

ਅਨੰਦ ਕਾਰਜ

THE ANAND KARAJ

THE SIKH MARRIAGE CEREMONY



This leaflet provides an insightful overview of the Anand Karaj (the Sikh Marriage Ceremony), exploring its significance and reflecting on the values of Sikhi

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INTRODUCTION

The Anand Karaj is an initiation ceremony for two individuals who aim to become at One with Divinity and who have recognised that the best way to do so is by submitting to the Guru. That they choose to do so together is in accordance with the preference for 'gristhi jeevan' or the life of a householder – one who seeks enlightenment alongside raising a family.

This short guide to the Anand Karaj will walk you through the practical elements of the ceremony, what is being committed to by the couple, and some general thoughts on the Sikh marriage ceremony as a whole.

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IMPORTANCE OF ANAND KARAJ

There are some decisions that we make in life which lead to more desirable outcomes than others, and a Sikh – as a student who not only wishes to learn from the Guru but also aims to put that which they learn into practice – is steered towards making those more desirable decisions. One of which is to share this lifetime with another who is on the same path and trying to learn from the same Guru.

This is reflected in the verses read during the ceremony which speak of the coming together of the soul bride with the Divine; these words have a secondary meaning which is interpreted as the coming together of the bride and groom at the feet of the Guru. In this context, the Anand Karaj is the first public step taken by two people who wish to live and work in a shared direction, committing themselves to the path espoused by Guru Nanak. Clearly for this reason it is an initiation that should not be entered into lightly by anyone.

We are at a pivotal moment in what will one day be looked back upon as Sikh history. Just as the formalisation of the Anand Karaj in the nineteenth century, and its legal recognition in the early twentieth century was developed and fought for by Sikh thinkers, we need to reassert its meaning for every strata of the community in the twenty-first century. This challenge is made more difficult because of the geographically dispersed Sikh population across the globe, but in the first instance what is desirable is a clearly presented manifest of what the Anand Karaj is and what parties engaging in it are signing up to.

This short guide to the Anand Karaj is one of our offerings to this end. It is an imperfect work-in-progress, but one which we hope the Sikh community worldwide will help us to improve and make better for the benefit of us all.

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ORDER OF SERVICE

Kirtan and Arrival: The Anand Karaj begins with Shabad Kirtan (Gurbani recited to music). The Sangat takes their seat in the Darbar to generate a setting focused on the Guru, in preparation of bearing witness to this ceremony. The groom should move forward and sit before Guru Granth Sahib Ji as the bride arrives to sit on his left. Anybody entering the Darbar from this point on is advised not to step between the couple and the Guru, and to wait until the ceremony is complete or to pay their respect from a distance.

Ardas & Hukamnama: The couple and their parents stand for an Ardas (whilst the rest of the Sangat remains seated). This is a statement declaring that the Anand Karaj is engaged in willingly by both bride and groom, who are affirming their intentions to live a Guru-centred life. The Hukamnama that follows is a randomly selected Shabad from Guru Granth Sahib Ji, imparting some particularly poignant wisdom for the entire Sangat to contemplate.

Palaa: A parental figure of the bride takes one end of the groom's sash and places it in the hands of the bride, symbolising the union of Divinity with the Soul that is central to the Anand Karaj.

Laavan: A four stanza shabad by Guru Ram Das Ji from Raag Suhi in Guru Granth Sahib Ji is the focus of the Anand Karaj, with each stanza (laav) spoken aloud and then sung in turn. As each laav is sung, the bride and groom walk around Guru Granth Sahib Ji, showing a commitment to live a Guru-centred life together.

Ardas & Hukamnama: Further shabads are sung followed by an Ardas declaring that this union is recognised and endorsed by the Sangat. The Hukamnama should be contemplated by the couple throughout their marital life and is considered a memorandum from the Guru specifically to the couple. The Sangat is advised to refrain from congratulating one another until after the Hukamnama is read.

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THE FOUR LAAVAN

There is neither an exchange of vows nor a symbolic act that represents the commitment of each person to one another; rather the Anand Karaj connects both individuals on a journey towards realisation through the Guru. In the laavan, two Sikhs come to the Guru for guidance on how they should lead their life which the Guru responds to by explaining how their life can unfold if they live according to the wisdom of the Shabad.

The four-part Shabad that is the focus of the ceremony depicts the coming together of the soul (the bride) and Divinity (the groom); but these words have a secondary meaning which is interpreted as the coming together of the bride and groom at the feet of the Guru.

By sitting together before the Guru to whom they bow their head, both indicate that their union will be Guru-centred; in the laavan, both individuals show their willingness to walk on the path of the Guru together; and through the Ardas, the couple publicly affirm the commitment they have made.

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THE FOUR LAAVAN EXPLAINED

The four Laavan from Raag Suhi can be interpreted thus:

Pehli Laav (1)

The Guru begins by setting out the blueprint of what you as a couple are embarking on together. You are leaving behind all past discretions, actions and beliefs to come together before the Guru who you both accept as being your teacher above all others.

You are starting a journey together to live more fruitful lives, where if you put into practice what you learn from the Guru, you will live in accordance with nature and the Universal principles that bring human beings contentment.

Doing this together as a couple before the Guru, you draw strength from one another and your lives become healthier, complete and your experiences much more valuable. You get hooked onto the Gurus instructed way of life and it becomes second nature to you both, enhancing the way you interact and grow with each other.

Dooji Laav (2)

Together, you come to realise that all things are touched by a Divine Design, that what we call 'God' exists everywhere and in everything. Your fears in life are removed one by one, and at the same time your individual desires unite towards an ultimate goal.

If you can put into practice what you learn from the Guru and become realised people, you will gain a profound respect for all creation – not just this Earth or the wider universe, but all beings, fellow humans, and most importantly one another too. You will only see One, and you will begin to see as One, thinking and acting in the same direction.

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THE FOUR LAAVAN EXPLAINED

Teeji Laav (3)

Your love and desire to be content is clear for all to see, and in contemplating the Guru together, here with other great souls, you are sure to be successful. When that happens and your contemplation leads you to realise what the Guru is teaching, your every word and action will bear out a life that will touch others too.

Your marriage is one that spreads love, and in meeting with other great souls, you should look to continue to grow together along the path of the Guru. If you do, you will become increasingly detached from the trappings of everyday life and you will both come to realise the meaning of life.

Chauthi Laav (4)

You have come together to achieve enlightenment and marital bliss is yours if you walk this journey together with the Guru as your teacher.

Your mind and body finds equilibrium – you are now both One – and at all times are you living a fruitful life, able to see the silver lining in every cloud, the good in all, and the Divine Design in one another. This marriage is blessed and having set out together, before the Guru, your journey to find bliss is now complete.

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ਸਾਡੇ ਨਾਲ ਜੁੜੋ GET INVOLVED

ਕਿਵੇਂ?

ਹੱਰ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰੋਗਰਾਮ:

- ਹੈਕਾਥੋਨ
- ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਸੇਵਾ ਦਿਵਸ
- ਸੰਗਤ ਫੋਰਮ

ਦਾਨ ਕਰੋ:

- ਔਨਲਾਈਨ
- ਸੰਪਰਕ ਰਹਿਤ ਰਾਹੀਂ
- ਰਸੀਦ ਕੱਟੋ
- ਦਫਤਰ ਵਿਚ

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- Sangat Forum

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