**Balpreet** weds  **Amandip**

May 28th, 2005

Sikh marriage was introduced by our fourth Guru Guru Ram Das in 1552 and was given statutory recognition by the British Rulers in 1909 under the Anand Marriage Act. The Guru explained the spiritual union allegorically by saying that: ‘The husband and wife are always close to each other, separated only by their ego.” He made this analogy the basis of the Sikh marriage and declared that the fulfillment of a marriage consists of spiritual unity to weed out the ego with joint effort. Marriage is considered to be a very sacred institution by the Sikhs. It is a religious affair, a spiritual union performed in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of the Sikhs. It is a sacred sacrament, although the bodies remain separate, the souls in them merge and become one harmonious whole.

**Sehra Bandi**

Groom’s sister ties sehra to his turban. Sehra is the tinsel veil that partially covers the groom’s face.

**Barat**

Barat is the procession of the Groom’s family & friends being hosted by the Bride’s family & friends at the venue. When the Groom is ready Barat departs for the actual wedding venue accompanied by singing and drum playing.

**Milni**

Welcome of Barat is called Milni. Members of the two families placing garlands over their counterparts’ heads as a sign of welcome and joining of the two families.

**Jaymala**

Bride and Groom place garlands around each other’s heads after Milni ends.

**Anand Karaj**

Guests must cover heads with a scarf or handkerchief and they must remove their shoes before entering the prayer hall where the actual wedding ceremony (Anand Karaj) will be held. During any Sikh religious service, everyone sits on the floor. This symbolises the equality of all people in the eyes of God. People usually sit crosslegged, but it is imperative that feet must not be pointed in the direction of the holy book.

1. **Kirtan** - After the reception of the Barat (the grooms relatives and friends) the groom and his entourage go inside the congregation hall accompanied by the relatives and friends of the bride. Both parties sat together and listen to the Kirtan performed by the raagis (musicians) in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib.

2. **Seating of the Bride and the Groom** - The groom is seated first, facing the Guru Granth Sahib. Then the bride comes, escorted by her sister(s) and friends and takes her place by the groom on his left side.

3. **Invoking Blessings** - This ardas is only carried out by the bride, the bridegroom and their parents while the rest of the congregation remains seated. The granthi (priests) prays to Waheguru (God) invoking His blessings for the proposed marriage and begging His grace on the union of the couple. This denotes not only the consent of the bride and groom, but also of their parents in the presence of relatives and friends.

4. **Hukamnama (Order of the Day)** - Then the Guru Granth Sahib is opened and a verse is read at random. This is called the order of God.

5. **Advice to the Bride and the Bridegroom** - The head of the raggis then address the bride and the bridegroom individually and explains to them their duties in the new life in which they are about to enter.

6. **Pallae di Rasam (Tying the wedding knot)** - The bride’s father gives the hand of his daughter by placing the other end of the groom’s long scarf into the bride’s hand while a short hymn sung. Holding this scarf in her hand, she later follows him during the main ceremony when they go around the Guru Granth Sahib.

7. **Lavan (The Marriage Hymn)** - Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs, also composed means to ‘unite’. A Sikh marriage is an attempt at uniting the individual soul to the Universal soul. The granthi starts the actual marriage ceremony, the prescribed four hymns are first read from the Guru Granth Sahib and then sung by the raggis. The modes of the acceptance of the promises contained in the hymns are that the bride and the groom listen to hymns when read from the Guru Granth Sahib and how to show their acceptance. The hymns are then sung by raggis and the couple gets a second chance to make up their minds. If they are sure of accepting the promises and taking the vows to fulfil them, then they stand up, go round the Guru Granth Sahib and bow again before sitting down. The significance of going round the Guru Granth Sahib is that they are calling God to be their witness during the wedding ceremony and the second signifies the final acceptance of the promises.

 **The First Lavan** - The Promises to love forever: This hymn explains the duties towards God, to each other, to the family and to the community at large. In the first Lavan, the Waheguru asks the bride and the bridegroom to promise that: (1) Only Gurbani is the Guru and the scriptures for a Sikh, practise truth and remember the Waheguru, and (2) Love your partner forever from the bottom of your heart and the Waheguru will bless you with happiness. Love is a delicate thing: it may get injured by the slighted departure from the truth or sincerity. Great sensitive art, loving tact, patience and sympathy are required to make two strange lives grow into one.

 **The Second Lavan** - The promise to merge completely into one another: The Waheguru has caused your union and now you both promise that: (1) You will dispel all the fears of your past life and will throw away all your pride; (2) You will respect each other and will always live in other’s eyes and heart; (3) You will descend in each other’s soul and will always remain each other’s beloved and (4) Your relation will be forever and you will always share your happiness and sorrow.

 **The Third Lavan** - The promise to be faithful: Your mind, which until yesterday had only distinct dreams, is today filled with utmost happiness. You are very fortunate that you both have been united in the presence of this congregation. Now you promise that you will always: (1) Live in humility; (2) Speak to each other with sweetness and love, and you will not forget the Waheguru; (3) From today you will think of no one else except each other, and will share each other’s dreams and be faithful forever and (4) From today both your actions and fortunes will be joint and one.

 **The Fourth Lavan** - The promise to be together in both happiness and adversity: The fourth stage is that of harmony or union, of complete oneness, of perfect balance which knows no separation, no mistrust. This is the stage in which effort is eliminated. The bride’s past and present become the groom’s past and present. They feel and think alike and both are completely identified with each other i.e. they become one spirit in two bodies. “The Waheguru has blessed you both. This marriage has been solemnised in the presence of God. Human love is superseded by divine love.” Now you both promise that you will always remain together in both happiness and adversity and will live in each other’s heart. When the Lavan ceremony is finished the couple is declared to be husband and wife.

8. **Anand Sahib, Ardas, Hukamnama and Karah Parshad (blessed sweets)** - After the completion of Lavan, other shabads are sung followed by the Anand Sahib, the Song of Bliss which is composed by the third Guru, is read and finally the ardas is said in which the whole congregation joins. The culmination of the ceremony is of the opening of the Guru Granth Sahib and reading a verse at random, after which Karah Parshad is distributed to the congregation.

**Doli**

The wedding event ends with doli, traditionally a very sad time for the bride’s family and friends as it symbolises the bride leaving her family home to move to the groom’s home. Before the doli , the bride usually changes clothes in to a set provided by the groom’s family.