

Guidance on dealing with Births in Sikh families

A short description of events related to the Birth of a Sikh child

Sikhs follow the instructions for all ceremonies (birth, naming and marriage) as set out in the *Sikh Rehat Maryada* (Sikh code of conduct) and by following the holy book the Guru Granth Sahib.

Prayer is the first action of Sikh women when they find out that they are pregnant. When the baby is born, the words of the Mul Mantar (a key prayer, composed by **Guru Nanak**) are whispered into the ears of the child.

It is also customary to visit the temple as soon as it is physically possible after giving birth, this is usually within forty days of the birth of the child. Once inside the **Gurdwara** the Guru Granth Sahib is randomly opened by the Granthi (priest) and a passage is read out aloud. The family will then choose a name by using the first letter of the hymn on the page opened. The baby's name is announced to the congregation, the Granthi will also add Singh (lion) as a surname if the baby is a boy, and Kaur (princess) if the child is a girl.

To celebrate, *Karah Parshad*, a sweet dish made from flour, semolina, butter and sugar, is distributed amongst the congregation.

Introducing a Sikh Infant to the Guru Granth Sahib

In the Sikh tradition a new-born infant is formally presented by the family to Guru Granth Sahib. This occasion may be used as an opportunity to conduct a Sikh baby naming ceremony. There is no set number of days following the birth of a child that the event has to occur. Once mother and child are able to bathe, an infant may be introduced to the Guru Granth as soon after childbirth as is comfortable.

The Sikh Baby Naming Ceremony

The immediate family, relatives, and close friends gather together in the presence of the Guru Granth either in the home or at the gurdwara for kirtan.

The family sings or recites hymns of rejoicing and blessing for the child such as:

- Parmaesar ditaa bannaa||

The Transcendent Lord has given me His support."

- Satigur saachai deea bhajej||

The True Guru has truly given a child."

- Pootaa maataa kee aasees|| O son (child), this is your mother's blessing, hope, and prayer."

A Sejh or Sadharan Paath, is a non-continuous reading of the Guru Granth Sahib from beginning to end. If such an endeavor is underway on behalf of the new born it is read to completion at this time and the family celebrates the Bhog, or conclusion.

A Hukam or random verse is read from the Guru Granth. The first letter of the verse determines the first letter of the name chosen for the child. A name may be suggested by the one reading and is decided on by the family members. The suffix of Kaur completes the name of a baby girl. The suffix of Singh completes the name of a baby boy.

The first five and final verses of Anand Sahib, "The Song of Bliss", are sung or recited.

An Ardas, a prayer of petition, is offered on behalf of the infant and parents. An offering of Prashad is prepared either by the family, or at the gurdwara, placed before the Guru Granth, and distributed to those gathered together for the Sikh baby naming ceremony.

Avoidance of Superstitious Rituals

Sikhism does not support superstitious ceremonial rites. No ritual cleansing with water following childbirth are necessary other than are normal in the course of life for sanitary reasons. No one having contact with the mother during or following childbirth, or eating food prepared by the mother is to be considered spiritually polluted. Life and death are considered to be ordained by the will of the divine. Both food and water are considered a life sustaining gift.

Making clothing for the infant from the draperies which cover the Guru Granth Sahib is considered sacrilegious and contrary to the ideals of Sikhism.

Resources on the internet regarding Sikh baby names

<http://www.sikhwomen.com/SikhNames/>

<http://www.singhsahib.com/sikh-baby-names-for-sikh-baby-boys-girls.php>

http://sikhism.about.com/od/sikhhabynames/Sikh_Names_Sikh_Baby_Names_Sikh_Spiritual_Names.htm

"Parmaesar Dita Bannaa" is a composition by Arjun Dev, the fifth guru, is a prayer of celebration. This hymn may be sung or recited on behalf of a mother for safe delivery of her child as an expression of joyous thanks to the merciful creator who is the destroyer of distress. This hymn of gratitude to the Transcendent Lord for support given enabling successful childbirth may be performed on the occasion of a newborn's presentation to the Guru Granth Sahib as a part of the Sikh baby naming ceremony.

The Gurmukhi words are spelled out here phonetically.

"Parmaesar dita bannaa||

The Transcendent Lord has given His support.

Dukh rog kaa ddaeraa bhannaa||

The dwelling place of distress and disease has been demolished.

Anad kareh nar naaree||

Men and women celebrate.

Har har prabh kirpaa dhaaree||1||

The Lord God has extended His Mercy. ||1||

Sant-hu sukh hoaa sabh thaaee||

O Saints, there is peace in every place.

Paarbrahm pooran parmaesar rav rehiaa sabhane jaaee||rehaao||

The Supreme Master, the Perfect Transcendent Lord is all pervading every place. ||Pause||

Dhur kee baanee aaee||

The Word emanated from the Primal Lord.

Tin saglee chint mittaaee||

It eradicates all anxiety.

Da-i-aal purakh meharvaanaa||

Merciful, kind, and compassionate is the Lord King.

Har naanak saach vakhaanaa||2||13||77||

Nanak utters the Name of the True Lord." ||2||13||77 SGGs||627-8

"Jamia Poot Bhagat Govind Ka," announcing the arrival of his son Har Gobind who became guru after him.

This hymn may be sung as a blessing in honor of a child's conception and birth. It may be recited at any time, or be performed as part of a kirtan program:

- When couples are hoping for conception.
- When parents are expecting.
- When celebrating the occasion of a birth.
- When celebrating a child's birthday.

The Gurmukhi words are spelled out phonetically here and may differ somewhat from accepted short form spellings as used in the title.

Assaa Mehlaa 5||

Raag Assa 5th Guru's House

"Satigur saachai deaaa bhaej||

The True Guru has truly given a child.

Chir jeevan oupajiaa sanjog||

The long-lived one has been born to this destiny.

Oudharai maahi aae keaaa nivaas||

He came to acquire an abode in the womb.

Maataa kai man bahuth bigaas||1||

the mother's heart is so very glad. ||1||

Janmiaa poot bhagat govind kaa||

A son is born - a devotee of the Lord of the universe.

Pragattiaa sabh meh likhiaa dhur kaa||rehaao||

This pre-ordained destiny has been revealed to all. ||Pause||

Dasee maasee hukam baalak janam leea||

In the tenth month, by the Lord's order, the baby has been born.

Mittiaa sog mehaa anand theea||

Sorrow is dispelled, and great joy has ensued.

Gurbaanee sakhee anand gaavai||

The companions blissfully sing the songs of the Guru's word.

Saachae saahib kai man bhaavai||2||

This is pleasing to the Lord Master. ||2||

Vadhhee vael bahu peerree chaalee||

The vine has grown, and shall last for many generations.

Dharam kalaa har bandh behaalee||

The workings have been set in motion, by the Lord, establishing the power of loving devotion.

Man chindiaa satiguroo diva-i-aa||

That which my mind wishes for, the True Guru has granted.

Bhe achint ek liv laa-i-aa||3||

I have become carefree, and I fix my attention on the One Lord. ||3||

Jio baalak pitaa oopar karae bahu maan||

As the child places so much faith in his father,

Bulaa-i-aa bolai gur kai bhaan||

I speak as it pleases the Guru to have me speak.

Gujhee chhanee naahee baat||

The matter is not concealed

Gur naanak tuthaa keenee daat||4||7||101||

Guru Nanak, greatly pleased, has bestowed this gift." ||4||7||101||
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"Poota Mata Kee Asees," which expresses a mother's hope for her child's wellbeing, and a plea that her child shall always love God.

This prayer may be sung or recited at any time, or performed as part of a kirtan program as a blessing:

- When parents are expecting.
- When celebrating the occasion of a birth.
- When celebrating a child's birthday.
- When celebrating Mother's day.

The Gurmukhi words are spelled out phonetically here and may differ somewhat from accepted short form spellings as used in the title.

Goojree Mehlāa 5||

Raag Goojree, 5th Guru's House

"Jis simrat sabh kilavikh naasei pitaree hoe oudhaaro||

Remembering Him, all sins are erased, and ones generations are saved.

So har har tumh sad hee jaaphu jaa kaa ant na paaro||1||

So meditate continually on the Lord, God, who has no end or limitation. ||1||

Pootaa maataa kee aasees||

O son (child), this is your mother's blessing, hope, and prayer,

Nimakh na bisaro tumh ko har har sadaa bhajhu jagadees||1|| rehaao ||

May you never forget for even an instant the Lord God and ever remember the Universal Lord. ||1||Pause||

Satigur tumh ko hoe daeaalaa santasang teree preet||

May the True Guru be kind to you, and may you love the society of saints.

Kaaparr pat parmaesar raakhee bhojan keertan neet||2||

May the preservation of your honor by the Transcendent Lord be your clothing, and may the singing of his praises be as food to you. ||2||

Anmrit peevhu sadaa chir jeevhu har simrat anad anantaa||

Drink the immortalizing Nectar that you may ever have long life, and contemplation of the Lord give you infinite delight.

Rang tamaasaa pooran aasaa kabeh na biaapai chintaa||3||

May joy and playful pleasure be yours, may your hopes be fulfilled, and worries never trouble you. ||3||

Bhavar tumhaaraa ehu man hovo har charnaa hohu koulaa||

Let your mind be the bumble bee, and the Lord's feet be the lotus flower.

Naanak daas oun sang lapattaaiou jio boondeh chaatrik moulaa||4||3||4||

Says servant Nanak, attach your mind to them, and blossom forth like the song-bird, upon finding the rain-drop." ||4||3||4|| SGGS||496