **Satgur sachai dia bhej*
- **Parmeshar ditta banna*

Guru Arjan Dev says,

The Guru has sent the child. The long-lived child has been born by destiny

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸਾਚੈ ਦੀਓ ਭੇਜਿ ਛ
ਚਿਰੁ ਜੀਵਨੁ ਓਪਜਿਓ ਸੰਜੋਗਿ ਛ

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.396)



Guru Arjan Dev says,

The Supreme Lord has given me His support and the abode of distress and disease is demolished.

ਪਰਮੇਸਰਿ ਦਿਤਾ ਬੰਨਾ ਦੁਖ ਰੋਗ ਕਾ ਡੇਰਾ ਭੰਨਾ ਛ

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, p.628)

Birth of a child is blessing of Akal Purakh. To rejoice on the birth of a son but feel sad or inferior on the birth of a girl is against principles of Sikh faith.

The surname of Singh and Kaur was bestowed upon the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh on the day of Baisakhi at Sri Kesgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib) in 1699

