

Key concepts

- The Rahit Maryada is the official Sikh Code of Conduct and Conventions. There were a number of unsuccessful attempts in the 18th century following the death of Guru Gobind Singh to produce an accurate portrayal of the Sikh conduct and customs. These attempts were contradictory and inconsistent with many of the principles of the Gurus and were not accepted by the majority of the Sikhs. Starting in 1931, an attempt was made by the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) to produce a modern standard Rahit. These efforts involved the greatest Sikh 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 Rahit Maryada is the only version authorised by the Akal Takht, the seat of supreme temporal authority for Sikhs.
- It includes many rules and guidelines for Sikh life – personal life and relationship with God – Naam Japo meditation on God’s name and daily prayers, following honest professions, importance of family life and voluntary service, living life following in the example of the Gurus, practice of equality in gender and caste, the importance of communal life and maintaining the Panth. These are all important expressions of Sikh identity.
- The Rahit Maryada provides key principles for a code of conduct which defines Sikhs from non-Sikhs.
- It provides clear guidelines about how practices should be organised in the gurdwara. It is a code of discipline that unites Sikhs everywhere and safeguards key Sikh beliefs, values and identity.
- Rahit Namas are collections of Codes of Conduct for the Sikhs. There are many of these collections, some more detailed than others, and some quite obscure. Many of the admonitions and guidelines pre-date Guru Gobind Singh, but with the establishment of the Khalsa, he verified and formalised the Code of Conduct for Khalsa.



Key quotes

- ‘It is a Sikh’s code of conduct that I love, not the Sikh without it.’ – (Guru Gobind Singh)*
- ‘One who has discipline is my Sikh, then one is my master and I his disciple.’ – (Guru Gobind Singh)*
- ‘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?’ – (Bhai Gurdas Kabit, 439)*
- ‘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.’ – (Guru Arjan)*

Key words

Gurus	SGPC	Gurdwara	Guidelines	Panth
Identity	Naam Japo	Equality	Caste	Discipline
Khalsa	Beliefs	Values	Community	Prayers
Rahit Maryada	Rahit Namas	Code of Conduct	Guru Gobind Singh	

Issues for analysis and evaluation

Key arguments/debates

Some would argue that the Rahit Maryada is a very effective guide to Sikh living. Others would argue that it is not relevant to many aspects of modern society. Some would argue that it is still an effective guide in parts.

Key questions

- Is the Rahit Namas an effective guide to Sikh living?
- How important is the Rahit Maryada in the context of Sikh identity?
- What is the relationship between the Rahit Maryada and the Rahit Namas?