

SIKH DESTINATION WEDDINGS

A Sikh is a person who follows the teachings of the Sikh Gurus, the Ten Gurus and Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee Maharaj. Adherents of Sikhi (the Sikh faith) will differ in their levels of practice and commitment but belief in the Ten Gurus and the supremacy of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee and Panj Pyare (Five beloved Sikhs who represent the physical form of the Guru) as their Guru is paramount. A Sikh will believe in the initiation ceremony of Amrit (immortal nectar) and will endeavour to become initiated and once initiated practice the discipline that they have sworn oath to.



The Sikh wedding ceremony began in 1487 (CE) when Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jee the first Sikh Guru rejected to have his wedding conducted in the Hindu tradition, Guru Jee instead wrote down the Mool Mantar – the first words of prayer of the Sikh faith which were revealed to Guru Jee from God. After writing the verse on paper the Guru placed the verse on a platform and then walked around the verse with his wife - Mata Sulakhni Jee to conduct a Sikh wedding. This occurred in Batala at Gurdwara Dera Sahib.

From the 15th Century the Sikhs have had a distinct ceremony for their weddings, which was started by Sri Guru Nanak Dev Jee. This ceremony was formalised by the fourth Sikh Guru, Sri Guru Raam Daas Jee when the Guru uttered the 'Lava(n)' verses and since then Sikhs walk around (do a parkarma) of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee four times to conduct their wedding ceremony which is now called the 'Anand Karaj,' which means ceremony of bliss. The bliss the Sikh faith prioritises is bliss in union with God, so the Anand Karaj ceremony is a vehicle for two individuals to assist each other in attainment of bliss with God. It is not a worldly materialistic ceremony, it is a spiritual one, regardless of what we may have made of it due to our negligence in practice of the teachings of the Great Gurus.

For Sikhs, Gurbani – the word of God, the scripture of the Sikhs, has always been centre stage of the wedding ceremony. Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee Maharaj are the eternal Guru for Sikhs, God supreme power, they guide and inspire the global Sikh community. Sikhs serve Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee with more grandeur than worldly royalty, a Sikh will sacrifice their life for the respect of Gurbani but will never knowingly disrespect Gurbani.



Gurdwaras – Sikh places of worship, have been constructed throughout the globe and the Sikhs as a community face many political, social, economic and religious challenges. With an increase in affluence of Sikhs sacrilege and disrespect of Gurbani is on the rise and it is those who call themselves 'Sikhs', who are the main culprits in these actions. Sikh weddings have become lavish affairs in which debts are accumulated and bank accounts emptied – all in hopes of the dream wedding and picturesque surrounds, photos and videos. To create memories of a lifetime. Please remember the aim of the Anand Karaj is to get bliss via union with God – so please reflect on what the ceremony means and what Gurbani teaches, it will then become plainly obvious of what is wrong and right but we forge ahead with our own fads and fancies and the Guru becomes a commodity to fulfil our qualms, tastes and desires.

The simple act of bowing to Sri Guru Granth Shaib Jee Maharaj is an act of submission to the profound wisdom of the Guru and the walking around or parkarma around Guru Jee - the lava are a repetitive act of submission, prayer and homage to the Guru, done to seek grace and blessings. Do we think of these thoughts during an Anand Karaj? How many of us actually commit acts contrary to the teachings of the Guru's prior to entering the Gurdwara, during the ceremony and once we leave?

These are points we must all ponder, our pride in being a Sikh and pride in having such Great Gurus should not be limited to our personal agendas especially when we are the ones seeking the grace of the Guru. We as Sikhs try to be in 'chardi kala' a positive outlook of soaring spirituality in which we continuously strive to get union with God, progressing all the time, in the fulfilment of that objective. We should not even need to write this article on Sikh destination weddings but here we are because of the laxity in discipline of practising Sikhs who conduct such weddings as Granthis (readers of Gurbani), Raagis (singers of Gurbani or Kirtanis) and the plethora of Amritdhari Sikhs that support this industry. Sikhi is a path of submission not ego fulfilment. All those involved in these ceremonies will indeed pay the karma for their actions, as we must all, for acts we indulge in.

So you may ask why we should not do Sikh destination weddings:



1) What is the need to have a destination wedding? Why can you not have the Anand Karaj at the Gurdwara? Are you seeking blessings or making the blessings come to you on your terms at your destination?

2) Is there a Gurdwara nearby or can you travel to one to get the blessings of the Guru? Sikhs in the past travelled hundreds of miles to meet the Gurus, just because we have become a global community it does not mean you should and can take Maharaj anywhere you like. There are protocols to follow when Guru Sahib is transported and purity issues of where Guru Sahib can be housed – Sahib Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee's horse stopped entering a field of tobacco let alone enter a site with alcohol, tobacco and many anti Sikh practices.

3) Is the wedding enhanced by having it an idyllic location or any destination outside of a Gurdwara? Are you getting more grace or blessings from the Guru? Is it necessary?

4) Can you imagine inviting Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee in person to go to your destination wedding – to bless the ceremony, to make it possible? Do you think Guru Jee would approve of coming to a beach resort, hotel, golf club or venue where you will most likely have a reception? Would the Guru attend the reception too? Or would the Guru be surplus to needs for the reception? So why is it that we think Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee is a commodity for us to transport wherever we wish? Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee Maharaj is the living eternal embodiment of the Gurus, not mere paper or scripture – 'Jagadi Jyot' the blazing eternal life giving light, the most powerful spiritual energy on earth. Only those with faith and blessed vision, witness this true glorious nature, through God's grace.

5) In 1998 an edict from Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib (the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs) outlawed Sikh weddings at palaces, hotels or venues where alcohol is present. Nearly all destination wedding venues are mixed use – they have alcohol on the site.

6) Unscrupulous individuals have made a whole industry out of wedding planning and destination weddings where Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee is disrespected and money is the only motivation of these people. Maharaj Sahib is transported in the most disgraceful manner in suitcases and luggage by these people. Families are happy to palm off all religious requirements to such people. So the disrespect continues unabated even though it has been outlawed by the Sri Akaal Takhat Sahib.

Vigilance is required by all Sikhs throughout the globe to increase respect of Gurbani and stop unnecessary disrespect of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee Maharaj. This is a collective responsibility of each and every Sikh who respects Gurbani & Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee Maharaj.