

NEWS FROM GOBIND SADAN

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Appeal to Leaders

In October 2003, His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh issued a powerful appeal to the leaders of the nation and asked that it be widely circulated:

Today all of you leaders, whether you are social reformers or religious preachers, want to promote yourselves in the country. For your own sake, you speak in large gatherings and blame each other for corruption. You waste all your energy throwing mud upon each others' parties, but there is no improvement. Why? Your own minds are rebelling against the orders of the great teachers and prophets. When you yourselves are not ready to listen to and follow the orders of the elders, how can you lead the nation?

You must first study the scriptures of the country and test yourselves. Peer into your inner selves. Sweep under your own seats. You blame each other, raising

your voice about corruption. If we look closely, there are no leaders, no matter to which side they may belong, who can escape this blame. All are liable to be punished.

Today it is necessary to obey the orders of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the commandments of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who even sacrificed his small children in order to establish these principles. Guru Nanak Dev Ji says, "By conquering your mind, you can conquer the whole world." Why is our mind to be conquered? Because our mind is the manifestation of the Light. We must recognize our Source.

You are not committing corruption; your minds are doing it, because your minds have slipped. You put your energy into obtaining others' women and amassing others' wealth. There is a difference between the message in your speeches and your practical life. You are misleading the public. Our young people have gone astray from the path of righteousness, because their leaders have forgotten their duty.

Our teachers and prophets have shown us great wide roads. "Earn your living by honest means and share with those in need," said Guru Nanak. They have taught us how to live in a high and pure way. But you are traveling on the wrong path. They have said, "Rise in the ambrosial early hour and chant God's Holy Name." Start your daily routine work only after meditating. Restrain your mind against doing evil. Control lust, anger, greed, ignorance, egoism, and bad thoughts. The Fifth Guru said, "There are five evils within me, and I am only one humble person: O Protector, please defend me from them."

Our minds have been polluted by the dirt of innumerable past lives. How can this filth be cleansed? Only by chanting the Name of God (Nam). Accordingly, Guru Nanak Dev Ji brought only the Name of God from the Immortal One. He said, "In the house of Nanak, there is only Nam." Guru Nanak further said, "You can be saved in this present age only by Nam. Kali Yuga (the darkest of ages) has come; sow the seed of Nam."

Today we cannot be saved by speeches or criticizing each other. Improve yourselves. What to speak of your states and your country, improve your own homes. This will be a great achievement. In your speeches, not only do you criticize each other; you do

do not even spare the prophets. The Guru is addressing you very people when he says, "You can not offer even a small palmfull of water, but you criticize that Being who brought the Ganges."

Then you speak of high and low and of castes. To which high caste did Valmiki (the sage who wrote down the Ramayana) belong? Bhagat Ravidas, Bhagat Kabir, Namdev, Sain — you know full well about the castes of these saints (all were from low classes). Guru Gobind Singh saw all humanity as one caste. He introduced us to the One who pervades each leaf, who is omnipresent and visible everywhere, who is nearer than our hands and feet, who cares for our breath, food, drink, and sleep. On what basis can you criticize the creation of the Creator? Guru Gobind Singh taught us to take care of others. He sacrificed everything to save our religion and others' faiths as well. Baba Deep Singh, Bhai Mani Singh, Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Dayala, and hundreds and thousands of great martyrs sacrificed and made our history a beacon of light to show us the path. These are living examples of our history.

I was very disappointed when I went to Punjab. The youth have forgotten Sikhism. No one knows even the names of our ten Gurus, four Sahib Zade (martyred sons of Guru Gobind Singh), and Panj Piyaras (first members of the Khalsa), not to mention the remaining history.

This is the responsibility of the management committees. The offerings in the gurdwaras are meant for preaching righteousness. It was their duty to carry the orders of the Gurus to each home. But the committees have forgotten their responsibility and are running after titles and treasuries and wasting their energy.

Gurdwaras are meant for meditation. The subject of opening the Tenth Door to clear vision was to be taught there. I want to tell you that you cannot get salvation by merely bowing your heads. The Guru says, "You cannot get salvation merely by looking at the Guru until you ponder his teachings." The Guru further says, "What will happen by merely bowing your heads when your mind is impure?" Therefore remove corruption from your minds. You all go to the gurdwaras to bow your heads but you do not act upon the commandments that are given there.

Stop giving useless speeches and empty lectures. Look inside your minds. When your minds are purified, then there will be progress in your states and in your country; improvement will come by itself. The scripture says, "Everybody commits mistakes; only Guru and God do not err." God is looking at what you are doing. One day you will have to give an explanation in His court. It is written in the Guru Granth Sahib, "You will go naked to hell and appear very frightful!" No one will save you there. You will be thrown into the fire of hell. Your form will become

frightful to see. An inquiry will be made into all your actions. Therefore, see the Creator in the Creation.

Whatever you say is quite different from what you do. You are attacking others but you are making the same mistakes that you do not want others to commit. The Guru is always watching you and is always present. Gurbani says, "My Guru is omnipresent; he neither comes nor goes. He is immortal and pervades every particle. When You are forgotten, I am beset by all the evils. When You come in my heart, only then I can serve." When the Guru is with you, then there will be no evil, no corruption. Model your life after those of the former Sikhs. Become like those who possessed will power, love, and a willingness to sacrifice. At present your life is like the description in the scripture: "Neither are you listening to praises of God nor are you praising God. You are merely making the sky fall by talking."

Let us now obey the commandments of the Gurus, because you will be accepted when you obey the commandments. Once you obey the commands, prosperity and success will follow you. The Guru has promised that when you forsake your thoughts and follow the Guru's instructions, society itself will be improved. By following the Guru's instructions, your minds will also be transformed. You will see the presence of God in everything.

Responsible people should go to every village and every home and convey the commandments of God. Use the energy of your mind toward good. Why collect false wealth? It will not accompany you. There is no need to create parties. Join the party of the One God. What is the use of separate parties? We should do that work that has been given to us by the Guru. Why are you wasting time? The Gurus converted the lives of tyrants. Greedy people like Malik Bhago were transformed into renunciates. Our seers themselves were worshipping God and also teaching goodness. They were giving the same instructions to all: "All are equal partners; no one is an outsider." Think of doing good to all. Do whatever the Guru teaches. The Guru speaks of taking care of the burning world: "O God, through whatever gate the people enter, please save them."

Why are you wasting your precious lifetime making separate parties? I will appeal to you all and to the whole world that human beings should follow their respective chosen prophets or deities; mutual enmities, lectures, and criticism of others should be stopped. Do not waste time. Arise early in the morning, recite God's Holy Name, meditate, and emphasize recognizing the Source of enlightenment.

The scripture says, "Human life is rare; one cannot get it again. Kali Yuga is best of all ages, for one can be saved simply by chanting God's Name." Make use of this time. Do not waste it. As the Guru

Granth Sahib says, "Whom should we call good or bad? All are His creatures." Pray for the good of all and make your world and the next world comfortable.

Gobind Sadan's mosque

An exciting new aspect of Gobind Sadan's devotional life is the completion of a lovely pure white mosque and with it, devout offerings of Namaz five times a day. Everyone is thrilled to hear our imam giving the call to prayer, which reaches for several kilometers around. For the month of Ramazan, a large number of Muslims came faithfully to Gobind Sadan's mosque to say their daily prayers, and over 250 celebrated the final day, Id-ul-Fitr, here. Friday prayers are also drawing so many people that they overflow the mosque. They proclaim gratefully, "It is truly a miracle that Babaji has built this mosque for us. There was no mosque anywhere in this area, and we had such hunger for Namaz."

On Id-ul-Fitr, copies were distributed of a new booklet in Hindi, Nur-e-Allahi ("The Light of Allah"), consisting of speeches by His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh relating to Islam. People have received it with such enthusiasm that many have begun making multiple photocopies and distributing it to all their friends, telling them to do the same. They say, "Whatever Babaji says is true." Gobind Sadan's imam, Nane Ali, frequently gives talks in which he carefully explains points from the Holy Qur'an and hadith of the Prophet Mohammed, always emphasizing Babaji's clarifications. His favorite point from Babaji's teachings is, as Babaji says, *"In India, the word 'Kafir' is incorrectly used to signify 'non-Muslim,' and the word 'Mu'min' is incorrectly used to signify 'Muslim.' Actually, 'Kafir' means 'one who conceals the truth,' whereas 'Mu'min' is 'one who believes in God and spreads the truth.' We all are concealing the truth. Who speaks truth? The whole world is Kafir — what else? There is no one speaking with courage. To speak truth is to be Mu'min. There is no timidity in religion."*

Guru Granth Sahib Seminar

On November 7 and 8, hundreds of scholars and educators attended a seminar held by the Gobind Sadan Institute for Advanced Studies in Comparative Religion on the topic, "Guru Granth Sahib's Universal Community." In the inaugural session, His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh explained, *Guru Granth Sahib is a unique holy book which breaks all the communal forts. It gives the message of love, respect, and tolerance for all religions. In it are collected hymns of saints of all religions, and it teaches*

respect for all holy books. But from the conflicts that are occurring today between religions, it becomes obvious that we are not properly reading or understanding or following the holy books.

People are trying to unite religions, but religion is already one. Where do we find proof of this? In Guru Granth Sahib. In it, there are those who recite 'Hari, Hari,' 'Gobind, Gobind,' 'Allah, Allah,' and 'Ram, Ram.' Guru Granth Sahib is not sectarian religion; it is dharam, in which all religions' holy scriptures — Vedas, Puranas, Qur'an, Bible, Torah, Zendavesta — are accepted. Guru Granth Sahib is not only Sikh religion; rather, it is universal religion in which in addition to the Gurus' inspired hymns, the hymns of followers of many faiths are included.

However in Punjab today nobody has the true knowledge of religion. At present many people are being misled in the name of religion, resulting in corruption and drug addiction, by which our culture is being destroyed. In the past, Punjab's culture was renowned, but we are now facing the adverse and dangerous consequences of its degradation. What is the remedy? All of us should read the religious scriptures, carefully understand them, and act upon them. We should recite the Name of God, be honest in our dealings, respect others' rights, and be concerned not only about our own families but also our society and the whole world.

The seminar began with a welcoming address by the President of the Gobind Sadan Institute, Swaranjit Singh. He observed that today the message of humankind's universal community given by Guru Nanak Dev Ji is limited to Sikhs alone. He described the practical interfaith work of Gobind Sadan and explained that a thoughtful discussion of the Guru Granth Sahib should reveal that it is not only for Sikhs but for everyone who believes in God. He noted that it contains not only the inspired words of six of the Sikh Gurus but also that of 30 saints from different provinces of India.

Shri Ashok Singhal, International Executive President of Vishwa Hindu Parishad, congratulated the audience on the upcoming birthday of Guru Nanak, saying, "Guru Nanak Dev Ji started a religious revolution in those troubled times of medieval ages, and this light continued to shine for the next 250 years through the Ten Gurus. The same light is guiding us all through Gobind Sadan and Maharaj Ji, Baba Virsa Singh." He said, "There is no other scripture in any language with such an impartial line of thought as Guru Granth Sahib. I suggest that all the spiritual organizations of India should adopt the line of thought of Guru Granth Sahib and should spiritually serve humanity selflessly, without any bias."

Guru Granth Sahib is not a holy book only for the Sikh community; it is for the whole universe. It is the encyclopedia of religion. It can give religious direction to the whole world."

Gurcharan Kaur, Manager of Gobind Sadan, observed that, "Our Gurus put the number 'one' before Om — as *Ik Onkar* — and taught people to recite the name of the Immortal God in place of thirty-three crores of gods and goddesses, as a symbol of universality."

Dr. Karan Singh, MP, International President of the Temple of Understanding, was the Chief Guest at the third session, 8th November. He proclaimed, "I have full faith that the meaning of Guru Granth Sahib's universal community is one in which there is no difference between rich and poor, in which there is no racial discrimination, and in which we should move ahead with deep love for God."

Dr. Satinder Singh, Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, proclaimed, "Interfaith dialogue began with Guru Nanak. He made a global city of the whole world. Guru Granth Sahib promotes international integration, not just national integration."

Professor I. H. Azad Faruqi from Jamia Milia noted the similarities between the Holy Qur'an and the Guru Granth Sahib. He observed, "Both holy scriptures express the divine Presence in this world, though in Islam the emphasis is on the transcendence of God, whereas in Guru Granth Sahib, the emphasis is on the immanence of God."

Alexander Kozhin, First Secretary from the Russian Embassy, brought a message from the Russian Ambassador, His Excellency Alexander M. Kadakin, for His Holiness Baba Virsa Singh. Ambassador Kadakin wrote, "It is hard to overestimate your role in the unification and consolidation of modern religions, and in strengthening spiritual values of the Indian people on the secular basis. The soul of every person, regardless of one's religion, visiting your Institute embraces deep faith and takes comfort in eternal merits of love and non-violence."

After many other scholars had given their papers, Dr. J.S.Rajput, Director of the National Council of Educational Research and Training, asserted that the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib are all the more valid and beneficial to society today, approximately 400 years after compilation of the scripture. "To arouse social consciousness we need the catholicism of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the chivalry of Guru Gobind Singh Ji," he said. "We should construct a society that is modern in its approach but also proud of its heritage."

Baba Siri Chand's Birthday

The 509th birthday of the great saint Baba Siri Chand, elder son of Guru Nanak, was celebrated with great enthusiasm by thousands of wellwishers on September 7 at Gobind Sadan, including Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, Union Minister for Human Resources Development, Sahib Singh Verma, Union Minister for Labour, Parkash Singh Badal, former Chief Minister of Punjab and Senior Akali leader, Tarlochan Singh, Chairman of Minorities Commission, Paramjit Singh Sarna, President of Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee, and Ajit Inder Singh Moffar, Senior Congress leader from Punjab. Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi distributed prasad in honour of Baba Siri Chand and said, "If such spiritual powers as Baba Siri Chand had not come, dharma would not exist. So long as the sun and moon remain, may Baba Siri Chand be revered."

Baba Virsa Singh explained, "*We need training to respect all religions. The historical record of Baba Siri Chand's life and close association with the Sikh Gurus needs to be brought out into the open, for he sets an inspiring example of spiritual power coupled with humility, sincere spiritual discipline, and serving people of all castes and all religions.*" Baba Siri Chand was a renowned renunciate but instead of leaving the world, he accepted the responsibility given to him by his father and master, Guru Nanak, to run the community farm at Kartarpur and to help the people.

Born in 1494, and living to the great age of 149, Baba Siri Chand had an extensive following. His immense spiritual powers drew people from all walks of life. Great Hindu and Muslim rulers came to touch his feet. Baba Siri Chand's impact was so great that a census of all spiritual communities conducted by Shah Jahan confirmed that Baba Siri Chand had the greatest following of any contemporary personality. Yet Baba Siri Chand had no property in his name, wore the scant clothes of an ascetic, and withstood even the harshest winter without shelter. In his code of conduct for his followers, he emphasized mental discipline, service, and rising above bias or ill will toward anyone.

According to Baba Virsa Singh, "*The most noteworthy feature of Baba Siri Chand's long life was his love and respect for the Sikh Gurus. They visited him with their followers, sent offerings regularly, and even gave their sons to serve as his disciples. It is unfortunate that Sikhs today do not revere and respect Baba Siri Chand as our Gurus have revered and respected him.*" He urged the congregation to follow Baba Siri Chand's example of sincere spiritual practice.
