

*the mind is filled with Divine Love. Meeting with the humble Saints of the Lord, I have found the Lord, by great good fortune. I have found the Immaculate Lord, and I sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord. I speak the Word of the Lord's Bani. By great good fortune, I have found the humble Saints, and I speak the Unspoken Speech of the Lord. The Name of the Lord, Har, Har, Har, vibrates and resounds within my heart; meditating on the Lord, I have realized the destiny inscribed upon my forehead. Servant Nanak proclaims that, in this, the third round of the marriage ceremony, the mind is filled with Divine Love for the Lord." (SGGSJ, p.773—774)*

#### Hymn 4

*"In the fourth round of the marriage ceremony, my mind has become peaceful; I have found the Lord. As Gurmukh, I have met Him, with intuitive ease; the Lord seems so sweet to my mind and body. The Lord seems so sweet; I am pleasing to my God. Night and day, I lovingly focus my consciousness on the Lord. I have obtained my Lord and Master, the fruit of my mind's desires. The Lord's Name resounds and resonates. The Lord God, my Lord and Master, blends with His bride, and her heart blossoms forth in the Naam. Servant Nanak proclaims that, in this, the fourth round of the marriage ceremony, we have found the Eternal Lord God." (SGGSJ, p.773—774)*

#### The Mechanics of Marriage

It takes many things to make a marriage work, including commitment, laughter, friendship, forgiveness, and romance. Successful couples provide support to each other when times are difficult, and they have fun together when times are good. However, one component that is particularly important in determining the outcome of a marriage is a couple's ability to resolve conflict.

This is why marriage in Sikh dharma is an institution of willingness, in which two identities want to amalgamate. It is not a contract or a legal document. It is an amalgamation of two egos to bring out a neutral new personality. Hence in Sikh marriage qualities such as humility, the removal of ego, love for God and a spiritual lifestyle are given a lot of importance.

When a Sikh couple do have conflict or a difference in opinion they can sit together and do a meditation such as JapJi Sahib and ask God and Guru to guide them and provide guidance.

*"She is forever truthful and pure, O Nanak; through the Word of the Guru's Shabad, conflicts are resolved." (SGGSJ, p.844)*

Speaking calmly and sweetly is also an excellent tool for conflict resolution and is a characteristic of spiritual people.

*"By Guru's Grace, my speech is like nectar. Through the Guru's Word, my selfishness and conceit have been removed." (SGGSJ, p.239)*

#### Summary

Marriage in Sikh dharma is considered the highest form of yoga because it requires more work to deal with another ego than simply having to deal with our own. Humility, selflessness, love and spirituality are considered important factors in making a marriage a successful and blissful experience of oneness.



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# Sikh Marriage - The Highest Yoga

Sikh Dharma

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## Introduction

Marriage is considered a sacred institution in most cultures and religious traditions. This essay looks at the Sikh marriage ceremony and the important ingredients for a successful marriage. The centre of all Sikh marriages is the Sikh Holy Scripture, Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji (SGGSJ).

## What is a Sikh Marriage?

Anand Karaj is the prescribed form of Sikh marriage. The words literally translate as 'Blissful Union'. The Sikh marriage is a very special ceremony in which two individuals are joined in an equal partnership. It is a joyous and festive event which is very family orientated and informal in atmosphere. Sikh marriages are usually arranged with families acting as little more than introduction services. The ultimate choice is always left to the girl and boy. In some cases the boy and girl choose each other first and then seek their parents' consent and blessing.

## How long does a Sikh Marriage take?

There are no restrictions as to what time the ceremony should start or what time it should end although they are usually performed in the morning with the religious ceremony taking no more than a few hours.

## Where can a Sikh Marriage take place?

The Anand Karaj ceremony can be performed in any Gurdwara or home where Sri Guru Granth Sahib has been respectfully installed. The ceremony cannot be performed in a hotel or a banquet hall.

## What do people wear at a Sikh Wedding?

Everyone at a Sikh wedding will wear smart, respectable and modest clothing. Also within a Sikh temple everyone will cover their head with a turban, chunni or a simple piece of cloth

## Elements of a Sikh Marriage

In the east, Sikh marriages are typically a three day event which begins with the Braah (grooms family

and friends) setting off for the girls house in the evening. They are received, entertained and hosted by the girls family and spend the night at her house. The following day the ceremony takes place at the local Gurdwara or at the girls home. Following the religious ceremony festivities, song and dance continue the remainder of the day with the groom and his family departing with the bride the following day.

In the west because of the constraints in time and difficulty in coordinating so many people, Sikh weddings are usually a one or two day event. The wedding can occur in the morning followed by a dinner and dance banquet in a hall or hotel at night, or the religious ceremony and banquet take place on consecutive days. In rarer cases only the religious ceremony takes place without any banquet.

## The Commitments made at a Sikh Wedding

The couple to be married will sit in front of the Sikh holy scripture and make a total of 4 rotations around the Sikh holy scripture which signifies the acceptance of four promises made between the couple and God. These promises include:

1. Performing good deeds, living a spiritual lifestyle and loving God and Guru
2. Keeping the fear of God in the mind and working towards becoming humble and removing ego from the mind. The couple are also enjoined to recognise the one God in the whole of creation and in the hearts of all people
3. Practicing love for God and commitment to seeking the sanctuary of the saints
4. Having achieved union with God the couple should help other souls who are also on their spiritual journey.

## Translations of the 4 Marriage Hymns

The four hymns sung during the marriage ceremony describe the union of the soul to the great soul. So it is these hymns which are used to unite the souls of 2 individuals so that the following scenario is achieved:

*"They are not said to be husband and wife, who merely sit together. Rather they alone are called husband and wife, who have one soul in two bodies." (SGGSJ, p.788)*

### Hymn 1

*"In the first round of the marriage ceremony, the Lord sets out His Instructions for performing the daily duties of married life. Instead of the hymns of the Vedas to Brahma, embrace the righteous conduct of Dharma, and renounce sinful actions. Meditate on the Lord's Name; embrace and enshrine the contemplative remembrance of the Naam. Worship and adore the Guru, the Perfect True Guru, and all your sinful residues shall be dispelled. By great good fortune, celestial bliss is attained, and the Lord, Har, Har, seems sweet to the mind. Servant Nanak proclaims that, in this, the first round of the marriage ceremony, the marriage ceremony has begun." (SGGSJ, p.773—774)*

### Hymn 2

*"In the second round of the marriage ceremony, the Lord leads you to meet the True Guru, the Primal Being. With the Fear of God, the Fearless Lord in the mind, the filth of egotism is eradicated. In the Fear of God, the Immaculate Lord, sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord, and behold the Lord's Presence before you. The Lord, the Supreme Soul, is the Lord and Master of the Universe; He is pervading and permeating everywhere, fully filling all spaces. Deep within, and outside as well, there is only the One Lord God. Meeting together, the humble servants of the Lord sing the songs of joy. Servant Nanak proclaims that, in this, the second round of the marriage ceremony, the unstruck sound current of the Shabad resounds." (SGGSJ, p.773—774)*

### Hymn 3

*"In the third round of the marriage ceremony,*