



What is the Rehat Maryada?

This document is the Official Sikh Code of Conduct. There were a number of attempts in the eighteenth century following the death of Guru Gobind Singh to produce an accurate portrayal of Sikh conduct and customs. These attempts were inconsistent with many of the principles of the Gurus and were not accepted by the majority of Sikhs. Starting early this century in 1931 an attempt was made by the Shromani Gurudwara 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. It's implementation has successfully achieved a high level of uniformity in the religious and social practices of Sikhism.

Sikh Rehat Maryada (Sikh Code Of Conduct)

ਸਿੱਖ ਰਹਿਤ ਮਰਾਦਾ

History judges a nation by its collective character and conduct. It is believed that human life is full of problems and pains. Discipline in life is the basic tool to address and solve these problems. The ultimate aim of human being is to overcome the problems and lead a pure and pious life to attain unity with God. According to Sikhism, the remedy of pain lies within.

Dukh daroo sukh rog bhaia Every religion has prescribed the code of conduct for its followers. The Sikh religion is not an exception. Sikh religion is a practical way of life. The Sikh Gurus prescribed comprehensive rules and a code of conduct (Reht Maryada) for the Sikhs to be followed truthfully in their day to day life.

The distinctive Sikh code of conduct is feature of fundamental importance to the life of the Panth that is the Sikh religion. The Sikh code of conduct can be traced from within Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Rehtnamas and practical life of the Gurus.

Guru Nanak Dev says,

Reflecting on the Name, man's mind is accustomed to serve others. Still one's ego, one is deemed to have practised worship, penance and self-mortification. When man hears the Lord's Name, he becomes emancipated in life. Through such a true way of life, he is blessed with eternal peace.

ਸੇਵਾ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਸਬਦਿ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ |

ਜਪੁ ਤਪੁ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਹਉਮੈ ਮਾਰਿ |

ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਜਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਸੁਣਾਏ |

ਸਚੀ ਰਹਤ ਸਚਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਏ |

(1343) Guru Nanak Dev is the founder of Sikhism. He started the institution of *Sangat* and *Pangat* which is the first step to *Reht Maryada* ladder.

According to Sikhism, the mission of human life is the attainment of God and the realization is possible by observing the principles of truth in their true spirit. It is desired of a Sikh to live upto the discipline of Bani (*Nam Simran*) and Bana (Wearing of Five Kakars and keeping piety of outlook) to attain the ultimate goal.

Sikh code of conduct provides social, cultural, religious and spiritual precepts for governance of Khalsa corporate life. Sikh faith is established on observance of the principles and rules formulated by the Sikh Gurus in the true sense.

Sikhism is a way of life and the game of love needs truth and commitment on that way. In micro sense, Sikhism is concerned with individual life style (Gurmat and Reht Maryada style of life) of a Sikh but in macro sense, it is concerned with his corporate style of life (Sangat, Pangat, supermacy of Akal Takht and Wand Chhakna etc) conducted and governed truly at all the times and at all the places and in every behaviour according to the Word of God.

Guru Nanak Dev says,

“If you want to play the game of love, then enter my path with head on thy palm. But once you set foot on my way, find not the way out, and lay down thy head.” Guru Gobind Singh says, I love Sikh but for his acceptance of my discipline”. He commanded the Khalsa never to follow the rituals, rites and traditions but if still they ever follow, “he shall withdraw his support and protection. So long as Khalsa retains his distinct identity, I will give him my entire radiance and strength. But if he should take on a non-Sikh way of life, then I shall have no confidence in him and withdraw my support and protection”.

Jab lag Khalsa rahe niara. tab lag tej dio mai sara.

jab eh gahe bipran ki reet. mai na karo in ki parteet.

ਜਬ ਲਗ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਰਹੇ ਨਿਓਾਰਾ |

ਤਬ ਲਗ ਤੇਜ ਦੀਉ ਮੈਂ ਸਾਰਾ |

ਜਬ ਇਹ ਗਹੈ ਬਿਪਰਨ ਕੀ ਰੀਤ |

ਮੈਂ ਨ ਕਰੇਂ ਇਨ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ |

(Guru Gobind Singh, Sarb Loh Granth) There is significant truth in these words. When due to comforts and pleasures, the Sikhs slackened and sacrificed the code of conduct, the Guru withdrew his grace.

The Sikhs recite daily in Ardas that:

Only the Khalsa (Pure) shall rule. Those who disobey shall perish and suffer. As a result of sufferings, they shall return to the pure faith.

Raj karega khalsa Aki rahe na koe,

khuar hoe sabh milainge bache sharan jo hoe

(Tankhahnama Bhai Nand Lal) According to the code of conduct for the Sikhs, Khalsa is a person who believes in one God. In whose heart the light of the Almighty God shines for ever. He who has full love, faith and confidence in God; Who meditates on the Name of God day and night; Who believes in the teachings of the ten Gurus and Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Who believes in honest labor, sharing his earnings with the less fortunate, does selfless Seva and leads a virtuous life. He who does not have faith even by mistake in fasting, worshipping, burial places, crematoriums or places of Jogi sepulcher is recognized as a pure member of the Khalsa. Khalsa is he who adopts the concept of Bani and Bana (Five Kakars).

Guru Angad Dev says,

“He who both offers salutation and says ‘no’ to his Master, has gone wrong since the very beginning. Both of his actions are false. He obtains no place in God’s court”.

ਸਲਾਮੁ ਜਬਾਬੁ ਦੇਵੈ ਕਰੇ ਮੁੰਦਹੁ ਘੁਥਾ ਜਾਇ |

ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵੈ ਕੂੜੀਓ ਥਾਇ ਨ ਕਾਈ ਪਾਇ | (474)

Meaning of Rehat

Sikhism is a way of life which believes in pure and pious living. It is a dynamic and practical religion. It has got certain principles and discipline to follow. More important than belief in the principles of the Sikh faith is the actual practice of the teachings of the Gurus. There are set rules and ways for the ideal life in Sikhism which determine Sikh beliefs and practices.

Sikh Code of Conduct is called Sikh Rehat Maryada. It is a manual and code of discipline for the followers of Sikh faith for social, moral, religious, spiritual and general living. According to the Sikh code of conduct published in 1945 by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar, a Sikh must practice the concept of Bani (Spiritual life) and Bana (Uniform with Five Kakars). He must live upto the Internal and External code of conduct.

Internal Rehat Maryada means living a pure, pious and spiritual inner life. External Rehat Maryada means the outer code of conduct and visible living of virtuous life (Bani & Bana i.e. Norm and Form)

Rehat Maryada literally means “the code of conduct or way of life”. Reht means mode of living or conduct and Maryada means tradition, practice of the faith or code or discipline of life. It extends its meaning to life discipline. It meets the principles for ethical, moral and spiritual life. It is a code which tells the Sikh followers how to live and how not to live. It is a manual for the Sikh which tells him to live like a Lotus which has its roots in muddy water but its flower blooms floating pure and spotless over the muddy base.

Sikhism is essentially a practical religion. It gives great significance to voluntary discipline and self restraint in the physical, mental, moral and spiritual fields. Sikhism gives reverence to its sacred traditions (Maryada), heritage, culture and religious living. It does not call for blind and arrogant compliance of its way of life. Sikh Rehat is touch stone which reveals the purity and perfection of the Khalsa.

Rehat Maryada is willing discipline

Sikhism believes in willing discipline of body and mind. It aims at serving the mankind and attaining the Ultimate Reality through Naam Simran, Sachi Kirt and Wand Chhakna. There is no use of coercion in observance of the discipline. It is not punitive. The code of Sikh conduct is positive, correctional and requires the devotee to attune with the Will of God.

Sikhism believes in gradual progress of Sehaj Dharis to become the Khalsa. The deviants and slow movers are to be treated with sympathy and loving care so that they learn their roots and join the main stream.

Sikh Rehat Maryada has been evolved on the basic principles of God’s universe, discipline of planetary system and the law of nature. Human body, mind and consciousness are gifts of the Lord leased to mankind for a pre-determined life time. Sikhism wants these gifts to be used for attainment of God through service of mankind.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the primary source of Sikh Code of Conduct. It is supported by Dasam Granth, Vars of Bhai Gurdas and writings of Bhai Nand Lal. The Rehat is further strengthened through the Rehat Namas of Bhai Nand Lal, Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Desa Singh, Bhai Champa Singh and others.

Gurbani says that blessed with infinite joy, without a trace of sorrow, is the house that Guru Nanak has inherited. Sikhism wants to keep peace and tranquillity in that house. Harkh anant sog nahi biya, so ghar gur Nanak ko diaya.

The doctrine of five Kakars gifted by Guru Gobind Singh helps the Sikhs to live life in full measure and with universal resources. The Guru ordained not only the Khalsa how to live but also how not to live. He gave certain do's and don'ts to the Khalsa Panth.

It is very essential to point out that no individual or individual organisation has the authority to change or alter the Sikh Rehat Maryada as per personal needs and whims. Every Sikh is required to bow head before the Sikh Rehat Maryada published by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. There is only one Rahit Maryada for the Khalsa Panth, it does not belong to any particular Jatha or entity, yet as Sikhs we are all obliged to follow it.

It is explicit in Gurbani that the principles of Gurmat are unchangeable and of permanent standing: The Instruction of the Guru is Unshakable. None can change it. Gurmat Mat Achal Hai Chalaey Na Sakey Koey (p-548)

Every Sikh must strengthen its rallying point i.e. Sri Akal Takht Sahib Amritsar failing which the Sikhs will lose their Vatican axle resulting in confusion everywhere.

Rehat and Discipline

How can the traveller (Sikh) who asks the experts (God-oriented) the way (of spirituality), but does not take even a step, ever reach his destination by mere asking? How can the patient who consults the physician, but does not take the medicine or follow instructions, be rid of the disease and regain his health? How can an apparently lewd wife, who asks another woman about true love but herself is full of lust, be loved by her husband? How can the Sikh who apparently sings Kirtan or listens to it with closed eyes and full brain (hypocritically) find spiritual fulfilment, unless he accepts the Guru's teaching and practises it faithfully.

ਪੂਛਤ ਪਥਿਕ ਇਹ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਨ ਧਾਰੈ ਪਗਿ

ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ ਕੈ ਦੇਸ ਕੈਸੇ ਬਾਤਨ ਸੇ ਜਾਈਓ |

ਪੂਛਤ ਹੈ ਬੈਦ ਖਾਤ ਔਖਧਿ ਨ ਸੰਜਮ ਸੈ

ਕੈਸੇ ਮਿਟੈ ਰੋਗ ਸੁਖ ਸਹਜਿ ਸਮਾਈਓ |

ਪੂਛਤਿ ਸੁਹਾਗਨਿ ਹੈ ਕਰਮਿ ਦੁਹਾਗਨਿ ਕੈ

ਰਿਦੈ ਬਿਭਚਾਰ ਕਤ ਸਿਹਜਾ ਬੁਲਾਈਓਂ |

ਗਾਇ ਸੁਨੈ ਓਖੈ ਮੀਚੈ ਪਾਈਓਂ ਨ ਪਰਮ ਪਦੁ

ਗੁਰੁ ਉਪਦੇਸ ਗਹਿ ਜੋ ਲੋ ਨ ਕਮਾਈਓਂ |

(Bhai Gurdas Kabit 439 - ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ ਕਬਿਤ ੪੩੯) Sikhism is a religion of Bani and Bana, not for show but for practice.

Guru Arjan Dev says,

Man professes one thing and practises quite another. In his heart there is no love, but with his mouth he talks tall. The Omniscient Lord, Who is Inner Knower, is not pleased with the deceitful show of garment of such person.

ਰਹਤ ਓਵਰ ਕਛੁ ਓਵਰ ਕਮਾਵਤ |

ਮਨਿ ਨਹੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਮੁਖਹੁ ਗੰਢ ਲਾਵਤ |

ਜਾਨਣਹਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਪਰਬੀਨ |

ਬਾਹਰਿ ਭੇਖ ਨ ਕਾਹੁ ਭੀਨ |

(269)

Important principles of Sikh Reht Maryada

1. Dharam-Di- Kirt Karna (Honest earning and truthful living)
2. Vand Ke Chhakna (Sharing honest earnings with needy and less fortunate)
3. Naam Japna (Meditation on the Name of One God)
4. Puja Akal Ki (Worshipping the Almighty God)
5. Parcha Sabad Ka (Understanding and practicing Gurbani)
6. Didar Khalse Ka (Appreciation of Sikh Rehat) Attending company of holy Sangat
7. Amrit Chhakna, (Initiation of Amrit Pahul and stay away from taboos)
8. Sarbat Da Bhala (Well-being of all)
9. Seva Sambhal (Selfless service for welfare of humanity)
10. Sacha Achar (Keeping good moral character in life)
11. Bhana Manana (Surrender before Will of God)
12. Believe in One God, Sri Guru Granth Sahib and teachings of ten Gurus
13. Practicing the principles of both Bani and Bana (Norm and Form)

14. No commission of Kurehts

15. Adopt and practice compassion, honesty, generosity, patience, perseverance and humility

16. Non observance of blind rites, rituals and superstitions. No worship of idols and images

The code of conduct is (such as rigorous socio-moral discipline for the Sikhs) prescribed so that the Sikhs must remain pure and emancipated.

If a Sikh breaches the cardinal instructions of no hair cutting, no adultery, no use of intoxicants and no eating of *Kutha* meat, he is called *Patit* and the transgressor must get rebaptized. If a Sikh violates the code of conduct other than the four cardinal transgressions, he becomes *Tankhaya* and has to appear before the Panj Pyaras for undergoing *Tankhah*.

The study of Sikh Rehat Maryada published by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar will answer many of the questions about Sikh way of life.

Views of different Sikh organizations, eminent Sikhs and Sikh bodies on Sikh Rehat Maryada were considered from 1936 to 1945. Sikh Reht Maryada was finally approved by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee vide its resolution No: 97 on February 3, 1945.

It was published by Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Amritsar in 1945 after deliberations with different Sikh Individuals and representatives of different organizations.