

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](http://library.thinkquest.org)*

### 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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](http://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 18<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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, Brāhmans (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.