

Daughter of the Khalsa

*Manjyot Kaur**

* Email: manjyot818@gmail.com. Her first article: "Embracing Sikhi" appeared in May 2006 issue.

This year's Vaisakhi was a most meaningful Gurburb for me. Not only did I participate in commemorating the Birth of the Khalsa — that incomparable moment when Guru Gobind Singh founded the Sikh nation — but I also celebrated the first anniversary of my rebirth in the House of the Guru, when I formally embraced Sikhi through the immense blessing of taking Amrit.

Becoming a 'Daughter of the Khalsa' was an essential way for me to make a solemn public commitment to living according to the tenets of the Rehat Maryada and trying my best to revere, understand, and incorporate into my daily life the teachings of Guru Granth. **Coming from a non-Sikh background, I felt that Amrit Chaknaa was absolutely necessary to my being truly considered, in both an individual and a corporate sense, a fully-fledged member of the Sikh people, legitimately and permanently linked with Sikh history and heritage, including that utterly pivotal day of 1699.**

So, after having been an only child all my life, I finally got my wish for brothers and sisters fulfilled by becoming part of a spiritual family and benefitting immeasurably from the experience and insights of my "elder siblings" who walk ahead of me along the Path. They are my cherished *Sadh Sangat*, whose fellowship helps me to attain greater levels of love and devotion to Sikhi.

Like many small children, I try to be "just like Mom and Dad" — but in what I hope is a somewhat more serious-minded manner.

Regarding my spiritual mother, Mata Sahib Kaur, this entails my striving to even remotely approach her sense of total devotion to the Guru and her astuteness in knowing that adding a personal touch of sweetness is necessary in all experiences of life, even the ones that are most weighty and fraught with significance.

Emulation of my spiritual father, Guru Gobind Singh, is even more difficult and complicated for me. When I contemplate his immortal greatness and true magnificence, I wonder how I could possibly have the unmitigated hubris to think I could ever be even a bit like him.

Among the countless splendid attributes of the Tenth Master, the one that I most admire is his seamless blend of empowerment and humility. He evinced this trait to complete perfection on that first Vaisakhi, when he inducted the Panj Piare — those five brave Sikhs who volunteered to give their heads to the Guru — as the first members of the Khalsa by giving them Amrit and, in turn, requested to be initiated at the hands of his disciples.

So, I have come to believe that perhaps it would be acceptable for me to think I might emulate him, albeit in an infinitely small way, through my own personal balancing act: consciously trying to experience the strength that comes from being a daughter of the Khalsa, while knowing all the while that it is not I, but Guruji who is great and important.

As I learn and grow as a Sikh, and find meaningful ways of being part of and serving the Panth, I try my best to keep in the forefront of my mind that my talents and accomplishments come through me, not from me: they are all manifestations of His Grace. I need to be ever-vigilant that my feelings of personal gratification never

insidiously morph into smug and preachy self-righteousness.

And, speaking of gratification, although I know that becoming Amritdhari is a significant milestone along the Path but not its end or pinnacle, the events of that day, April 13, 2007, remain beyond compare for me.

Besides the exultation I felt when, during the Amrit Sanchar, it became my turn to actually receive the Ambrosial Nectar, I will never forget the utter jubilation that filled me in the pre-dawn hours of that morning: the moment when I wore all of Guru Gobind Singh's "Gifts of Love" — the *Panj Kakkars* — together for the very first time.

I felt totally whole and complete, as well as, I must admit, quite *tyaar-bar-tyaar!*

This attitude is at the core of my conception of what being a Saint-Soldier is all about. I seldom think of this term applying to me in a martial sense, although I do derive tremendous inspiration from visualizing and reflecting upon iconic female personages such as the brave general Mai Bhago, the fictional Sundri of Bhai Vir Singh, and many other real-life Kauris who fought heroically in the struggles that have marked our history. Since I am light-years away from bearing the merest whiff of sanctity, and my meager attributes certainly do not include expertise in horsemanship and sword-wielding skills, how do I think of myself as a *Sant-Sipahi*?

To me, being a Saint-Soldier lies in continually striving to uphold the ideals to which Guru Gobind Singh, in his divinely-inspired wisdom, gave tangible form in our five Articles of Faith.

Here is what the Kakkars mean to me.

Keeping *Kesh* is accepting my body, with all its hair intact, as Waheguru's creation, and valuing it in the complete form which He deemed fit to give to me. Having been born and raised as a non-Sikh and imbued since early girlhood with society's expectations of how a well-groomed woman should look, this acceptance requires frequent rejection of my previously-inculcated notions of femininity, in order to fully embrace a concept of inner and outer beauty that is in alignment with the Divine Will.

The *Kara* signifies my wearing His ring because I am His and He is mine. It is a visible sign of my desire to be inseparably attached and totally committed to Him. But, whenever I futilely attempt to make my own puny will be carried out as opposed to His, it turns from a "wedding band" into a "handcuff" that tells me (yet again!) who is truly in control of my life.

The *Kirpan* enables me to remind myself that, because I have been blessed to serve His purposes and do His Will, remaining on the sidelines with good intentions is not sufficient. I must be courageous enough to actualize them in concrete ways, and be willing to stand up for my beliefs, instead of just paying them lip service. I must remember that, while it is wonderful to think lofty thoughts, they mean very little unless they are actually put into practice in ways that serve His Creation.

With the *Kangha*, I acknowledge the importance of living a clean and orderly life (as well as the need to have neat and tidy hair!). Adhering to a lifestyle befitting a Khalsa is my active responsibility; I cannot mindlessly go along with the whims and trends others might indulge in, even "just once", if they do not correlate with what I believe is the appropriate behaviour for me.

The *Kachhera* helps me to admit that constant vigilance is necessary over my all-too-human mind and heart, requiring self-control and self-restraint from thoughts and

actions unbecoming of a daughter of the Guru. Since I have been blessed with the discernment to distinguish between what is right and what is not, it is my duty to make decisions for myself that are in line with this knowledge.

Through His Grace, I have never transgressed the injunction to keep Kesh, the pre-eminent Kakkar. However, I must confess that I often fall short of totally fulfilling all the other above ideals. I feel that Waheguru, as our loving Creator, understands our human weaknesses and failings. I do not think it is a rationalization or an abdication of responsibility to believe He only expects us to always try our utmost to uphold these ideals, not that we must perfectly and perpetually succeed in embodying them.

As I begin my second year of "living in the House of the Guru", I hope and pray that I will always be worthy of the awesome privilege of being a daughter of the Khalsa!

