

NEWS FROM GOBIND SADAN

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Dr. Karan Singh speaks at Dasam Granth seminar

Dasam Granth seminar

A ground-breaking effort of His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh on behalf of the teachings of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Sikh Guru, occurred in January, when Gobind Sadan hosted a major seminar to study the *Dasam Granth*, the writings of Guru Gobind Singh. Nearly 100 eminent scholars from various universities in India and abroad attended and listened with extraordinary interest to each other's presentations.

The central issue was the authenticity of the writings. Guru Gobind Singh is credited with shaping Sikh religion and with turning timid and oppressed people into brave opponents of tyranny. Nevertheless, his writings have not been fully accepted by Sikhs, for they do not fit into a rigid interpretation of Sikh religion. Therefore, scholars had appealed to His Holiness Babaji to hold a seminar to clarify the doubts.

At the inaugural function in Gobind Sadan's lovely garden, His Holiness Babaji said, *We have tried to understand Guru Gobind Singh with our limited thoughts but it is very difficult for us to comprehend the divine wisdom with which he was speaking. His thinking is highly enlightened, without bias. He described the culture and history of the Four Ages and the incarnations and prophets of God such as Lord Krishna and Durga Mata in detail, so that their history might be known. But he himself meditated upon and had merged with the One God who created the entire cosmos, Whose light is running the whole Creation.*

Dr. Karan Singh, former Ambassador of India to

the United States, Maharajah of Jammu and Kashmir, and now President of The Temple of Understanding, said, "Great avatars, Ram, Krishna, religious reformers, Mahavir, Buddha, great acharyas, great sages and saints, great Sufis, and great Gurus have appeared in India. The Sikh Gurus have made a great contribution to this country and to the defense of our culture. It is very sad that their heritage has been claimed only by the Sikh community. We should understand that if the Ten Gurus had not come and done their work, and there had not been the inspired writings of the Gurus and saints of India, compiled as the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and *Guru Gobind Singh's Dasam Granth*, perhaps our country as we know it would not exist. Today we would instead be divided into many pieces among our neighbors. This is the power of our cultural heritage."

Throughout the ensuing deliberations, there was a remarkable lack of acrimony among the scholars, despite their initially variant points of view. The presentations made it clear that the writings of Guru Gobind Singh are rich repositories of cultural history and strong affirmation of social justice, the upliftment of women and the oppressed, and the unity of all peoples.

Sikh committee united by Babaji

In an age where conflicts and disasters are daily news, His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh, by the grace of God, is bringing harmony where there had been irreconcilable differences. A major demonstration of this peacemaking power occurred in the committee which manages the Sikh gurdwaras (temples) and educational institutions in Delhi. Two factions had developed within the committee, so opposed that it was impossible to elect an executive committee which both factions would follow.

On December 12, 1997, Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of Punjab, visited His Holiness Babaji in Gobind Sadan and asked him to select the executive committee. Babaji was not inclined to do so, for he is neutral, and his work is spiritual, rather than management-oriented. However, on January 9, 1998, Sardar Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President of the gurdwara management committee in Amritsar, home of the Golden Temple, came to Babaji with the same request, pleading with him to select the executive committee members and give them his blessings. Then

members of each faction came to Babaji asserting that they so respected him that they would accept whatever committee he recommended.

Each time the factions came to Babaji, he spoke to them about conducting religious management according to religious principles, and becoming themselves good examples of the Gurus' teachings.

Infighting between the two factions persisted up to the day of the election. On that day, as requested, Babaji sent his selections for the executive committee members to be presented to all the members at Rakab Ganj Gurdwara, with the Jathedar (head priest) from Akal Takt, Amritsar, present as observer. Miraculously, the selections were unanimously accepted amidst "pin drop silence," and all 51 committee members bowed before the Guru Granth Sahib (holy Sikh scripture). Everyone marveled that this was the first time since the committee was formed that such a peaceful election had taken place. All the members came to Gobind Sadan to thank Babaji and to take his blessings. He warned them against enmity, emphasizing that it is strictly forbidden by the Sikh Gurus. He asserted, *Our father will never be happy if his children are fighting. Sikhism has suffered because we are quarreling with each other in the gurdwaras. Guru Gobind Singh is very happy that you have made a unified decision. This is a sign that there can be peace in our community. Blessings have been bestowed; now dharam will spread.*

His Holiness also challenged certain practices which have developed in the gurdwaras, including announcing donations during the prayers (As Guru Amar Das said, "Without our speaking, He knows everything." Whatever we have belongs to the Guru.) He also challenged the bestowing of gifts upon VIPs in gurdwaras. He cautioned, *Stop elevating people above the Guru Granth Sahib. If we are going to present anything to visiting dignitaries, we should give the sacred cloths which have been used to cover the Guru Granth Sahib. They should preserve them respectfully in their homes.*

To Badal: The Guru is not ours alone

When Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of Punjab, came to Babaji in December, His Holiness spoke to him of the universality of Guru Gobind Singh's mission: *He has not given special preference to his family or his Sikhs. Instead, he sacrificed his children, his father, and his residence in order to bring happiness to the public. We have created the misconception that he belongs to us. But Guru Gobind Singh belongs to the entire Creation. Sometimes I feel that the very trees are standing by his order, that the ocean is moving by his orders, that the air is lovingly*

fanning him and saying, "Please look in my direction." But we have tried to confine him.

Today who works for the sake of other religious communities? Everyone is looking after his own community. But Guru Gobind Singh did not erect any boundaries. He never said, "This person is Sikh, that one is Hindu, that one is Muslim." Instead, he said, "Recognize all human beings as one. You are all sisters and brothers."

What do we gain by quarreling? There is a race going on now to say, "I am good, and the other is bad." In truth, we all are bad. Who is good? Only our Father.

Guru Nanak said, "If you want eternal happiness, always chant the Name of Narain [God pervading in waters]. Narain is my family." The Fifth Guru says, "Recite 'Ram, Ram.' Recite 'Sohang, Sohang' [That which You are, I am also]. Shaikh Farid says, "Allah! Allah!" Reading these many Names of God in the Guru Granth Sahib, one wonders, "What religion is this?" The whole cosmos is included in the religion which is in Guru Granth Sahib. When we bow our heads before it, no notion of caste remains, for we are bowing before Farid, before Kabir, Ravi Das, Nam Dev [low-caste saints whose inspired hymns are included in the scripture]. We are bowing before great devotees of God from all directions. We are bowing before the whole cosmos. Guru Gobind Singh gathered his closest disciples from all directions and all castes and called them his Five Beloveds. Guru Gobind Singh did not make any boundaries. It is we who have built the walls.

A spiritual person has no feelings of enmity toward anyone. He will pray, "Oh God, may that leader rule in a good way, and may he do justice. 'The whole world is burning. From whichever door people can be saved, please save them, by Your Grace.' Oh God, bring the rains at the proper times. Oh God, give food to everyone."

Guru Nanak says, "What worry exists in a person who has faith in God?, He worries for others. He is always concerned, 'Why is there poverty among the people? Why don't they have sufficient clothes?' Then he says, "Oh God, give them everything."

Chalissa

In many religious traditions, we find mention of 40-day-long intense spiritual efforts. Moses spent 40 days on the mountain with God, and Jesus spent 40 days in the wilderness. At Gobind Sadan likewise, in November His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh received the divine command to initiate especially strong spiritual practices for 40 days. The hukam was that Akhand Path [continual reading of the scripture] should be carried on for 40 days by readers who would dress in yellow-orange and would stand as they read aloud,

and that a new havan [sacred fire] should be maintained continually by pairs of devotees for 40 days, reading aloud Jaap Sahib [Guru Gobind Singh's great hymn of God's praises], reciting Nam, and offering ghee and samagri [fragrant herbs, grains, and dry fruits]. Thus a special havan was prepared in Babaji's lovely garden on the hill, a raised platform for the Guru Granth Sahib was built in the house on the hill, and people began carrying out the orders night and day, in addition to an intensification of Gobind Sadan's usual round-the-clock devotions in the central community, where many individuals have been sitting in the havan up to to seven hours a day for forty days. The special programme is still continuing, and an atmosphere of great light is quite noticeable.

Many evenings, Babaji himself comes to sit at the garden havan and invites the whole community to recite Jaap Sahib and sing hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib as well as Babaji's spontaneous songs of praise for his beloved Guru Gobind Singh.

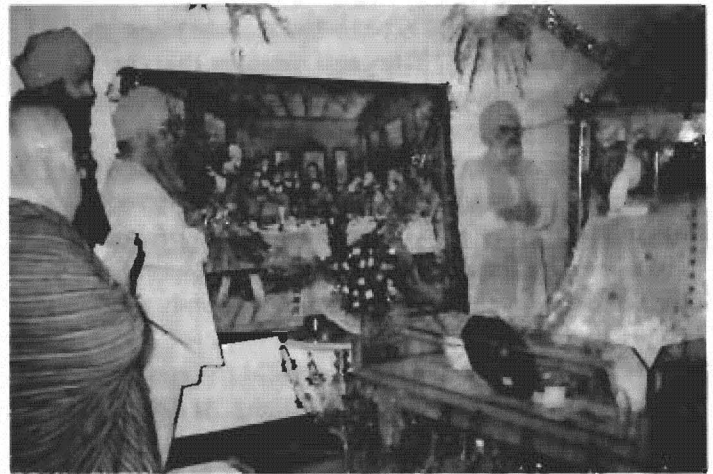
At the end of the initial forty days, His Holiness Babaji explained to the people that he could not tell them why these orders had been given. He referred back to orders given to him by Guru Gobind Singh perhaps half a century ago when he was a beardless youth, orders which are still being carried out at Gobind Sadan: *Maharaj showed me that wherever I would go, samagri and ghee should be offered in a sacred fire. Jaap Sahib should be recited with offerings of samagri. And at prayer times, seven bananas and sweet prasad should be offered and distributed.*

This seemed very strange to me. All these orders were beyond my understanding. When a person loves someone, he does not question him. but a slight feeling arose in me, "Scriptural recitations are done everywhere. Why don't You ask other people to put samagri in the fire?" Thereupon, Maharaj said quietly, "It has a meaning. Accept this and offer samagri."

Slowly, slowly, the meaning of these things has become apparent. Looking at seven, we see that there are seven planets affect ing the earth. It is said that God worked for six days and rested on the seventh day. When marriage is performed around a bedi [fire enclosure], the couple circumambulates the fire seven times. When people go to Mecca on pilgrimage, they go around the Ka'aba seven times.

As for the havan, fire has been associated with worship since time immemorial. In churches, mosques, and temples everywhere, candles or lamps are lit for worship. Zoroastrians feel that fire is a very pure thing, and thus will not burn their dead. In our country, fire has always been used with worship by sages and saints.

Maharaj also said to read Jaap Sahib. Now I feel that it is because Jaap Sahib says to God, "You have no sectarian religion. You have no place of pilgrimage, You have no country." Maharaj knew that a time would come when people would fight in the name of religions. Thus he gave this scripture for recitation in which there is no sect. Those who believe in the Holy Qur'an or who believe in the Vedas, Gita, or Ramayana, will all feel, "It is our sacred book." When a person with spiritual understanding listens to Jaap Sahib, he will hear, "You are the Mantra of mantras." Maharaj has understood God as utterly vast, and thus he has said, "You have no religion." Otherwise, all scriptures ultimately terminate in praises of some prophet or master. But Jaap Sahib begins and ends with God's praises. There is no praise of any guru or prophet. Maharaj has straightforwardly given description after description of God.



Prayer before Guru Granth Sahib at end of chalisa

The third order which Maharaj gave me when I was young was, "You should work." At that time, I felt, "I am sitting continuously in meditation, and Maharaj sits with me. Now he wants me to work; perhaps he will go away." Inwardly, I objected to this command. But now I have come to know why he said this. Now I know that people are very opposed to someone's begging from others. The Guru's orders are, "Give food to others from your own earnings, and also obtain your own food by working. "

Thus there are certain things which people do not understand. But when you read Jaap Sahib, your problems are solved, and things happen which are beyond your imagination. These things happen because the hukam to read Jaap Sahib did not originate in my thinking. Neither did offering samagri or cutting seven bananas. This is His order, and He must do the work.

Sacred celebrations

During this winter Gobind Sadan joyously celebrated Guru Nanak's birthday, the Ascension of the Prophet Muhammad, the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur, Hanukkah, Diwali, Lohri, Christmas, and Guru Gobind Singh's birthday. The latter two were celebrated together on January 5th at Jesus's Place. A fairyland of oil lamps and lights twinkled all about, and thousands of flowers created a canopy for His Holiness Babaji and his honored guest, Father Philip of the Delhi Orthodox Centre. Schoolchildren lined the stone pathway waving balloons, Santa Claus made a jolly appearance, a Christian choir sang Christmas songs in Malayalam, members of Gobind Sadan sang a special rendition of "Silent Night" as a Punjabi lullaby to the infant Jesus, and Father Philip and Babaji addressed the crowd. Afterward, the people joyfully sang and danced until 1:30 in the morning.

Father Philip said, "What is the real meaning and message of Christmas? The great message that the angel of God announced to humankind was, 'I bring you tidings of peace and joy.' Whenever there is violence, whenever there is irreligion, God comes to intervene in the world. God has come down to see humankind, to live with them, to bear their problems, to bear their sufferings. God came into this world to uplift it to the level that all can enjoy heavenly peace and joy that never ends."

His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh told the audience of Sikhs, Hindus, Muslims, and Christians, *At Gobind Sadan, we always celebrate all prophets' holy days with the same enthusiasm. What does this mean? Jesus said, "What is God? Love. My Father's Love is in the trees, the the mountains, in the oceans, in the whole Creation." You may be surprised to know that Guru Gobind Singh likewise said, "God is in water, God is in the earth, God is in mountains, God is in caves, God is near and far." He emphasized, "See My Father's Love in trees, in jungles, in the earth, in the oceans, in the animals. His Love is in all hearts."*

If God is in everything, then if you believe in religion, why do you hate other human beings? Why are you jealous of others? Because people speak of religious things but do not practice them. Jesus, Guru Gobind Singh, and the Prophet Muhammad all say, "Whenever any prophet's holy day occurs, why don't you all get together and celebrate it?"

Jesus's well

For long, His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh had been saying that there was a great amount of water at Jesus's Place. The surface of that area is high, dry, and rocky, a

very unpromising place to find water. At last this winter a tube well was dug in precisely the spot near Jesus's Place identified by Babaji in vision. He could see in vision that a great underground pool of water would be found beneath the layer of blue stone. At 245 feet the well drillers pierced through the blue granite, and at once struck so much water that they could drill only 15 feet further, for the huge rig, capable of drilling 1000 feet if necessary, was stalled by the tremendous pressure of the water. Never before had so much water been found in dry Delhi, except alongside the Jamna River. What is more, the water is very sweet. His Holiness Babaji says it comes from snow.

Shami, a volunteer at Gobind Sadan, was the first to be healed by the water. His sinuses had been painfully inflamed for days. As soon as Jesus's sweet water began to gush forth, he rubbed a bit across his face. At once the pain and congestion disappeared. The extraordinarily sweet and abundant water will be distributed to the garden at Jesus's Place, to surrounding dry areas where farming was never before possible, and, God willing, to Jesus's Place as a blessed source of healing.

The greatest dangers

A global conference in Prague called Forum 2000 asked Babaji: "In what do you see the biggest danger for the civilization on the Planet Earth in the third millenium?" His Holiness Babaji replied, *The only dangers are self-interest, anger arising from self-interest, and greed. People take up weapons because of anger. Because of self-interest, people make laws by which they will benefit and other people will lose. There are so many weapons on the planet that the effects of our anger may be harmful at any point. The only thing which can save us from the angry use of those weapons is love, faith, and a willingness to serve. These will save us, and will not allow us to do any harm.*

Whenever danger has been created, people have created it. Humans have committed crimes, and humans have polluted the environment. If people want to improve these things, God willing, people can improve them. There is no difficulty in this.

Are not the messages of all our prophets and messiahs one and the same? When we understand this, perhaps our journey will be much shorter and nothing will happen.