

and women can sit together and equally participate in reciting the praises of the Divine and *Pangat*-sitting together, irrespective of caste or social status, to eat a common meal in the Institution of Langar (common kitchen). Women were never excluded from any specific task. Both men and women took equal part in essential tasks. The Guru says: "Come my sisters and dear comrades! Clasp me in your embrace. Meeting together, let us tell the tales of our Omnipotent God. In the True Lord are all merits, in us all demerits"(Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 17) There are no priests or commentators, no rituals or philosophical doctrines that stand between a person and the Guru's Bani (teachings). There is a direct relationship with God for every man, woman and child. Only the veil of ignorance or one's ego stands between the human and the God. In general status of women was elevated as Sikhism. 2) Condemns the practice of women burning themselves on their husband's funeral pyre (sati). "A 'Sati' is not she who burns herself on the pyre of her spouse. A 'Sati' is one who lives contented and embellishes herself with Good conduct". (SGGS, 787). 3) Condemns prevalence of female Infanticide and the ritual of dowry in Indian society. "O' my Father! give me the Name of Lord God as a gift and dowry. Let the Lord be my wear, His Glory my Beauty, that my Task be accomplished. Blessed is the Lord's worship; the True Guru has blessed me with it. In all lands, nay, in all Universe Pervades the Glory of the Lord; the gift of the Lord's (Name) is matchless; All other Dowry displayed by the self-willed is false egoism and a vain show." (SGGS, 78/79). 4) Condemns the wearing of veils by women. One of the simplest but most effective instruments for the subjugation of women in society has been the invention of the veil. It hampered free movement and made them stay within the four walls of the home. One of the reasons advanced for the veil was that women were 'tempresses' for the celibate priests and sages. If that be so, perhaps the priests and sages should have the veils and not the women. Guru Nanak abolished the use of veils by introducing the system of Sangat (Sikh congregation) where no veil was allowed. Both men and women are required to cover their head in remembrance of Waheguru. Jews, Muslims and others cover their hair in places of worship, but for Sikhs the whole world is a place for Waheguru's remembrance and holy living. Women are also expected to participate in Kirtan as equal partners and even to lead the prayers.

A Youth's Message

Sikh Youth are the future of the Sikh Panth! They have the power to revive the spirit of Sikhi, and inspire others to follow on the path. They have the **power to unite the Sikh Panth**, by realizing that a Sikh is a Sikh is a Sikh. They have the power to change the world, through the teachings of the True Guru - and by doing Seva for all humans irrespective of religion, caste, creed, gender, language and country of origin, so that other communities may be inspired to do the same. Today's youth, by the grace of the True Guru, have the potential to become Khalsa, and True Devotees of Waheguru Ji. May the youth realize this potential, which can be easily forgotten amongst the nitty gritty of everyday life... And may they act upon it.

GURPURABS & PROGRAMME September 2016

Parkash Guru Granth Sahib Ji (Sunday Prog. 4 Sept)	02-09-2016
Gurgaddi Guru Arjan Dev Sahib Ji (Sunday Prog. 4 Sept)	03-09-2016
Joti Jot Guru Ram Das Sahib Ji (Sunday Prog. 4 Sept)	04-09-2016
Gurgaddi Guru Ram Das Sahib Ji (Sunday Prog. 18 Sept)	14-09-2016
Joti Jot Guru Amar Das Sahib Ji (Sunday Prog. 18 Sept)	16-09-2016
Gurgaddi Guru Angad Dev Sahib Ji (Sunday Prog. 25 Sept)	21-09-2016
Joti Jot Guru Nanak Dev Sahib Ji (Sunday Prog. 25 Sept)	25-09-2016

On first Friday of every month **Youth Program** held at Gurdwara Sahib from 6-8pm

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Nit Chardi Kala

NEWSLETTER OF UNITED SIKH VOLUNTEERS AUSTRALIA

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First Installation of Guru Granth Sahib Sahib Ji (2nd Sept.)

It took about three years to complete the compilation of Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Guru Ji named it the Adi Granth. "It will not be just a book, but a Granth in which the Word of God will be tied down so that Sikhs can read it, chant it, sing it, remember it and live it," said Guru Arjan Dev Ji. This whole work was finished on August 30, 1604, Granth Sahib was installed at Sri Harimandar Sahib. Baba Budha Ji was appointed the first Granthi. Photo shows devotees carrying golden palanquin containing Guru Granth Sahib on the occasion of 400 years of the installation of the holy Guru Granth Sahib at Darbar Sahib .

UNITED SIKH VOLUNTEERS AUSTRALIA ਸੰਯੁਕਤ ਸਿਖ ਸੇਵਕ ਔਸਟ੍ਰੇਲੀਆ

The Saga of Saragarhi (12th September)

September 12, 1897 is a day that needs to be recalled with intense pride. Saragarhi is the incredible story of 21 men of the 36th Sikh Regiment (currently the 4th Sikh Regiment) who gave up their lives in devotion to their duty. In keeping with the great tradition of the Sikh soldiers, they fought to the death rather than surrender. The Battle at Saragarhi is one of eight stories of collective bravery published by UNESCO. It has been mentioned as one of the five most significant events of its kind in the world which includes the Saga of Thermopylae associated with the heroic stand of a small Greek force against the mighty Persian Army of Xerxes in 480 B.C.

The British colonial rulers had constructed a series of forts to control the NWFP (North West Frontier Province - today a state in Pakistan) and to provide security to troops against marauding tribesmen. Two such forts Fort Lockhart and Fort Gulistan were a few miles apart. Since these forts were not inter-visible, a signalling relay post called Saragarhi was located mid-way on a bluff to provide heliograph (A heliograph is a simple device for sending Morse code using a mirror catching the sunlight) communications between them. This post or picket had been fortified to provide safety and protection to the signaling detachment. In 1897 there was a general uprising in the NWFP engineered by Afghans. It was the duty of the 36th Sikh to occupy Gulistan and Lockhart forts. On 12 September 1897, hordes of tribesmen laid siege to Fort Lockhart and Saragarhi, with



the aim of overrunning the latter and at the same time preventing any help from the former. The Commanding Officer of 36th Sikh, Lt. Col. Haughton, was at Fort Lockhart and was in communication with the Saragarhi post. The defenders of Saragarhi under the indomitable and inspiring leadership of their detachment commander, Havildar Ishar Singh, resolved to defend their post in the best tradition gallant Sikhs. They were not there to hand over the post to the enemy and seek safety elsewhere. Havildar

Singh and his men knew well that the post would fall, because a handful of men in that make-shift fort of stones & mud walls with a wooden door could not stand the onslaught of thousands of tribesmen. These plucky men knew that they will go down but they had resolved to do so fighting to the last. From Fort Lockhart, troops and the Commanding Officer could count at least 14 standards and that gave an idea of the number of tribes and their massed strength against the Saragarhi relay post (estimated at between 10,000 to 12,000 tribals). From early morning the tribals started battering the fort. The Sikhs fought back valiantly. Charge after charge was repulsed by the men of the 36th Sikh. The tribal leaders started to make tempting promises so that the Sikhs would surrender. But Havildar Singh and his men ignored them. The enemy made two determined attempts to rush the gate of the post and on both occasions the defenders repulsed the assault. While the enemy suffered heavy casualties, the ranks of the defenders too kept dwindling as the fire from the attackers took its toll and their ammunition stocks were depleting. Unmindful of his safety, Sepoy Gurmukh Singh kept signaling a minute-to-minute account of the battle from the signal tower. The battle lasted the better part of the day. Thereafter, one of the fiercest hand-to-hand fights followed. All this time, Sepoy Gurmukh Singh continued flashing the details of the action at the post. Beside this the Commanding Officer of 36th Sikh and others at Lockhart Fort also saw his unique saga of heroism and valour unfolds at Saragarhi. The battle had come too close for Sepoy Gurmukh Singh's comfort, so he asked Battalion HQs for permission to shut down the heliograph and take up his rifle. Permission was flashed back. He dismounted his heliograph equipment, packed it in a leather bag, fixed bayonet on his rifle and joined the fight. From this vantage point in the tower he wrought havoc on the intruders in the post. He died fighting, but took 20 of the enemy with him.

The tribals set fire to the post, while the brave garrison lay dead or dying with their ammunition exhausted. Next morning the relief column reached the post and the tell-tale marks of the epic fight were there for all to see. This episode when narrated in the British Parliament drew from the members a standing ovation in the memory of the defenders of Saragarhi. The account was received all over the world with awe and admiration. All the 21 valiant men of this epic battle were awarded the Indian Order of Merit (posthumously) which at the time was one of the highest gallantry awards given to Indian troops and is considered equivalent to Victoria Cross. Never before or since has a body of troops - that is, all of them won gallantry awards in a single action. It is indeed a singularly unique action in the annals of military history.

The Status of Women in Sikhism

(Adapted from Article by: Harjit Kaur, Professor of Economics, University of Syracuse, USA)

We as human beings belong to a social group at birth and our development and growth is influenced largely by that group's philosophy. Being a Sikh woman by birth and part of Punjabi society, I have seen women being glorified as goddesses as well as downgraded. Over the years this has developed into a search for an explanation, and recently I have turned to the Sikh Scriptures (Sri Guru Granth Sahib) for an answer. The Sikh Religion was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539 AD) who was born in West Punjab - now in Pakistan. A brief reference about the social inequalities of that period, especially with respect to women, helps to appreciate the progressive doctrine adopted by the Sikh Gurus. For centuries, the status of women in India was being systematically downgraded. The caste system, economic oppression, denial of right to property and inheritance, a false sense of impurity attached to menstruation and child birth, deliberate deprivation of education led to the deterioration of women's position in society. This was further justified by religious sanctions as was done by Manu, the Hindu law giver. Woman was referred to as a 'seducer', 'unclean', and a 'tempress'. She was denied the right to preach or to participate in other religious rites. Per Manu's laws inheritance of the family's property was also limited to males and dowry was prevalent. Men could be polygamous whereas women were supposed to burn themselves alive on the pyre of their dead husbands (Sati). Education of women was also looked down upon. In Praise of Women Guru Nanak writes: "from the woman is our birth, in the woman's womb are we shaped; To the woman we are engaged, to the woman we are wedded; The woman is our friend and from woman is the family; Through the woman are the bonds of the world; Why call woman evil who gives birth to the leaders of the World? From the woman is a woman born, without woman there is none". (Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 473) The Guru reprimands those who consider women as inferior to men. He sees them as active partners in advancing goodwill, general happiness and the collective moral values of society. This declaration definitively requires women to be placed in high esteem. Guru Nanak openly chides those who attribute pollution to women because of menstruation and asserts that pollution lies in the heart and mind of the person and not in the cosmic process of birth. "If pollution attaches to birth, then pollution is everywhere (for birth is universal). Not one grain of corn is without life; Water itself is a living substance, imparting life to all vegetation. How can we then believe in pollution, when pollution inheres within staples? Says Nanak, pollution is not washed away by purificatory rituals; Pollution is removed by true knowledge alone" (Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 472) In many religions God has been addressed as father. However, it was Sikhism which introduced the concept of God as mother and father. The fifth Guru (Guru Arjan Dev) reinforces the high status given to women by the first Guru by placing the feminine name given to God (mother) before the name of father. God is our Mother as well as our Father. "Thou O Lord, art my Mother and Thou my Father. Thou art the Giver of peace to my soul and very life". (Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, 1144). In Sikhism widespread and practical steps are advised to be taken for the socio-religious equality of woman. Guru Nanak introduced the Concept of *Sangat* (holy congregation) 1) where both men