

# O King, Why Are You Sleeping? - Scriptural Wisdom

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rwjn ikau soieAw qU nId Bry jwgq kq nwhI rwm ]

– SGGS:548.

O king, why are you sleeping? Why don't you wake up to reality?

This princely status has been accorded to a seeker - a Sikh. Truly fascinating that a common person be given the title of a King. It is like calling every American "Mr. President." But the Guru is asking the seeker a question! He is asking, "O King, why are you sleeping? Why don't you wake up to reality?"

What is this reality the Guru is talking about? It is fascinating to even begin to comprehend what the Guru reveals. He says -

sdw suKu min vsY duKu sMswrh KovY ]

– SGGS:392.

Peace ever is a state of one's mind. One can be rid of suffering in this world. This is reality - with tranquility there is peace everywhere, and thus happiness everywhere. How can this be true? For we see suffering and conflict everywhere. Then again, what we see, is that the reality? Or are we simply 'asleep to the true reality' as described in Guru Granth Sahib?

The reality is: *Mun tu Jot Sarup hai – Apna mool pachaan*

Guru is saying: O mind, you have the image of the Almighty Himself. O *mind*, you have the light of the Creator. O *mind*, recognize your True Source.

Fascinating, isn't it! No other scripture book in this world has given human beings such a high status. In every heart God Himself resides. In every thing God Himself exists. There is the light of God in you. There is the light of God in me. There is the light of *Waheguru* in everyone of us. We have a great responsibility, don't we?

We are responsible of everything we do in our life. We are responsible when we hurt someone's feelings, for the Creator resides in every heart. We are responsible for our judgment of others, for we are trying to judge God himself. What - and whom - do we judge? After all, the Creator is within the creation and the creation abides in the Creator. And this creation is under the Order and nothing exists outside this Order.

PrIdw Kwlku Klk mih Klk vsY rb mwih ]

– SGGS:381.

If we truly understand this then there will be happiness within us. If we truly can comprehend that everything happens for a reason and that every reason and action is under the Order – the order of the creation and the Creator, this world will be a different place. The colors around us will be different:

hukmY AMdir sBu ko bwhir hukm n koie ]

– Japuji.

But unfortunately this light, and this happiness, that the Guru talks about, in spite of it existing in everyone and everything, is a rare commodity. Why? The Guru himself answers by saying that we are in deep slumber. We are asleep to this beautiful, elegant, mystic reality of life.

We are asleep when we let our Gurdwaras become a battlefield of power and ego. We are asleep when our youth are losing their confidence in *Sikhi*. We are asleep when our Sikh mothers cannot teach their children about *Sikhi*. Indeed mothers have been given one of the highest levels in Sikhism. The Guru says:

mwqw miq ipqw sMqoKu ]

- SGGS: 151.

Mother has been equated to wisdom. The Guru says, let wisdom be your Mother and contentment your Father. Sikh mothers have to wake up to this reality that the Guru has bestowed the foundation of *Sikhi* in their hands. Today, if *Sikhi* is on the decline it is because the Sikh mothers have failed to teach their children the wisdom of *Sikhi*. Today the Sikh mothers have failed to create the confidence in their children's hearts that when they stand in front of the mirror with a turban – they should think that the turban over long hair makes them look a good human being in God's image.

Today the Sikhs are "asleep" because the Gurdwaras have failed to facilitate the Guru's message. What a shame to see our Guru's door becoming a battlefield of ego and ignorance. O King, why don't you wake up? Wake up to the reality when the Guru says:

BII suhvwI CwprI jw mih gun gwey ]  
ikq hI kwim n Daulhr ijqu hir ibsrwey]1] rhwau]

*"Even the humble hut is sublime and beautiful if the Lord's Praises are sung within it.  
Those tall mansions where the Lord is forgotten are useless. ||1||Pause||"*

– SGGS: 745.

Today we are asleep because we are busy only making money and not conveying the true essence of *Sikhi*. We are asleep when our Sikh *gyanis* are afraid to speak like Sikhs for they

don't want to offend anyone, and because we have assimilated ourselves into an alien materialist culture. We are asleep because we have created our own convenient views on *Sikhi* and, with false confidence, we say that there is no need of following the Guru's message. We are asleep when we fail to realize the profound ingenuity of Guru Gobind Singh's system of Khalsa - a system which was - and is deeply relevant to our times.

We are asleep when we go to the Gurdwara and bow our head in front of our Guru. We are asleep while listening to *Kirtan* and *Katha*. We are asleep because we have not understood, or truly follow, our Satguru's advise. We are asleep because we have failed to realize the true reality.

syvk isK pUjx siB Awvih siB gwvih hir hir aUqm bwnI ]

gwivAw suixAw iqn kw hir Qwie pwvY ijn siqgur kI AwigAw siq siq kir mwnI ]1] –  
SGGS: 669.

The Guru is saying that your listening and reciting of God's name will be approved only when you unconditionally accept the Order of the *Satguru*. In other words, we start following what we recite, hear, and read from Guru Granth Sahib.

Wake up! Wake up to reality that we have a great responsibility as Sikhs. It is our duty to understand what the Guru says and it is our responsibility to spread his message to the whole world - **A message of peace - A message of ultimate Reality - A message of God and Grace.**

Wake up, O Gurdwara committees! Shatter this brick-wall around you and see what your youth is doing. See by your own eyes the future of *Sikhi* losing its confidence, its identity, its wisdom!

Wake up, O donors of thousands of dollars; your donation to Gurdwara is of no use if it is not earned honestly and righteously. Don't be so proud of your earnings through liquor stores and using that money to support Gurdwaras.

pihlw scu hlwl duie qIjw KYr Kudwie ]

– SGGS:141.

Let the first virtue be truthfulness, the second honest living, and the third charity in the Name of God.

Wake up, O mothers for you are the foundation of *Sikhi*. Embrace the understanding of *Sikhi* and then lead your children towards **truth** so that they may feel confident of themselves when they look into a mirror.

Wake up, O Sikh scholars! Please, stop using others' work as a lens to view *Sikhi*. You bring the depth and the elegance of *Gurbani* to such a level that it loses its essence!

Wake up, O Sikh leaders! Stop playing games of politics for there is a better teacher of guidelines to follow and understand – a *Granth* of wisdom, of selflessness, of ethics, of loyalty to one's principles. You are of no use to anyone if you fail to walk on the path of truth and justice. You are of no use to anyone if you cannot represent your own and stand for the rights of your own.

Hopefully, you are not what the Guru says you were in his time:

kUVu boil murdwru Kwie ]

AvrI no smJwvix jwie ]

muTw Awip muhwey swQY ]

nwnk AYsw AwgU jwpY ]1]

– SGGS: 139

Telling lies, they eat dead bodies.

And yet, they go out to teach others.

They are deceived, and they deceive their companions

O Nanak, such are the leaders of men. ||1||

Wake up, O Robbie Singh. Don't be misled, for you are also in the same boat as others. Your writings and talks are of no use if you yourself fail to live them. Your listening and reading of *Gurbani* is of no use if you fail to unconditionally abide by the order of *Satguru*.

This is not all easy. If it were, then Guru Nanak Ji would have never said this:

jau qau pRym Kylx kw cwau ] isru Dir qII gII myrI Awau ]

– SGGS: 1412

If you desire to play this game of love with Me, then step onto My Path with your head in your hand.

O king, ( O Sikh) why are you sleeping? Why don't you wake up to reality?



## **A Report on Sikh Youth Symposium held in North America**

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[Note: In preparing this report, I am thankful to Sardar Satpal Singh Ji, a key figure in the symposium and a close associate of Sardar Kuldeep Singh Ji (Ohio), who has contributed major informations about the Symposium in this article. Another key figure of the time in USA, and a member of the editorial advisory board of 'The Sikh Review', Dr. Inderjeet Singh (I.J.Singh) from New York was also present in the final round of the Symposium. He was in the panel of Judges, and made a brief speech about the judging of the candidates, at the Rochester Hills Gurdwara.]

The Guest Editorial in *The Sikh Review* of July 2002, has a message of love to the younger generation of the Sikh diaspora in North America. Therein, I J Singh assessed the Sikh diaspora's ties that bind Sikhs to its religious roots in the mother country, and thinks it is the umbilical\_cord links; that are influencing the next generation's preparedness to establish a stronger society willing to maintain its unique look in the diaspora of North America. He meant perhaps with the hair and turban in-tact.

His estimation is on the basis of the activities of the Sikh youth symposium and the summer camps of Sikh boys and girls between the age of 6-22, which is organised by some dedicated Sikhs of North America, like Gajinder Shah Singh (Los Angeles), Kuldeep Singh (Ohio). The Guest Editorial mentioned about the upcoming annual Sikh Youth Symposium organized by the Sikh Youth Federation of USA, which was to be held in the Midwest region of the United States of America in the month of August.

My interest in writing this article is to give a picture of the events that ensued in the final round of the said Symposium. It was a wonderful coincidence that I got the opportunity to witness the 'local center' round at the Rochester Hills Gurdwara in Michigan, the 'regional level round' at Cleveland in Ohio state, and the final round, held jointly at two Gurdwaras of Michigan, the Rochester Hills and the Madison Heights.

*Sangat* at the two Gurdwaras helped in conducting the final round symposium, which was held for three days, starting on Friday the August 9, 2002. A number of volunteers made it into a very well organized event and a highly successful one too! Speech competitions for groups I, II and III on Friday, as well as the *Kirtan* program and the prize distribution function on Sunday, were held at the Madison Heights Gurdwara Sahib. Competitions for groups IV and V were held on Saturday at the Rochester Hills Gurdwara Sahib.

### **Record Attendance:**

A total of about 800 young Sikhs had participated in initial rounds of the symposium across USA and Canada. The youth that participated at the final level had progressed through the central and the regional levels by winning the first place at each. All the participants were highly competent and made outstanding presentations. The Group I participants (6 - 8 year old) had read the book '*The Essence of Sikhism: The Lives and Teachings of the Sikh Gurus: Vol. 4.*' by Mrs. T. K. Anand. They included the following three aspects in their speeches:

1. How our *Gurus* gave preference to the true followers of the *Sikhi* path over their own children in passing on the responsibility of *Gurgaddi*?
2. The importance of the institution of *Langar* and how it should be run by contributions from honest earnings.
3. Contributions of Guru Amar Das Ji to *Sikhi* and the society at large.

Group II youth had read ‘*Bed Time Stories*. Vol. 4, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji.’ by Sardar Santokh Singh. In their speeches, they addressed questions on Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji’s life, his stand against rituals, and events related to his sacrifice to save Hinduism from the coercive policies of tyrant Aurangzeb.

The Group III youth addressed questions on martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev Ji, of the two younger Sahibzadas of Guru Gobind Singh Ji - Baba Fateh Singh Ji and Baba Zorawar Singh Ji - and of other martyrs such as Bhai Sati Das Ji, Bhai Mati Das Ji and Bhai Dayala Ji. They also touched on the lessons that these sacrifices teach the Sikhs as well as the non-Sikhs. The book they used for preparing their presentations was ‘*Stories from Sikh History: Book V - The Sikh Martyrs*.’ by Sardar Kartar Singh and Sardar Gurdial Singh.

Group IV (11-14 years) used the book ‘*Sikhism - A Universal Message*’ by Dr. Gurbaksh Singh for their presentations. They discussed the struggles of Sikh history during the times of Zakria Khan, Mir Mannu and Ahmad Shah Abdali. They also discussed the significance of the unique Sikh identity, its relevance to the recent events, including terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and the current prevalence of large number of Sikhs losing their identity.

An important highlight of the competition was the discussion held for group V:

### **Sophistication in Thematic Approach:**

The discussion format for this group was initiated last year at the International Symposium in Los Angeles. This year, the format was developed further. The participants had been given a topic to study and analyze. This year’s topic was ‘Sikhism in a multi-religious, multicultural society’. The Sikh religion was initially born in Hindu and Islamic environment, but has now spread far and wide creating newer boundaries of interaction with other religious groups. The Interfaith Meetings in various states of USA, is a common experience of the Day. Many Christian Churches all around invite religious leaders of various religions, to participate and exchange interfaith viewpoints.

In this multi-religious and multicultural society, the Sikhs face several challenges - and opportunities - in both exercising their faith and in interfacing with other religions and societies. The participants primarily used the book ‘*The Sikh Way: A Pilgrim’s Progress*’ by Dr. I. J. Singh. They were also encouraged to research the topic using any additional resources as well as to draw upon their own knowledge and understanding of *Sikhi* and its issues. During the competition, the participants made opening and closing remarks, in which they emphasized that *Sikhi* was a unique, independent religion, rather than a reform movement in Hinduism or Islam.

They then addressed several questions posed by the moderator. These questions touched on various aspects of *Sikhi* and its relationship to its religious neighbors.

### **Promoting Punjabi Language:**

A very heartening aspect of the speech competition was that a majority of participants gave their speeches in Punjabi. Out of the 38 speeches given by the youth (in the first four groups), 27 were in Punjabi, with no hint in their accent that most of them had been born and brought up in a foreign land thousands of miles away from the birth-place of *Sikh Gurus*!

A picnic was organized at the Kensington Park in Detroit on Friday evening where lessons were imparted in the art of *gatka*. Many people enjoyed a ferry ride in the lake. A number of games and competitions were specially organized at the park, which was enjoyed by all. A wide variety of mouth-watering food was available throughout the day.

A banquet was held on Saturday evening to honor the Sikh youth. The guests of honor at the banquet were the youth who had taken part in the symposium, rather than some high-profile political figures. All the 41 regional winners were seated on the head table especially set for the purpose. The participants were ushered in one by one, as they were introduced to the audience, and escorted to their seats by other youth volunteers attending the function. The entertainment program at the banquet highlighted some important Sikh traditions, which are generally not given much importance at many functions. These included an outstanding solo *tabla* performance by Sardar Gurpreet Singh, a young renowned *tabla* player; a short lecture on Sikh traditions by Sardarni Ramandeep Kaur, a young outstanding attorney from Toronto, a *gatka* performance by Bhai Surat Singh and group, and a Sikh educational skit by the Sikh youth from various parts of America.

### **Musical Tradition:**

The concluding session of the program, on Sunday, provided another memorable highlight. Youth who had come from all over America and Canada to participate in the symposium presented an unforgettable *Kirtan* performance. Outstanding performance was seen from participants ranging from young children who could barely fit their fingers on the *tabla* or the harmonium right up to the college-going youth. Not a single soul was left untouched by their wonderfully rendered melodious *shabads* in *ragas*, presented better than many professional *raagis*.

The *Kirtan* program was followed by announcement of the PRIZES. Winners of awards in various age groups were as follows:

Group I (6-8 years): 1st: Jasmeet Kaur; 2nd: Keerat Kaur; 3rd: Jasleen Kaur.

Group II (9-10 years): 1st: Japji Singh; 2nd: Kuldeep Singh; 3rd: Teghpreet Kaur.

Group III (11-13 years): 1st: Manjot Kaur; 2nd: Simerjit Singh; 3rd: Soni Kaur.

Group IV (14-17 years): 1st: Jagtaran Singh; 2nd: Namrata Kaur; 3rd: Manpreet Kaur.

Group V (18-22 years): 1st: Manpreet Kaur; 2nd: Kuldeep Singh; 3rd: Manmeet Kaur.

### **New Challenges - Hope Eternal:**

Listening to all the speeches and the discussion during the competitions made it amply clear that the Sikh religion, while going through difficult times on several fronts, is ready for any challenge. Even the youngest group of participants, between 6 to 8 years of age, gave highly enthusiastic, eloquent and impressive speeches that touched the hearts of everybody in the *Sangat*. Who else except our *Gurus* could have imagined that young children, born and brought up oceans and centuries away from the site and times of birth of *Sikhi*, would be bearing its torch so eloquently and so competently? That puts the power of dispersal (*ujjarr-jao*), from the 'Sakhees of Guru Nanak', in a real perspective.

Participation in the Sikh Youth Symposium has been growing steadily since the first symposium was held in 2000 in Buffalo, New York. From Buffalo to Detroit, the participation has grown from approximately 500 youth to 800, 15 centers to 25 and 4 regions to 10. There are already discussions going on to add 4 more centers for the 2003 symposium.

With a memorable performance of our youth in Detroit fresh in our minds, we look forward to the next round of symposium functions, with the International event scheduled to be held in Toronto, Canada in August 2003.

