

“Sahaj Path” Movement: First Awards go to Amandeep Kaur and Harpreet Kaur

Jaswinder Singh Khalsa*

Photo gallery of October 2 event may be downloaded from www.worldsikhnews.com

October 02 witnessed a spectacular congregation of over 3000 youth, mostly students, from the 6th standard upto graduate and post graduate level. These were the students who had completed at least one recitation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, in *Sahaj Path* to commemorate the tercentenary of Guruta Gaddi of SGGS.

The Sukrit Trust has been spearheading the campaign of Sahaj Path over last two years, “Over 12,000 students participated in this movement. About 3000 students completed their Sehaj Path and participated in Shatabdi Gurbani Vichar Muhim competitions. All the 3000 students were honored in Amritsar by distinguished spiritual personalities of the community. Many students from other faiths also participated in the competition and were awarded mementoes, medals, computers, cameras etc.

The overall first prize of five competitions worth rupees one lac was bagged jointly by two sisters, Amandeep Kaur (Class 6) and Harpreet Kaur (Class 12) of village Ghasitpur, district Amritsar. The second prize, a laptop, went to S. Jatinder Singh also of Amritsar. While the other prizes including computers, cameras, mementoes, were bagged by 87 different participants. Ms Kulwinder Kaur of BA1 from Ludhiana bagged the first prize in Gurbani Kanth by memorizing 59 banies from Sri Guru Granth Sahib. **But more than the material prizes it is the spiritual bliss and peace of mind that these students have achieved that counts.**

The Sukrit Trust also held prayers at Sri Akal Takht for celebrating year 2008 to 2018 as Decade of Spiritual Renaissance. According to S. Jaswinder Singh Khalsa, Chairman Sukrit Trust, “The students were examined based on their accuracy in recitation of holy scriptures i.e. Sahaj Path, Gurbani Kanth, Gurbani Vichar, Gurbani Bolchal and Gurbani Handwriting. The competitions were held at 12 centres across the state during the months of August and September.

The students all dressed in white suits and blue turbans/chunnies were carrying placards with slogans like: ‘Only a bond of spirituality can link whole of humanity’; ‘Sahaj Path — Puts glow in our Eyes, Smile on our Face and Spring in our Walk’; ‘Spirituality is beyond religious, cultural and national barriers’; ‘Sahaj Path — Dispels all fears and worries’. ‘Enjoy Everlasting Eternal Bliss’; ‘Let us spiritualize every moment, action and feeling’; ‘We are Spiritual beings on human journey’; ‘Spirituality helps in Academics’ etc.

The dignitaries who honoured the students included Giani Gurbachan Singh, Jathedar Sri Akal Takhat Sahib, Giani Jaswinder Singh, Granthi, Sri Harmandir Sahib, Bhai Jeewan Singh of Akhand Kirtani Jatha, , Bhai Devinder Singh ji Khalsa khanewale, Baba Sewa Singh, Kar Sewa Khadur Sahib, S. Harwinder Singh Phoolka, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court, S Jatinder Singh Jati Khalsa, UK, Dr. Amarjeet Kaur UK, Dr. Brijpal Singh Patiala, S Harkirat Singh of Satnam Sarab Kalyan Trust and many other dignitaries.

Besides, the second annual report of the Trust, a new self help project of ‘fifteens’ and brochure of International Gurbani Vichar Competition etc were also released on this occasion. The first Sukrit Sewa Ratan Award – 2008 was bestowed on Bibi Kamalpreet Kaur of village Jarg, district Ludhiana for her all round best selfless services to the

community.

It is noteworthy that **Sukrit** is carrying out five projects namely Career Guidance, Coaching, Vocational Trainings, Self Help Projects and Placement Services. Bearing the logo of '**Sword of Knowledge**', the prime aim of the Trust is to achieve **Spiritual, Academic and Professional Excellence** by inculcating skills of hard work and work culture among the youth thereby saving them from evils like drug abuse and apostasy.



Malaysia: And the Sikhs Go Marching!

Meera Murugesan (Kuala Lumpur)

Every Saturday afternoon, the grounds of Sri Dasmesh school in Jalan Pantai Baharu, Kuala Lumpur, resonate with traditional sounds of Scotland.

In this private school, just minutes from bustling Pantai Dalam, the captivating music bagpipes fill the air and the rhythmic beating of drums add to the mood as one unique Malaysian band goes through its weekly practice session.

Set up by the Sikh community in 1986 as a way to draw its youth into character-building activities, the Sri Dasmesh Pipes and Drums Band has now evolved in one of the leading bands in the country and in Southeast Asia. Made up of non-professional musicians, with members ranging from engineers and businessmen to schoolchildren and university students, it stands out with its impressive use of bagpipes and a striking uniform that's a combination of Sikh and Scottish attire.

Starting out as a small, nine-member unit 21 years ago, the band is now a 50-man team that's always in high demand and has performed through Malaysia and also in Canada, Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom.

"It's always been a great source of pride to us that people recognise our uniqueness. We're the only Sikh band in Southeast Asia and we're also proud to be known as the Malaysian Sikh Band," said Terlochan Singh, drum major of the band. The businessman and father of three was drawn to the band after watching them perform at a youth camp in 1987. Enthralled by their music and captivated by their striking uniforms, he joined the troop and has never looked back since.

Like many other band members, Terlochan hasn't had any formal training in music. Everything he knows about bagpipes, he picked up after joining the band.

"Bagpipes are usually associated with police or military bands. It's a challenging instrument to learn but it's a challenge we took up because when people hear the bagpipes, they're captivated," said Terlochan.

The band's impressive skills have seen it win several competitions and since 2005, it has taken part in the Jakarta Highland Gathering in Indonesia.

In Malaysia, the band has performed during National Day parades, war memorial services and Police Day functions and at the 1998 Commonwealth Games in Bukit Jalil.

For the Sikh community, the band has become a platform for its youth to bond with one another and develop emotionally and spiritually.

"We spend time together, even after practice, and there's a sense of belonging and togetherness because of our shared identity," said Paramjit Singh, a university student and pipe major in the band.

The men in the band are required to keep their hair long and wear turbans as called for by their religion. Even female members of the band wear scarves during performances to ensure uniformity.

Band members are also required to be highly disciplined and committed and many of

them carry these traits into their personal lives, excelling in school or in their chosen professions.

Sangeetha Kaur, one of a handful of female members in the band, said the opportunity to travel and perform and meet people of various backgrounds has made her more articulate and confident.

The college student is also proud that women in the band can hold their own when it comes to marching and playing the bagpipes.

During parades, the band sometimes marches as far as four or five kilometers and members have to be fit enough to continue playing and keep the pace.

It took Sangeetha about eight months to grasp the basics of the bagpipe and play competently.

Jagdish Kaur, another female member of the group, said she learned how to read notes and developed an interest in music after joining the band.

Despite being hesitant initially about participating in the band, the teenager has no regrets now.

“For someone my age, being able to perform this way is very exciting. It’s not something every 16 years old gets to do,” she said.

Over the years, as new members sign up, some seniors leave due to work and family commitments, but many, return after a while, eager to contribute once again.

Jasbir Singh is one such person. He signed up again with the band four years ago after having left due to work commitments.

Jasbir said he came back after his children wanted to become members and he too signed up.

The band has come a long way since its early, challenging years, but none of its members ever forget the joy they gained from being part of the team, said Jasbir.

“The things that drew you to the band in the first place will always bring you back,” he said.

For more information on the band, go to sridasmesh.com



[Courtesy: Dr. Jaspreet Kaur]