

Central Gurdwara Resource Centre

Issue 13

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October 1996

The Newsletter for the Sikh Youth of Today

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

Issue 13 - "Teran" Like all the newsletters this issue is dedicated to Almighty Waheguru. When I think of the number 13 - "Tera" comes to mind which also means "Yours" - We owe everything to God and so why do people become superstitious about a number of all things.

Superstitions and Rituals have no place in Sikhism and no place in modern society. Yet we find practices which are totally illogical being practised almost everywhere. My rule of thumb is "if it doesn't make sense, question it - if the answer doesn't make sense, ignore it". It is up to us to question these dubious practices, such not washing your hair on certain days, only then will they come to an eventual end.

This month as well as the newsletter we will be busy organising the **Fourth National Sikh Youth Forum**. Please treat this as a formal invitation as I urge you all to attend and air your views and hear those of others. We hope to have attendees from different parts of the country and a diverse and spirited discussion is promised. Topics chosen for workshop discussions will include the lost generation and the future of the Forum.

The Forum is on **Saturday 19 October**
starting at **12 noon** at
Central Gurdwara London,
62 Queensdale Road London W11

The newsletter this month has a thought provoking article about the way in which the views of Sikhism have preceded the views of the modern world we live in, the second article is a discussion on the Langar.

Finally I would like to apologise to those who have requested the Gurbani CD ROM and not received it yet. I am informed that further copies have now been produced in the USA please do keep checking with me as we will be getting some soon.

Bhupinder Singh - Editor



Gatka
The Sikh
Martial Art

Please do not throw
away - pass on to
someone else.

This is **YOUR** newsletter
please do send us your
comments, articles & poems.

If you are organising an event
please let us know - to
publicise it in the newsletter

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Barah Maha (1st pauri)

ਕਿਰਤਿ ਕਰਮ ਕੇ ਵੀਛੁੜੇ ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਮੇਲਹੁ ਰਾਮ ॥

Kirit karan ke vichure kar kirpa meloh Ram

By the actions we have committed, we are separated
from You. Please show Your Mercy, and unite us
with Yourself, Lord.

ਚਾਰਿ ਕੁੰਟ ਦਹ ਦਿਸ ਭ੍ਰਮੇ ਥਕਿ ਆਏ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀ ਸਾਮ ॥

Char kunt deh dis bharame thak ae prabh ki sam

We have grown weary of wandering to the four
corners of the earth and in the ten directions. We
have come to Your Sanctuary, God.

ਧੇਨੁ ਦੁਧੈ ਤੇ ਬਾਹਰੀ ਕਿਤੇ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਕਾਮ ॥

Dhen dudhai te bahri kite na ave kam

Without milk, a cow serves no purpose.

ਜਲ ਬਿਨੁ ਸਾਖ ਕੁਮਲਾਵਤੀ ਉਪਜਹਿ ਨਾਹੀ ਦਾਮ ॥

Jal bin sakh kumlavati upjeh nahi dam

Without water, the crop withers, and it will not bring
a good price.

ਹਰਿ ਨਾਹ ਨ ਮਿਲੀਐ ਸਾਜਨੈ ਕਤ ਪਾਈਐ ਬਿਸਰਾਮ ॥

Har nah na milai sajnai kat paeai bisram

If we do not meet the Lord, our Friend, how can we
find our place of rest?

ਜਿਤੁ ਘਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਕੰਤੁ ਨ ਪ੍ਰਗਟਈ ਭਠਿ ਨਗਰ ਸੇ ਗ੍ਰਾਮ ॥

Jit ghar Har kant na pragtee bhath nagar se gram

Those homes, those hearts, in which the Husband
Lord is not manifest—those towns and villages are
like burning furnaces.

ਸੂਬ ਸੀਗਾਰ ਤੰਬੋਲ ਰਸ ਸਣੁ ਦੇਹੀ ਸਭ ਖਾਮ ॥

Srab sigar tambol ras san dehi sabh kham

All decorations, the chewing of betel to sweeten the
breath, and the body itself, are all useless and vain.

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਕੰਤੁ ਵਿਹੁਣੀਆ ਮੀਤ ਸਜਣ ਸਭਿ ਜਾਮ ॥

Prabh suami kant vihunia mit sajan sabh jam

Without God, our Husband, our Lord and Master, all
companions are like the Messenger of Death.

ਨਾਨਕ ਕੀ ਬੇਨਤੀਆ ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਦੀਜੈ ਨਾਮੁ ॥

Nanak ki benantia kar kirpa dejai naam

This is Nanak's prayer: "Please show Your Mercy,
and bestow Your Name.

ਹਰਿ ਮੇਲਹੁ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਨਿਹਚਲ ਧਾਮ ॥

Hari meloh suami sang prabh jiska nihchal dham

O my Lord and Master, unite me with Yourself, O
God, in the Eternal Mansion of Your Presence"

Live, live, live forever. Rise early each day,
and drink the Nectar (Name) of the Lord.

KHALSA - MAKERS OF THE MODERN WORLD

"The modern world is the product of Sikhism - in terms of power and in terms of ideas. If you take a straw poll of people around the world today and ask them their beliefs about the universe they might say: One God, equality between races, sexes, and religions, rituals of no meaning - it's a person's conduct which really matters, traditions of no meaning - it's the Spirit that really matters. What percentage of people would say this, whether they call themselves agnostics, Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, animists, Taoists, humanists, whatever? About sixty percent of people in the world? Now, ask a Sikh to summarise the essential teachings of Gurmat. Would she come up with the same list? Yes. Would that be true of any other religion? No. So are sixty percent of the people in the world Sikh? Yes, they believe the Sikh doctrines, but do not follow the Sikh discipline or feel part of a Sikh identity.

Return to the beginning. In 1500 one person (Guru Nanak Dev Ji) declared this vision to the world. No one else had it then, only his followers hold it consistently now. Yet sixty percent of the world actually believe it.

How did this come about? The modern world in the West is based on the writings of the French Enlightenment. Two thinkers stand out - Rousseau and Voltaire. Both were Deists. They believed in God and human emancipation, though this was NOT to be widened to include people of colour and women, perhaps about ninety percent of the world. They based their argument on the basis of Natural Religion and natural law which they claimed were used in other parts of the world. In the Courts of the Gurus there were French travellers and, indeed, the first European descriptions of the Sikhs is as "Oriental Deists."

In 1699 Waheguru ordered SatGuru Gobind Singh Ji to reveal the Khalsa. Based on a Book (Granth) containing Divine Natural Light (Guru), the people - all races, female and male, who sought the Ever-Present Natural Light (Waheguru) would gather to open the Book to dispel the shadow of hau-mai - unnatural "I am" in the houses of their bodies. Siri Guru Granth Sahib Ji would focus them to the Light. They (Siri Khalsa Panth Sahib Ji) would agree on a lifestyle to embody such Light (meeri-peeri) which might find some codification (Sikh Rehat Maryada). If people broke these rules they should admit their falling into darkness and seek the help of their fellows to travel into Light.

Rousseau wrote his classic "The Social Contract" many years later. He argued that people could only be free if:

- 1/ they obeyed rules they had made;
- 2/ these rules embodied Natural law.

For, if they embodied people's particular wills (hau-mai) they would inevitably lead to dominance and oppression. They must embody the general will (Gurmata) which could only be decided upon by the people together, following the cult of the Supreme Being - Nature Itself. A guide - the Legislator, might be needed to put the people in tune with

their real selves - the higher will (Gurmat). Rousseau is often called the "father of democracy", and the inspiration for the ideals of the French Revolution.

In 1675, Siri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji became the first martyr for freedom of conscience. He died to preserve the right of people to practise beliefs he thought mistaken. Years later, Voltaire said, "I may disagree with you till the death, but I will die to preserve your right to believe what you do." Voltaire is critical in western thought because his anti-clerical writings led to the growing disenchantment with established religion in the name of humanity. His writings also influenced the French revolution. But just think. At the time the French revolutionaries were guillotining thousands in the first ideological massacres of the post-religious age, in 1801, the Sarkare-e-Khalsa of Ranjit Singh, became the first state to abolish the death penalty.

Enough about ideology, what about power? In 1500 arguably the greatest power in the world was that of Islam. Moghul-Sikh relations have two periods. The first culminated in the rule of Akbar the Great who went to pay homage to Siri Guru Amardas Ji. His son was tutored by Mian Mir, the friend of Siri Guru Arjun Ji. In Akbar's court Siri Sukhmani Sahib Ji was recited each morning by a Wazir, Mohammed Khan. In other words, belief in Islam was being replaced by belief in Natural Religion, Sikhism. Fundamentalist Muslims led by Sheikh Sirhendi supported a coup which brought Prince Salim to the throne. Their price was the support for fundamentalism and the martyrdom of Siri Guru Arjun Dev Ji.

After the coup of the fundamentalists, Islam became deeply embedded, culminating in the suppression of the sufis and forcible conversion of the Hindus seventy years later. Then from 1699 to 1799 there was open war between the Sikhs and Moghuls. The coup of fundamentalist Islam in India was crucial. Fundamentalists everywhere were supported through the Islamic economy and came to power. When the Sikhs, through Divine Will, seized control of Punjab, a crucial link in the Muslim world economy was broken and Islam began to economically decline. Ideologically, too, it suffered. The fundamentalists, bitten by the experience of Natural Religion, maintained a strict adherence to the letter of Islam, killing the Spirit of religion. All reformers of Islam in the twentieth century point to this as the main reason for the decline of Islamic civilisation, yet fail to see that if you take out the rigidities of Islamic law and doctrine, then what you are left with is Natural Religion, Sikhism. This is what had happened four hundred years ago and what would happen today. This is the bitter lesson the Islamic fundamentalists have learned.

After the decline of Islam, the Europeans took over. The British were the main power, but only after 1849, when they conquered the Sarkare-e-Khalsa, was British power in India secure, and Queen Victoria declared Empress of India. If India was the 'Jewel of the Crown' of the British Empire, it was symbolised by the physical Jewel, the Koh-i-Noor, worn by Ranjit Singh. As Hindus from Uttar Pradesh tried to weaken Sikhism in Punjab, the Sikhs joined the British

in turning the revolt of 1857. Without their help, the British Empire in India may have ended. The Sikhs were rewarded for this action and became the sword arm of the British Empire. When the British forgot their debt to them, and carried out atrocities such as the Kamagata Maru and Jallianwala Bagh massacres the Sikhs were at the forefront of the Independence movement which destroyed the Raj in India, culminating in the end of the British Empire. Of the 113 people hanged in the Independence movement, 93 were Sikh.

As the British lost world hegemony the United States took over. The modern American Empire is often likened to the Roman Empire - cosmopolitan and economical. Through the loss of state in 1849, its carving up in 1947, and the troubles in it since 1984, the Sikhs have spread to all corners of the new Roman Empire. This is by Divine Will to spread the Light. They will be 300 years old in 1999. Like the Christians in the old Roman Empire they are often mistaken for a small offshoot cult by others, often portrayed as a small, strange group by apologists. But by those who know Love and love the world, they declare themselves as the servants of Eternal Light (Name), the High Way of Faith - the dust of the feet of all saints and mystics, the Light of the modern world. The Sikhs must unite under one banner, the Akaal Takht, to take the new Roman Empire by storm, just as the Christians united under the Roman Church took the old. "Waheguru, all is achieved by Your will, what can a person say or do."

Bhul chuk maaf karni ji

Kanwar Ranvir Singh

LANGAR

The "langar" has been and remains one of our important religious institutions. Yes, religious, and not merely social. In its current practice, at least in Canada, USA and UK, it is practised in a watered-down version, though.

Namely, that certain people sit together in rows, and are served by the same sevadars. I state "certain" for there are some members of our community, who do not eat from the same kitchen or sit separately to be served by specific sevadars. As per Sikh tenets, seva is an endeavour in anonymity. Yet, in each and every place, mentioned above, there are pronouncements weeks before and there are praises heaped later on, that "today it is so-and-so's langar" or "today it is so-and-so pariwaar's langar seva". An institution that was meant for nurturing humility has been circumvented into yet another tool for projection of one's haumai. Seva, to be done as part of our sehaj, becomes a periodic activity to draw attention to oneself. This is the second dimension of the "turning back the clock" that we are doing. To pre-Guru Nanak times.

The requirement in Guru Amardas Ji's court was that before you could come to his "court" to seek his "darshan", you had to sit in the "pangat", partake in the "langar" (eat the food that was served). The langar was part of the religious experience. It was a pre-condition to the "darshan"; the "sant sangat" began at the langar. You prepared yourself to be worthy of sitting in the "gur sangat".



Nowadays the "religious" aspect of our practices has been isolated to the "haajri" in the diwaan hall where the kirtan is being performed in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib. The langar has been relegated to a mere

social activity, done after the "religious" activity is over. In many a place, after the "kirtan sohilaa" has even been read. People cluster around folks of their strata, talking shop, the latest materialistic acquisitions, or the "near-genius" achievements of their family. Equality and humility is defined as the posteriors being at the same ground-level.

In this situation, it is amusing, how everybody is concerned about covering the heads. Or for that matter, whether we eat sitting on chairs or standing up. I have seen this rescindment of our logical practices, even in the Harmandir Sahib complex in Amritsar. The practice was that after taking a dip in the sarovar, you went to the langar hall, did sevaa or ate food, and then went to the Guru's darshan. Nowadays the devout ones make a parikarma (circumabulation) of the Darbar Sahib, go for the "darshan" and then, because you are hungry by now, go "eat the langar".

Even the terminology sounds ridiculous nowadays. Ask anyone, and "langar" is translated into "lunch" or "dinner". - "langar khaa ke jaaNaa ji". This sure sounds fine, for with the translation of "langar" into "lunch", it means "Please eat lunch before you leave".

"Langar" is the persian word for "ship's anchor". You "drop anchor" instead of "eating it". When a ship wants to take a breather, stock on the supplies, before embarking again on the oceans, it drops anchor. In Punjabi we state "bandargaah tte jahaaz ne langar paaiaa".

Consequently, the correct usage is :

"langar paa ke jaaNaa ji".

The above metaphor, alluding to our ship-like body's journey through the ocean-like world, was the background behind the usage of the term "langar". We have lost the semantics, and as we lose sight of the rationale in our understanding as well as implementation, we begin to look more and more bound by religious rituals. Much to the disappointment of our younger generations as well as those outside the faith. Our practices thereby contradict, at times, the values and ethics we might be espousing about our religion.

The third dimension of the annulment of our religious logic, in this arena, is the separation as well as shift, of the activity of the "langar paaNaa", into sitting at the diwaan and then eating lunch.

I am aware of the conveniences, expediencies and confines that forced us into these "changes". Yet, in our zeal for making these "adjustments", we seem to have lost the intent.

Jasbir Singh - first published on Khalsa Net

poets Corner

Sikhi and Khalsa an exposition

Sikhi is the Fire	Flame is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Spring	Stream is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Love	Loving is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Faith	Faithful is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Dharma	Karma is the Khalsa
Sikhi is His message	Messenger is the Khalsa
Sikhi is His Code	Conduct is the Khalsa
Sikhi is His Word	Voice is the Khalsa
Sikhi is His Court	Verdict is the Khalsa
Sikhi is His Kingdom	Crown is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Conscience	Conscientious the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Happiness	Haughty is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Humility	Humble is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Strength	Strong is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Fellowship	Friendly is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Fort	Formidable is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Shrine	Saintly is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Siege	Soldier is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the School	Scholar is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Seva	Servant is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Peace	Polite is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Simran	Submitting is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Spirit	Sincere is the Khalsa
Sikhi is the Saviour	Saved-one is the Khalsa

Gurinder Singh Sacha

**Calling all Sikh Societies
Organisations and Gurdwaras**
Please contact us if you would like to dis-
tribute the newsletter in your area

This months Gurpurabs

- 1 Oct Gur Gaddi Guru
Angad Dev Ji
- 7 Oct. Joti Jot Guru
Nanak Dev Ji
- 28 Oct. Birth Anniver-
sary Guru Amar-
Das Ji

If you are part of any
Sikh organisation and
can distribute this
newsletter among
young Sikhs please
contact us.

The opinions
expressed do not
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those of the Editors or
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**Fourth National
Sikh Youth Forum**
19 October 1996 - 12 noon
Central Gurdwara London
62 Queensdale Road - Shepherds Bush
London W11 4SG
Information: 0171 460 2020

Important dates in Sikh History October

- October 6** Death of Guru Har Rai in
1661.
- October 6** Ascension to Guruship by Guru
Har Krishan in 1661.
- October 7** Death of Guru Gobind Singh
in 1708.
- October 23** Birth of Baba Buddha in 1506.
- October 25** First Diwali celebrations at
Amritsar to welcome Guru Har-
gobind after his release from
Gwalior Fort.
- October 27** Birth of Banda Singh Bahadur
in 1670

Computer Corner

For any of the following items please contact
Bhupinder Singh contact number on front page.

- Cultural Roots Multimedia Knowledge Base
Vol. 1(PC/Mac CD-ROM)** covering The Sikh
and African Diaspora. For ages 5+ **£35-00**
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