

Grade: 8

Course: Virṣā (ਵਿਰਸਾ)

Lesson Number: 19

Unit Name: The Sikh Code of Conduct

Title: Introduction to Sikh Rahit Maryādā (ਸਿਖ ਰਹਿਤ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ)

Standards

Standard 4: The Sikh Code of Conduct

- Students identify the process and legitimacy of the Sikh Rahit Maryādā.
 - Students will learn about the historical context of the reasons and the consultations that led to the formation of the Sikh Rahit Maryādā. They will understand key historical personalities, processes, debates, and critics in its formation.

Objectives

1. Students will examine how and why the Sikh Rahit Maryādā was developed.

Prerequisites

- Previous lessons on Singh Sabhā (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ) Movement and SGPC.

Materials

- Readings on Rahit Maryādā (in Teacher Resources)
- Matching activity (in Teacher Resources-*optional: Part of Engagement*)
- Ruled paper
- Pencils/red pens
- Journal
- Small envelopes (one for each student)

Advanced Preparation

- Teachers should look over reading and S.G.P.C. website and be comfortable with what the Rahit Maryādā is and where it came from.
- Teachers should read through the entire Rahit Maryādā and be prepared to answer any questions that students may have regarding it.
- Teachers also need to cut out matching activity into eight different squares. Then teachers need to put squares into an envelope.

Engagement (15 to 20 minutes)

- Ask students what type of rules/regulations they are expected to follow in school.
- Discuss with students why it is important to follow these rules (i.e., without those rules school would be chaotic, everyone may come up with their own rules and do what they want to do; without rules it may be difficult to make people accountable for their actions).
- Now ask students to explain how the different sects we studied in the previous lesson were not following the rules/principles of Sikhī (ਸਿਖੀ). You might want to review the sects/groups with the activity in Teacher Resources as a quick refresher. You can use the matching activity provided below if you have time. If you do not have time to do the activity, have a quick discussion to revisit the sects.
- Now ask students what could have been done at that time to unite the Sikhs and make sure that all of them knew what was expected of them as Sikhs of the Gurū (ਗੁਰੂ). Feel free to write these comments on the board as students express their thoughts.

- Accept various answers; however you are looking for students to say something along the lines of having uniting rules that would lead to the Sikh Rahit Maryādā or Sikh code of conduct. If none of the students are able to come up with the correct answer, then direct them towards it. Let students know that today's lesson is an introduction to how/why the Sikh Rahit Maryādā was developed.

Exploration (35 minutes)

- Now ask students to open their journals and write the words Sikh Rahit Maryādā on the top.
- Ask students to define the Sikh Rahit Maryādā in their own words in about two sentences.
- Now ask students to share their answers with the class. Do not discuss answers at this time, just listen to what they wrote.
- Now read aloud the short description: What is the Sikh Rahit Maryādā?
- Compare the answers the students wrote with the description provided and discuss which answers were correct and which were not, and why.
- Hand each student the next reading on the historical background of the Sikh Rahit Maryādā and the reading titled 'Sikh Rahit Maryādā'. Let students read both write-ups. Ask them to read it to themselves quietly and take notes as there will be follow-up lessons on it.
- Ask students if they have any questions about the reading. Clarify any of their questions.
- Now hand out the list of people and organizations involved, for students to go over and understand that a lot of people were involved in the process of creating the Sikh Rahit Maryādā. This can be found at <http://www.sgpc.net/sikhism/introduction.html> (*Please do not spend time reading each name or each organization. This paper is just given out for them to get a feel of how many people are involved and that this was not a one or two person process).
- Now hand each student a piece of ruled paper. Explain that they will be writing a paragraph that outlines how the Sikh Rahit Maryādā was developed. They need to make sure that they include the process and the important people involved. This write-up should be written for a Non-Sikh audience and, therefore, should take into account descriptions of particular words or phrases that need clarification.
- Provide students 15-20 minutes to complete the paragraph and then you will collect them.

Explanation/ Extension (5 to 10 minutes)

- Take the collected paragraphs and hand them to your students randomly (Students will need red pens for marking. Make sure no student receives his/her own paper).
- Now direct students to evaluate each other's paragraphs. Ask them to write suggestions as to how the paragraphs can be improved and what they liked about them.
- Direct students to write/type their final copy to turn in next week.

Evaluation (On-Going)

- Collect paragraphs next week to evaluate.

Teacher Resources

What is the Sikh Rahit Maryādā (ਸਿਖ ਰਹਿਤ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ)?

The Sikh Rahit Maryādā is the Official Sikh Code of Conduct. During the eighteenth century, following the death of Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਹਿਬ), there were a number of unsuccessful attempts to produce an accurate portrayal of Sikh conduct and customs. However, these attempts were contradictory and inconsistent with many of the principles of the *Gurūs* and were not accepted by the majority of the Sikhs. Starting early in the 20th century, in 1931 an attempt was made by the Shromaṇī Gurduārā Prabandhak Committee (ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ) (S.G.P.C.) to produce a standard Rahit.

These efforts involved the great 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 Rahit Maryādā is the only version authorized by the Akāl Takht (ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ), the seat of supreme temporal authority for Sikhs. Its implementation has successfully achieved a high level of uniformity in the religious and social practices of Sikhī (ਸਿਖੀ).

Adapted from: www.sikhs.org/rehit.htm

Historical background on the Sikh Rahit Maryādā

Rahit comes from the Pañjābī verb rahiṇā (ਰਹਿਣਾ) (to live) or rahind (ਰਹਿੰਦ) (to remain), and means mode of living, while Maryādā is a Sanskrit word composed of marya (ਮਰਿਯਾ) (limit, boundary, mark) and ādā (to give to oneself, to accept, to undertake), meaning bounds of morality. Gurū Nānak Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਹਿਬ) and his nine successors not only set for their followers a strict moral standard, but also a distinctive pattern of personal appearance and social behavior. One of the documents that address what is expected of a Sikh on a daily basis and in general in our lives is the Sikh Rahit Maryādā. The Sikh Rahit Maryādā can be divided into the following titles: physical appearance; religious beliefs and observances; moral conduct; and social behavior. However, there was a long process that was involved before the final document was accepted.

During the 18th century, mostly because of government repression, Sikhs had to move to inaccessible places, leaving *Gurduārās* (ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ) to be managed mostly by non-Amritdhārī well-wishers of the Panth (ਪੰਥ) and *Mahants* (ਮਹੰਤ). They looked like Hindūs and followed many of the Hindū rituals in the *Gurduārās*. *Gurū* portraits (of course, all imaginary) were made popular during this period. Worship of Hindū gods was also re-introduced by these caretakers. In the early 20th century a different Maryādā was followed at almost every *Gurduārā* depending upon who was managing the place.

The Gurduārā Reform Movement began in the late 19th century with the Singh Sabhā (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ) Movement, who wanted the *Mahants* to practice what was dictated in Gurbāṇī. Sikhs continued to demand the right to control their *Gurduārās*, and finally the British government agreed. In 1905, the government issued that idols be removed from the Harimandar Sāhib (ਹਰਿਮੰਦਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ). In 1909, the Anand Marriage Act was passed, confirming that Sikhs are not a sect of Hindūs. Earlier, Brāhmins (ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਨ) performed the Sikh marriage by making the couple go around the fire and reciting Hindū mantras. In 1925, the British Indian government approved the Gurduārā Act in the Pañjāb Legislature, which allowed Sikhs to manage their *Gurduārās* according to their own principles.

On March 15, 1927, a general body meeting of the Shromaṇī Gurduārā Prabandhak Committee (ਸ਼੍ਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ) (S.G.P.C) at the Akāl Takht (ਅਕਾਲ ਤਖਤ), appointed a 29 member sub-committee, convened by the Jathedār Akāl Takht, Bhāi Tejā Singh (ਭਾਈ ਤੇਜਾ ਸਿੰਘ), to explore Sikh teachings, traditions, history, and practice, and to prepare a draft of a Code of Sikh conduct and conventions. The task of completing the draft was entrusted to Professor Tejā Singh of Khālsā (ਖਾਲਸਾ) College, Ammritsar (ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ). He was also the convener of the sub-committee. The draft was published in the April 1931 issue of the Gurduārā Gazette, the official newspaper of the S.G.P.C, for electing public opinion. The *Rahit* subcommittee considered the draft, as well as the comments received from various quarters, and held meetings at the Akāl Takht on October 4 and 5, 1931, January 3, 1932, and again on January 31, 1932. The final version, after being referred to several boards and committees received approval by the Shromaṇī Gurduārā Prabandhak Committee on February 3, 1945. It was then published under the title Sikh Rahit Maryādā.

In drafting the Sikh Code of Conduct, scholars drew upon the teachings in the Gurū Granth, and the unbroken oral tradition and practice. They also examined various historical documents to look for the common thread in all of them. These were the Gurū Granth Sāhib, the writings of Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਹਿਬ), the poetical works of Bhāi Gurdās (ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ) and Bhāi Nand Lāl (ਭਾਈ ਨੰਦ ਲਾਲ), and many others.

Sikh Rahit Maryādā

The original Rahit was verbally communicated by the Tenth Guru, Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib, to the Five Beloved Ones in 1699. Following that event, the *Rahit* was primarily transmitted orally. During the eighteenth century, some individuals wrote down what they understood of the *Rahit*. The written versions are ascribed to Bhāi Nand Lāl (ਭਾਈ ਨੰਦ ਲਾਲ), Bhāi Desā (ਦੇਸਾ) Singh, Bhāi Dayā (ਦਯਾ) Singh, and Caupā (ਚੌਪਾ) Singh, among others. None of these written versions, however, seem to have comprehensively captured the original verbal communication to the Pañj Piāre (ਪੰਜ ਪਿਆਰੇ). It could also be that over the years, the original versions of Bhāi Nand Lāl's *Rahit* or the *Rahit* written by others were altered. Caupā Singh's *Rahit* is problematic because Caupā Singh was a Chibbar Brāhman, and he chose to write the *Rahit* according to his own ideas and not those of the Gurū. For instance, Caupā Singh says that Brāhmans should be considered supreme, or that women should never be trusted. So, all existing written *Rahits* seem to be unsatisfactory for one reason or another.

After the *Gurū*, one person, in any case, cannot document the *Rahit*. The *Gurū* transferred his authority to the Gurū Panth and the Gurū Granth. So it is the Panth, the collective of all committed Sikhs, who have the authority to draft the *Rahit* in light of the teachings of the Gurū Granth. This would mean building a consensus among all members of the Panth, which may seem to be a tall order for our community.

Through the eighteenth and nineteenth century, however, such consensus did exist. The Khālsā (ਖਾਲਸਾ) would assemble at the Akāl Takht, or elsewhere when the Takht was inaccessible and make decisions for the Panth through consensus. We have at least one eye witness account from 1805 when John Malcolm was present at a Sarbat Khālsā (ਸਰਬਤ ਖਾਲਸਾ) in Ammritsar. The *Rahit* during these years was never disputed, and it remained an oral tradition, although disputes on the correct code of conduct started becoming prevalent. The debate on meat, for instance, seems to have started as early as the middle of the eighteenth century, about fifty years after the passing of Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib. Such debates never became the focus of the Khālsā's attention, as there were other more significant issues to deal with.

By the end of the 19th century, the *Rahit* Sikhs practiced, had deteriorated so much that the Sikh identity was pretty much lost. As with the Buddhists, the Sikhs had been engulfed into the larger Hindū fold. This was partly due to the Hindū or Aryan approach towards undermining and swallowing up any Indic creeds that sought to assert a separate identity and challenge the Hindu caste structure. The other reason was the Sikhs were complacent about their practices and identity. In the later half of the 19th century, Sikhs woke up and several reform movements started, that sought to revive the original intent of the ten Sikh Gurūs. One of these movements was the Singh Sabhā Lahar (ਸਿੰਘ ਸਭਾ ਲਹਰ). These movements also addressed the issue of the community not having a uniform *Rahit*.

In 1925, after much debate and discussion, a *Rahit* was drafted by scholars from several differing schools of Sikh thought. This draft *Rahit* was then sent to Sikhs all over the world. This was a serious attempt at building consensus among the community. Principal Tejā Singh was convener of this effort. Other people involved in this effort included notable Sikhs such as Bhāi Vīr Singh (ਭਾਈ ਵੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ), Akālī Kaur Singh (ਅਕਾਲੀ ਕੌਰ ਸਿੰਘ) and Bhāi Kānh Singh Nābhā (ਭਾਈ ਕਾਨ੍ਹ ਸਿੰਘ ਨਾਭਾ). So serious were these Sikhs about hearing from Sikhs worldwide, they sent this draft to Canada, USA, Kenya, Malaysia and other Diaspora countries. Remember this was 1920s, when air travel did not exist. After eleven years of debate and discussion, during which some Sikhs chose to walk out of the process because they did not get their way, a final version was agreed to in 1936. This version is what most mainstream Sikhs accept as the Gurū Panth's *Rahit*. Some Sikhs revere this document because it reflects the closest Sikhs have come to a consensus in a long time. *Rahits* written by individuals, regardless of how great their practice of Sikhī, still remain the ideas of just individuals. Bhāi Raṇdhīr Singh (ਭਾਈ ਰਣਧੀਰ ਸਿੰਘ), Bābā Gurbacan Singh Bhiṇḍrānvāle (ਬਾਬਾ ਗੁਰਬਚਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਭਿੰਡਰਾਂਵਾਲੇ) and other such Sikhs were no doubt devoted Sikhs, but were not the *Gurū*, and cannot speak for the Gurū Panth. Their ideas are those of individuals, and their *Rahits* are not any more acceptable than those of Caupā Singh or Desā Singh.

The Gurū Panth's *Rahit*, therefore, is the 1936 version, accepted by the SGPC and other Sikh institutions in 1945. Note that this *Rahit* is not the SGPC's *Rahit*; it is the Panth's *Rahit*. The SGPC is one organization that accepts and prints this *Rahit*. Other smaller organizations such as the Sikh Missionary College also print this *Rahit*. This *Rahit* has seen three small changes in the 1940s (the addition of eventual hope of Sikhs to freely visit shrines in Pakistan), 1960s (the addition of a fifth Takht) and 1990s (the addition of reading the complete Anand Sāhib during *Ammrit Sañcār* – ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸੰਚਾਰ - instead of 6 *paūrīs* - ਪਉੜੀ). No one, including the *Jathedār* (ਜਥੇਦਾਰ) of Akāl Takht, has the authority to amend this document. If the Panth is to see any form of unity today, it is imperative that they rally around this Maryādā, until we can be free to come up with something better. We would encourage all Sikhs to read and live by *Rahit*'s letter and spirit.

transcript of the first trial was important in the conviction. De La Beckwith was 42 years of age when he murdered Evers, and 73 years old when he was finally sentenced to life in prison.



After years of hard work spent in getting De La Beckwith convicted, the young District Attorney is now a judge in Hinds County, Mississippi. Evers' wife will be thankful to him forever.

What Evers fought for is still followed today in Mississippi. His loud voice about violence not being the way for the people of Mississippi helped civil rights, but he ended up losing his own life fighting for equality.

He will be respected always. Many tributes have been paid to Evers, including two books, one written by his wife, Myrlia Evers. Evers would be proud to know that there are 145 elected black officials in Mississippi and that Blacks can enroll in all Mississippi schools today.

Source: library.thinkquest.org

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