

'What is it that Lives and Never dies?'

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* Scion of the Kapurthala State, he wrote such Sakhis' in early decades of the 20th Century for the benefit of the younger generation. Ed. SR

THE GURU WAS HOLDING HIS DIWAN as usual, when a Sikh weeping bitterly fell at his feet and, almost stifled by sobs, managed to say, "I have lost my only son. I am ruined. O Sat Guru, my wife and I can find no peace. We find comfort in nothing."

The Guru lifted his head with his own hands from his feet. His mere touch virtually cured the heartache of the bereaved parent.

"Brother, take courage," he said, "There is none in the world who has not suffered the loss of someone dear to him. The departed are those under whose loving care we grow from infancy to manhood and then, one by one, those go, whom we love and admire. The pain has its roots in pleasure. We suffer when that which gives us joy is taken away from us. They who are wise do not attach themselves to that which is passing. It is attachment to the impermanent and transitory which is the source of suffering. **Everything in this world is in state of flux. It is futile to associate intimately with that which must pass, whosoever is born must go. Everyone has his turn. He, the Creator, is only one permanently established; all else comes and goes.**"

"Sat Guru" said another, "what is that lives and never dies?"

"That which is not subject to the three *gunas*," said the Guru, "and that which never floats and is not drowned. It is matter, which partakes of the three *gunas*, which changes, the self which gives it life, is changeless. Remember, He alone lives in whose heart He abides. None else is in reality alive. Now:

"The love of family is born of attachment to self.
Abandon attachment, it is replete with darkness,
O brother, waive off the delusion of attachment and doubt,
Receive the true Name in your heart so that it becomes,
The life-breath of the body,
When the true name which is replete with nine treasures
Finds its way into the heart, there is no weeping for kith and kin.
In the ocean of attachment, born of ignorance, the world is drowning:
Only the righteous cross this ocean.
This attachment binds us to the wheel of birth.
This attachment again leads to the realm of death.
Receive instructions from the Teacher and escape the noose of Death -
Unless attachment vanishes, the bonds are not broken.
By his grace attachment vanishes
And the disciple becomes one with God."

The disciple bowed and asked again, "Why is the *Jiva* born and why does it die again and again?"

"The *jiva* inspired by the will to live, persists in affirming the self, aware of its own individuality," said the Guru. "**In self-assertion this world exists. Self-assertion is the bondage created by the self itself. Self assertion is the disease, self-**

surrender the cure. The asserting self performs acts, for the satisfaction of the self, and thus builds its own character, which determines its present and its future.

“In the hope of living, the world works for its own death. The hope never dies and there is no escape from birth and death. Hope finds fulfillment when we seek the feet of God.

A Sikh who had just come, stopped for a short while and then rose to go.

“Why are you in such a hurry to depart?” enquired the Guru.

“Satguru,” he said, “I am in attendance on a friend who is very ill and altogether helpless. There is no one to look after him. He was feeling worse when I left him this morning, but I could not miss my daily sight of you.”

“It is more important to follow my instructions than to come to see me,” said the Guru. **“You have ignored my teaching by coming to me to serve yourself, instead of serving him whom God has placed in your care.”**

“Forgive me,” said the Sikh, “O Sat Guru, I have indeed erred and neglected my duty. I came to you to gratify the self.”

“Remember,” said the Guru, “that is more important to follow what I teach than to see me. Your duty was with the patient.”

The Sikh fell at the feet of the Guru, begged his forgiveness and departed.

“See,” said the Guru, when the Sikh was gone. “How self intrudes upon men of good intentions. Indeed until, the individual self melts into God-consciousness, there is not freedom from desire, from self-expression and from gratification of the self. Separation is the life-breath of the ego, and it does all it can to strengthen the will to separate. As we turn towards God, his compassion for all his creation enters our hearts and as this feeling to serve other fellow-men increases the sense of separation decreases and *Jiva* moves to be one with its source. Listen:

The light of dawn breaks forth, when the ego dies,
Then the tide of good-will for all fills the heart,
He who sees himself in all that exists,
He indeed is exalted, says Nanak.”

The Guru continued, “Such a one become one with God and becomes responsive to joy and sorrow which sweep this whole creation.”

Salig Rai, the jeweller, who had been listening with rapt attention, then asked, “Tell me how to find the way of happiness in this world?”

“They alone can find the way of happiness,” said the Guru “who know the truth. They are happy in the four worlds. Having subdued the ego, and with it thirst for things, they are absorbed in truth.”

“What happen to those,” he asked who did not realise the truth?”

“He who does not realise this truth,” said the Guru, “burns in the fire of desire, but he who knows his own self, becomes one with the infinite God”.

What are the characteristics of a good man?” asked the jeweller.

“A good man,” said the Guru, “does not wrap himself in indifference. He returns good for evil, his heart is empty of hate and envy. He suffers when others suffer. He is happy when others are happy, while a man who is not good hates others, is indifferent to the suffering of others, and cannot bear to see any one prosper.”

“What are the characteristics of a devotee?” asked a Sikh.

“A devotee” said the Guru, “is like a virgin bride, who surrenders herself to the bridegroom without any thought of self. A devotee is no more aware of his separate self in the service of the Beloved. The image of the beloved fills his heart sense of separateness ends and the devotee becomes one with object of devotion.”

“Tell me, O great teacher, how should a householder live?”

“Listen,” said the Guru, “he who earns his living by hard labour and shares it with others, he follows the true path.”

“What should be the characteristics of your Sikh?” asked Bhagirath.

“He who is truthful, contented and compassionate towards all, he who is free from covetousness and hate, he who is harmless, dispassionate and desireless, he who is self-controlled and has learnt to discriminate between right and wrong, he who surrenders himself to the supreme God and learns to abide by His will; such a harmonised person has entered the path of discipleship.”

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The SikhNet Film Festival: 2007 - A Spectacular Response

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As many as forty films have been submitted to this year's SikhNet Youth Film Festival, fifteen more films than in 2006. Incredibly creative, some have an amazingly professional quality, coming from entrants as young as 13 years!

Espanola, New Mexico, USA - The Second Annual SikhNet Youth Online Film Festival inspired 40 film submissions from around the globe. The Festival idea originated last year with SikhNet's recognition of the immense popularity and creativity of video postings on Internet sites such as Google Video and YouTube, and the need for youth to get involved in the media to better communicate the Sikh identity. The online festival is deemed to be a huge success by contestants as well as the creators.

According to SikhNet Webmaster, Gurumustuk Singh, “Tapping into the creativity of Sikh youth worldwide has been one of SikhNet's primary goals. In 2006, when we initiated the online film festival, we could not envision what beautiful films we would receive. Nor could we have imagined the groundswell of support from the Sikh community worldwide.”

This year's theme “Sikhi in the 21st Century” inspired young Sikh filmmakers from Pennsylvania to the Punjab to respond with creativity, honesty, insight, and their own personal experience of the Sikh lifestyle to produce highly original and surprisingly

professional short films. All the films may be viewed online at www.SikhNet.com and viewers can also leave comments there for the young filmmakers.

Gurumustuk Singh considers every one of these films a winner, however in two weeks, SikhNet will announce awards for the first through third prizes in all age divisions.

Cash awards will be given in both the intermediate and junior divisions - 18-25 years old and 11-17 years old respectively. The best films from filmmakers age 26 and older will also be selected, but are not eligible for cash prizes.

A few of the many comments Sikhnet received from the young filmmakers follow:

“The greatest thing of all happened to me in the summer of 2006 right before I got accepted into the film program at university. SikhNet announced a Youth Film Festival that was aimed at spreading the message of Sikhi. I took the opportunity to make a film about Sikhi and along with my brothers I directed The Call which was my first narrative film. I was happy with the end product of our weeks of work and was thrilled to submit my film into an actual film festival. However, the day I found out that I had won first prize I got a spiritual and mental boost within me that assured me that I was on the right path. What better way to start a career in film than by making an award-winning ‘dharmik’ film.” - Jasmeet Singh Bansai (Age: 20)

“It doesn’t matter what creative avenue you choose to explore, just don’t be afraid to express yourself to the fullest extent. And don’t hold back because you may be afraid as to how other people may perceive you. If you stay true to yourself, your roots and your faith then ultimately you will succeed.” - Sukhdeep Singh Bhogal (age: 18)

Sikhnet’s mission is to educate and communicate on all matters of interest concerning Sikhs around the world at www.sikhnet.com.

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Youth to the Fore! A Unique Excursion

SJS PALL

IN THESE PERILOUS TIMES, when majority of people are becoming more and more materialistic, oblivious of the spiritual values enunciated by God’s messengers, a revival of moral discipline, especially among youth, is an urgent need. But imparting spiritual teachings and thought to the up-coming generation is no easy task. **The youth erroneously believes that morality and spiritual power are not relevant for material advancement in the 21st century.** It has become equally difficult to keep the people at large firm in their Faith because of globalization that may have made the world a smaller place, but rendered it savagely competitive. The race for earning more money, holding better positions and amassing wealth has become the sole concern of the new generation.

Followers of the Sikh religion are no exception. Our upcoming generation’s indifference to morality and discipline inherent to our religion becomes all the more apparent when our youth abandon their identity by shaving off their head and facial hair. Although, a number of small organizations are making efforts to stem this tide of increasing apostasy, the same are not yielding the requisite results. The **Kesh Sambhal Prachar Sanstha**, based in Amritsar, is one such organization that

organizes seminars, art competitions and other contests, **including personality development contests, with the object of increasing awareness about the values and concepts of Sikhism.** This Sanstha feels that in addition to the existing methods of propagation of religion, like katha and kirtan, some modern methods need to be devised to attract the younger generation. In our spiritual awareness camps, held so far (at Amritsar, Delhi, Dalhousie, Cheema Sahib, Baru Sahib and Dehradun) we interact with young participants through debates and discussions, question-answer sessions, games, quiz programmes and film shows. The last camp held at Baru Sahib from 22nd June - 27th June 2007 was useful exercise for promoting religious and moral values.

I was among those invited to attend this camp and deliver lecture on moral challenge. **Baru Sahib** is a picturesque spot in the Himalayan foot-hills situated in Sirmour District of Himachal Pradesh. It falls on Rajgarh-Nahan Road. Although most of the road between Rajgarh and Baru Sahib, is not in good shape, Baru Sahib (believed to be a sacred place) is visited by a large number of people throughout the year. Sant Attar Singh Ji Mastuana, a renowned holy man, had a belief that it was a place visited by many sages, saints and rishis. Guru Gobind Singh Ji is believed to have blessed this place during his visit to the state of Nahan. Thus, his distinguished disciple, Sant Teja Singh established a residential educational institution at this place. The Academy, now well-known is looked after by Baba Iqbal Singh, Former Director Agriculture, Himachal Pradesh. As seeing is believing my wife and I undertook the tiring journey of more than 10 hour from Delhi, via Solan, Rajgarh and reached there before the camp started. More than 80 students of higher secondary level of various schools of Delhi participated in this camp. Some students from rural background from Punjab were also included in. In addition, about 40 adults including teachers and parents also took part in this camp.

The camp started daily early in the morning with light exercises and meditation. The participants also joined the morning recitation of Nit-nem Bani, a normal routine. It was really a wonderful sight to see the students reciting holy Gurbani in a holistic atmosphere. It is a matter of pride that the students of this Academy, all of whom are amritdhari have imbibed knowledge about Sikh religion traditions, history and life style.

The lecture sessions started daily at 10 a.m. There were 4 lecture everyday, with two breaks, till 1.15 p.m. The lectures by scholars, on the importance of religion in life, history and concepts of Sikh religion and the scriptural text of Guru Granth Sahib were broadly covered. There were lectures on a healthy life of drugs and intoxicants which erode the mind and body. The participants enjoyed the practical aspects, viz. singing, painting, sports and cultural activities, like declamation, poetic recitation etc. The participants also enjoyed film shows. One of the movies '**Kambdi Kalai**' emphasized importance of identity of the Sikhs. Among the various competitions held on the last day of the camp the participants took lot of interest in painting, turban tying and **gatka**. The training in painting given by the noted artist S. Kulwant Singh Gill elicited a lot of interest.

The campers visited the Academy and interacted with the regular students including those from foreign countries. The camper enjoyed games of volleyball, basketball in other outdoor activities. The campers were also taken for trekking in the hills. The interest created in indoor games was equally notable. Individual

assessment of the students, in a psychological manner, eliciting their views and a written general knowledge test were the inputs collected by the Sanstha for motivating the students in the right direction.

The Sanstha believes that the students should compete with others by acquiring the requisite skills and update knowledge of all subjects, but must also know about their spiritual heritage. The motivation provided by the speakers, particularly by the lecture of S. Harpal Singh of the Academy, led to a good numbers of students being ready for *Amrit-paan*. Several students took Amrit and many learned reading Gurbani from Guru Granth Sahib. There were others who were honoured for their excellence in other spheres like art, music, games, and general knowledge.

Such camps provide direction to a spiritual way of living. They also provide moments of peace and tranquility to enable us to think of something higher as to elevate our souls, to make the world, a better place to live.

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‘Cool Monty’

The UK spinner finds it tough to keep his emotion in check

England spinner Monty Singh Panesar said keeping his emotions under control is proving a big challenge of his soaring Test career. The 25-year old left-arm spinner enhanced his growing reputation with 10 for 187 in England’s 60 run third Test win against West Indies at Old Trafford.

That saw Panesar become the first England spinner since Phil Tufnell against Australia at The Oval in 1997 to take 10 wickets in a Test.

Off the field Panesar, the first Sikh to play Test cricket for England, is as far removed in character from Tufnell as is possible to imagine, being a non-drinker and non-smoker, unlike the former Middlesex left-armner whose private life became the subject of some lurid headlines.

But Panesar is as passionate as anyone when it comes to playing cricket and that enthusiasm, his manifest eagerness to do well, coupled with his undoubted skill has already made him a cult hero.

Whereas Tufnell would sometimes turn his anger on teammates if things weren’t going well, the only outlet Panesar has for his emotions on the cricket field appears to be with his frenzied appeals.

As Shivnarine Chanderpaul, dropped on 18 by Panesar, slowly and methodically batted West Indies towards what would have been a Test record fourth innings victory total of 455, England’s spinner became increasingly frustrated as a succession of pleas were turned down by Pakistani umpire Aleem Dar.

And at one point Panesar charged down the pitch to celebrate a ‘catch’ in the slips when a wickedly bouncing delivery had clipped Chanderpaul’s helmet.

Players, who risk being fined or suspended if their conduct towards officials falls foul of the International Cricket Council code of conduct, are supposed to appeal to the umpire’s face before celebrating a wicket.

Dar, after rejecting Panesar's appeal, had a word with the bowler and appeared to be telling him to calm down.

"He was saying maybe appeal before I start celebrating. I guess I get a little bit excited when I'm out there," explained Panesar, whose sprint down the pitch when he takes a wicket gives the appearance of hyperactive puppet whose strings have just been cut.

Panesar has been mocked for his poor fielding and now, in England at least, every time he successfully gathers and returns the ball he is cheered, albeit in a supportive if patronising fashion, by spectators.

However, he surprised a few people by dismissing Darren Sammy caught and bowled following the all-rounder's well-hit drive.

"I was disappointed with the catch I dropped. I felt I was there and I should have taken it," explained Panesar, described by West Indies captain Daren Ganga as one of the top three spinners in the world.

"Today's one, I guess it stuck in my hand and I was glad to get a caught and bowled."

