

# Sacrifice at Hazur Sahib Myth & Truth

A veteran Deccani Sikh himself, the author presents the facts of the honour of weapons at Hazur Sahib and calls for caution in its condemnation. He clears the air over the vegetarian-non-vegetarian debate amongst Sikhs and seeks effective steps to rid Sikh society of unethical and unSikh practices wherever they are practiced.

World Sikh News presents these facts, not to foment the debate, but to help build a hypothesis for solution to this never-ending debate for the benefit of a wider cross-section of the Sikh people.



The Internet has provided a forum for free speech which is being abused by all and sundry to project their views with the finality of an intellectual whose research cannot be wrong. All writers, young and old, write in the superlative degree, presenting their views as "the only correct view", "the best book", "the worst case" and the like. Human fallibility has become non-existent.

After the Tercentenary celebrations at Hazur Sahib, on the internet and in print magazines, it has become fashionable for Sikh intelligentsia to indulge in a superlative discussion about, "Goat Sacrifice at Hazur Sahib."

I have been following this debate for a long time and I have observed that most of the debate is frivolous and those who do spend time on this subject do so without

## Nanak Singh Nishter

understanding the details of the phenomenon.

Beyond all reasonable doubt let me authoritatively say and explain how this myth is a half-truth and more injurious than the lie.

As a student of Gurmat, I am fully aware of the facts and practices of the Sikhs particularly of this region, who are called "Deccani Sikhs". Since the last four generations, I have lived in this region and therefore I am also one of them.

What is the act of sacrifice? It is a religious ritual of killing (an animal or person) in order to propitiate a deity. This is strictly forbidden in Sikhism. The lives of the Ten Gurus and the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib have several crystal clear explanations.

The shabads of Guru Granth Sahib are misquoted, misused and misinterpreted to propagate vegetarianism among the Sikhs by some intellectuals and by vested interests, particular those running deras.

Even innocent Sikh preachers toe the line, as either they are ignorant or they too want to appease the vested interests or they think vegetarianism will make them popular.

Sikhs living in and around Hazur Sahib of the erstwhile Hyderabad State are the descendants who took Amrit in presence of

Guru Gobind Singh Ji in the year 1708. Around 1830, the Sikh Army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to help the Nizam, who was the ruler of Hyderabad. This army was retained here as a Sikh Peace keeping Force, which had 14 Risalas (units) at all district headquarters with its Unit Gurdwaras. They held the then prevailing practices and rituals of the Sikhs of that period as a disciplined Armed Force.

It is not fair to presume that Jhatka of goat is a sacrificial act at Hazur Sahib and other Unit Gurdwaras of the Deccani Sikhs. Since thousands of years, it is a custom of warriors of India to put the Tilak of blood to their weaponry on the occasion of Dashara and Holi. In these Gurdwaras, the tilak of blood is put to the weapons, not to Guru Granth Sahib or any other idol or photograph. Though it is not in consonance with Sikh philosophy, like many other practices that have crept into the Sikh way of life, this too requires sane intervention so that it can be stopped. Mere condemnation ad nauseam will not help stopping it.

It is important that we see things objectively and rationally. From the point of view of Sikh image and Sikh practice, this has to be stopped, but this should be bracketed with many other practices and rituals which require serious steps. But there are so many rituals and festivals of other religions which are Celebration of the New Year of the Christian Era, Sammat new month -Sangrand and Full moon day -Pooanmashi. Are these all not anti-Sikh practices?

Guru Nanak Sahib in shabad number 25 on pages 1289-90 has explained how the fools quarrel over vegetarianism and meat-eating. In 35 thirty five verses starting with "Pehla masaho nimiya maasai ander vas".

"ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਮਸਹੁ ਨਿੰਮਿਆ ਮਸੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਵਾਸੁ", saying that, "First, the mortal is conceived in the flesh, and then he dwells in the flesh". Gurbani repeatedly reiterates that God is equally abiding in His Creation including food grains, water, vegetation, animal and human bodies. Gurbani strictly condemns sacrifices of animals for pleasing deities and offerings of eatables

in fire for performing Havan, Yagyan, Lohri and other such festivities.

On page number 1275 of Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Nanak Sahib has further explained the law of nature that, "Ek ji, kai jiyaan khahi", "ਏਕ ਜੀਅ , ਕੈ ਜੀਆ ਖਾਹੀ" means "One life eats several lives".

On page number 955, Guru Angad Sahib Ji further clarifies saying that, "Jiya ka ahar ji, khana yeho karey", "ਜੀਆ ਕਾ ਅਹਾਰ ਜੀਆ ਖਣਾ ਏਹੁ ਕਰੋਇ॥", meaning "God has made the creatures' food for other creatures."

There is enough historical evidence that in the in the langar of Guru Nanak Sahib and Guru Gobind Singh, meat was cooked and served. As the sentiments of non-meat eaters were hurt, it was subsequently stopped. Thus, Guru Ka Langar has gone purely vegetarian and should be accepted and venerated by one and all.

Since thousands of years, Jhatka is an Indian tradition of killing any animal with one stroke. In Assam, Rajasthan and some other north Indian regions, it is still prevailing. Halal meat is actually Zubah meat (half cut throat) which is halal (permitted) for the Muslims. This tradition is borrowed by them from Jewish religion's "Kosher meat". This sort of meat is specifically declared haram (forbidden-sinful) for the Sikhs in Sikh Rehat Maryada. The diktat to eat Jhatka meat was a revolt against the established custom of the time and also a step of rebellion against Muslim tyranny.

Those who advocate vegetarianism among Sikhs is deliberately overlooking the provisions of Sikh Rehat Maryada, which clearly prohibits consuming Kutththa (halal meat) and does not in any manner prevent Sikhs from being non-vegetarians. It is the discretion and liberty of Amritdharis to consume meat, if they choose to do so. Also, any Sikh, who chooses to be vegetarian, is welcome to remain so, but it is foolhardy, naive and wrong to attempt to amend the Sikh religious ethos according to this choice.

Nanak Singh "Nishter" is a Hyderabad-based orator, writer and Urdu poet. He is a regular columnist of World Sikh News. He is an activist-academician making immense contribution to the social and cultural welfare of Sikh society. He is director of International Sikh Centre for Interfaith Relations. He may be contacted at nanaknishter@gmail.com