

Singh Sabha Southall Education Centre



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Newsletter April 2016

Issue No. 7

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SSSEC Newsletter written and edited by Gurleen Kaur & Harpreet Kaur



Vaheguru ji ka Khalsa, Vaheguru ji ki Fateh!

It has been a long time since the last edition, so once again we present to you a bumper edition of the SSSEC Newsletter! We hope you enjoy reading this term's edition, looking back on recent events as well as learning something new!

(We apologise in advance if we have made any mistakes or missed anyone out!)

~Gurleen & Harpreet Kaur :)

Important Notices

Keep us Updated!

Please **email us** about any **absences** or **changes** to your personal details such as contact numbers, address, and health. It is particularly important that we are aware of any **allergies or other health conditions** including **learning difficulties**, so we can give our students the **best possible education!**

Please also keep us updated on how we are doing; we can only improve further with your **feedback and suggestions**. What are we doing well? How can we improve our classes? How much progress have students been making? What more would you like to see happen at SSSEC? (Would you like to visit Bournemouth beach again this year?)

Social Media

Please make sure you **regularly check our social media pages and website**. We regularly post updates on Facebook and twitter, including upcoming dates and photos from events. We may also send out **emails with important notices** and dates but social media is the main method of communication with you.

Parents' Lunchtime Seva & 'No milk; no biscuits' Rule!

Thank you so much to all the parents who have been contributing their time, money and effort towards providing the students and volunteers lunch every week without fail. **If you want to get involved, please contact Narinder Kaur at 07944130342.** They have now also implemented a new rule which means students can only have a biscuit if they have had some milk as well – **no milk; no biscuits!**

Dates for your Diary

End-of-year exams are also taking place this term. Ask your teacher for more information.

Sunday 17th April 2016 – First day of summer term

Saturday 30th April 2016 – Zonal level speech competition (Brent Sikh Centre)

Sunday 15th May 2016 – Speech competition centre-level prize-giving

Sunday 5th June 2016 – Classes closed for half term

Sunday 10th July 2016 – End-of-year programme

Sunday 17th July – Whole-school trip and last day of term!





Achievements

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Our students and volunteers continue to achieve highly and make us proud. Here is just a selection of their accomplishments over the last two terms:

You may have recognised a lot of the faces on the front cover of this magazine. These students have spent a lot of effort to make some amazing pictures, posters and leaflets. They wrote (and drew) about topics such as Bandi Chhorr Divas, speaking Punjabi, Pehla Parkash, Guru Gobind Singh ji and many more – we hope to see more of you creating high quality work in the future!



This year saw some of the toughest competition we have seen in the first round of the Hemkunt Youth Symposium and Keertan Darbaar. Everyone did amazingly well; all five of our kirtan jathas placed in the top three positions in their age groups, and there were only a few points between the first, second, and third winner in each group of the speech competition. More information and photos on pages 6&7 of this magazine.



A few months ago Ajuni Kaur from the GCSE Punjabi class gave a presentation at her school about Sikhi. She talked about the idea of equality, langar, the 3 pillars, and Sikh philosophy. Her classmates didn't know much about Sikhi, and Ajuni was able to answer a lot of their questions.

Last term, one of our very own teachers won the Nishaan Poetry Competition, run by the inter-university Sikh Society network Nishaan. Congratulations to Gurleen Kaur for making us proud! You can read her poem on page 11 of this magazine.

Please keep us updated about your achievements related to Punjabi and Sikhi! We wish you the best in all your endeavours.



4 Review of autumn term 2015

University student workshop

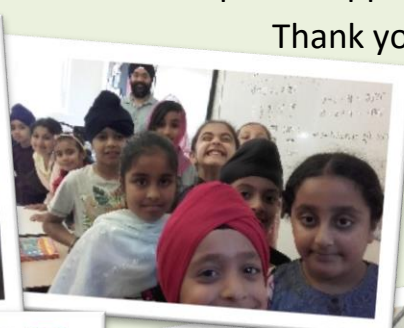
We started the year off with a unique workshop which aimed to facilitate discussion between current university students and those about to start university. Everyone appreciated this opportunity to learn from each other, share tips about university life, and talk about any concerns they may have had. We hope to be able to provide more workshops such as this, and on other topics such as starting high school, choosing A levels and applying for university.



Settling in at Villiers

A big change this year was the new location for SSSEC classes. Despite the new setting, everyone adapted very quickly and soon started feeling at home. Both old and new students have continued joining us throughout the year and we now have over 200 registered pupils. This would not have been possible without everybody's immense help and support.

Thank you!



Special lunches

The SSSEC Parents' Lunch Seva team has been selflessly providing lunch and snacks to all our students and volunteers every week. Apart from the regular sandwiches, fruit, milk, and biscuits, they have organised some special lunches with pizza and chips, crisps, chocolates, fruit juice, samosas and spring rolls, mathia and mithai! The children greatly appreciated and enjoyed these (unhealthy) breaks from the regular lunches – which they also love ;)



Special Guests Tajvinder Singh and Meva Singh

We have been fortunate enough to have been visited by some special guests. Thank you to inspiring personalities Tajvinder Singh and Meva Singh who spoke in assembly about their experiences, and the struggles they faced in getting where they are now. Tajvinder Singh is the youngest ever Darbar Sahib hazoori ragi, and the first American-born person to do kirtan at Darbar Sahib. Meva Singh is a para-badminton player who regularly competes in matches both in the UK and abroad, and has won various prizes over the years.

I did enjoy coming to SSSEC; I was so happy to see so many Gursikh children with turbans. I am very proud of them all and they all are doing so much for Sikhs by coming to Punjabi school on Sunday. I hope my friend the little girl has not forgotten Uncle Ji with one leg. I wish all the children best of luck and keep working hard. I hope to see you all some time. After June I am going on holiday soon after my next match for Herts Toppers Badminton Club. My team is on the top of the league – and we are the only club in England to have para players in the teams playing in an able-bodied badminton league.

Winter Programmes

Our 2015 Winter Programme was split over two days – Kirtan & Music, and Punjabi. The teachers and students worked very hard to prepare, giving great performances. The Punjabi programme was on the theme of revolution and we are very grateful to Harjinder Singh aka 'The Man in Blue' for coming in and talking to students on this day about his experiences. Thank you also to all our volunteers who did an amazing job as usual!



6 Review of spring term 2016

Kirtan Competition

On 20th February, 22 SSSEC students arrived at Brent Sikh Centre eager to show everybody what they had been working so hard to prepare, along with their teachers and parents. With Guru's grace and the help of their trainers Kiranpal Singh, Gurleen Kaur and Harpreet Kaur, all jathas received either 1st, 2nd, or 3rd prize! Four of the five jathas qualified to go to the international competition in July in the USA. We all learnt that practice and effort is key to achieving your best and that it is much more important to enjoy yourself and understand the Guru's message rather than only aiming to win the competition.



Speech Competition

The group 1-3 centre level speech competition took place on 20th March with over 70 participants. The quality of the speeches was extremely high, and there were only a few points between the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners. The judges, which included both SSSEC teachers as well as some from much further away, were very impressed by the young participants, and gave some good feedback and tips at the end of the day. Children also enjoyed a tasty lunch with pizza and chips, and took part in fun activities.



Talks by Ravinder Singh, Sarbjit Singh & Raminder Singh

We are very lucky to have so much talent and wisdom within our own sevadars and their families. Last term we had three special talks. Sarbjit Singh (Tegvir and Japleen's dad) gave a well-prepared and interesting presentation about his visit to Penang in Malaysia, how Sikhs are viewed there, and the various Sikh landmarks in the area.

Ravinder Singh (Habhi and Ajuni's dad) talked about the importance of the Sikh identity when we invited him to the stage after he appeared on the cover of Forbes Romania.

Raminder Singh (a secondary school head teacher and SSSEC volunteer Swarn Singh's brother) gave an enthusiastic and engaging talk about Vaisakhi which captivated the children.



SSSEC on Desi Radio

On 13th February, to mark the upcoming International Mother Language Day, two of the SSSEC Team, Tejinder Pal Singh and Gurleen Kaur, spoke on Desi Radio about the importance of learning Punjabi. They answered questions from listeners and the host, Pammi, about SSSEC classes as well as their views on why our mother tongue is so important. We are grateful to Desi Radio for giving us this opportunity.



Kirtan at Southampton

As some of you will remember, our kirtan students performed at the Singh Sabha Southampton Gurdwara a few years back. On Saturday 9th April, we were lucky enough to be able to return, and a group of our students and teachers performed kirtan for 2 hours, including shabads prepared for the kirtan competition. The sangat really enjoyed listening to the kirtan and the Gurdwara sevadars kindly prepared a special langar for the children. Hopefully we will continue to visit and be part of the Southampton sangat.



Nagar Kirtans – an opinion piece

‘Nagar Kirtan’ literally means ‘neighbourhood kirtan (singing of gurbani)’. For a lot of us, attending the Nagar Kirtan is the highlight of Vaisakhi; a chance to join in with a colourful, lively procession through the streets to celebrate, meet our friends, sing shabads, and – of course – eat a LOT of langar! But have we ever really taken time to think about whether there is something more to this tradition than the Sikh version of a street party?

ACTIVITY: What is your favourite thing about Nagar Kirtans? Do you think they have a deeper meaning than just being a fun way of celebrating a Gurpurab or Vaisakhi?

The first Nagar Kirtan is said to have been started by Baba Buddha ji when Guru Hargobind Ji was imprisoned in the Gwalior fort. Sikhs would gather together to walk around the fort, singing shabads in defiance against the imprisonment of the Guru and to show that they were still in chardikala. This gradually turned into the Parbhaat Pheri, a more recent tradition. ‘Parbhaat’ means ‘morning’ and ‘pheri’ means ‘round trip’.

The Sikh community in a neighbourhood usually hold daily Parbhaat Pheris in the lead up to a Gurpurab or other occasion. They start singing kirtan in the streets at dawn, gathering people as the procession passes in front of their homes. This group of Sikhs, enjoying kirtan together in the early morning air, may reach up to a few hundred. The Parbhaat Pheri usually ends at someone’s house, and everyone joins in to make, serve and eat langar together. Afterwards, people still have time to go to work and make the most of the day. Sometimes the final Parbhaat Pheri is on the morning of a Nagar Kirtan marking the event.

ACTIVITY: How are Nagar Kirtans different from Parbhaat Pheris? List as many things as you can think of!

Nagar Kirtans today vary in size but the largest gatherings can reach into the hundreds of thousands. Usually a nagara at the front announces the arrival of the Nagar Kirtan, led by the Panj Pyare and the palki containing the Guru Granth Sahib ji and a ragi jatha singing shabads. The sangat follows on foot, and there may be more floats behind them carrying those who are unable to walk for long, or more people singing kirtan. Free food is provided by sevadars from floats or stalls at the sides of the roads, and there may be stalls providing information and literature or selling Sikhi-related items.

ACTIVITY: Draw out a map of the Southall Nagar Kirtan!

Nagar Kirtans can be an amazing way to bring together the Sikh community to remember and reflect on the history and message behind the occasion. Singing kirtan together in such a large gathering can be an uplifting experience, and the generosity of those providing langar or helping out is inspiring. However, if we look more closely at modern Nagar Kirtans, we begin to see that there is much to be worried about. We must ask ourselves, is this how Sikhs should celebrate Vaisakhi and Gurpurabs? Here are a few things which need to be changed...

Organising a Nagar Kirtan is expensive. There are costs associated with getting the council's permission to carry out the procession, as it disrupts traffic and means that the streets need to be closed. Preparing the palki, floats and decorations is also not cheap, and the many stalls providing food are only possible with generous donations. Sometimes it can seem like an extravagant display of wealth. Would all this money not be better used elsewhere, for example improving the gurdwara and educational facilities or donations to charity? Imagine how many people would benefit if all the money that goes into organising a Nagar Kirtan was used to provide better health, education and other resources to those who need it!

Apart from money, so much food is wasted on this day. The idea of langar isn't just to provide free food to everyone, it is about making sure that those who would otherwise go hungry can have something to eat, and destroying inequalities. It is also a chance to sit down, eat together, talk and debate with those who you may not normally talk to. But the free food provided by volunteers at modern Nagar Kirtans simply gives well-fed people the chance to eat even more, and a lot of that is wasted in the end. Have we forgotten the real reason langar was started?

You will have no doubt experienced the pushing and shoving that all too often accompanies a major Nagar Kirtan. Some people seem to forget their manners on this day, and impatiently push people out of the way so they can reach the palki or food stall before others, not thinking of those who have been waiting longer than them to do the same. Is this how Sikhs should behave? What kinds of role models are they being to the young children around them?

Sikhi is about being one with Vaheguru, and looking after the natural world around us is a big part of that. But every year we see massive heaps of black bags and yet more rubbish littering the streets after the Nagar Kirtan has finished. Apart from being an unnecessary waste of resources, all this rubbish ends up in landfill and many recyclable items, such as paper plates and plastic cups, are not recycled. Coupled with this is the gas and petrol used up in cooking food and driving the floats. Don't Sikhs have a duty to be more eco-friendly?

Big Nagar Kirtans are often used by companies and businesses as a chance to promote their products and services. This is not at all related to celebrating the Gurburab or Vaisakhi, and can be seen as a misuse of the event and the goodwill of the sangat. Is it right to allow such advertising at an event which should be about coming together to sing Gurbani?

We can see that the focus of Nagar Kirtans seems to have shifted away from learning about Sikhi and the Guru's message to simple merrymaking and enjoyment. It is not wrong to have fun, but when it comes at such a large cost to the environment and wastes so much of the sangat's money, it cannot be a positive thing. Some might think this means we need to stop doing Nagar Kirtans, but they are also a great tradition and an opportunity for likeminded Sikhs to meet and celebrate Gurburabs and Vaisakhi together. Surely it is better to learn from our mistakes and improve the way we do Nagar Kirtans? Remember, if there is something that needs to be changed, don't sit back and wait for someone else to do it!

Activity: *What would you like to change about Nagar Kirtans? How can you do this?*

Poetry Corner

In the winter term, Harneet Kaur asked her Punjabi class pupils to write some poems about Mata Gujri ji. Class 4 did stunningly well, producing some beautiful poems in both English and Punjabi which they shared at the Winter Programme. Here are some examples:

By Diya Kaur

ਮਾਤਾ ਗੁਜਰੀ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਕਰਾਂ ਤਾਰੀਫ਼ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ।
ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਇੱਕ ਪਤੀ ਵਾਰਿਆ।
ਦੂਜਾ ਇੱਕ ਪੁੱਤ ਵਾਰਿਆ।
ਤੀਜਾ ਚਾਰ ਪੋਤੇ ਵਾਰੇ।
ਚੌਥਾ ਆਪਣੇ ਆਪ ਨੂੰ ਵਾਰਿਆ।
ਮਾਤਾ ਗੁਜਰੀ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਕਰਾਂ ਤਾਰੀਫ਼ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ।



By Anmol Kaur

Mata Gujri Ji was forgiving
Always humble and caring
The grandmother of the chaar sahibzade
Always helpful and loving
Guru Gobind Singh Ji was her son
Up in a tower she stayed with the chhote Sahibzade
Justice is what she wanted
Remembered God wherever she was
In 1705 she passed away

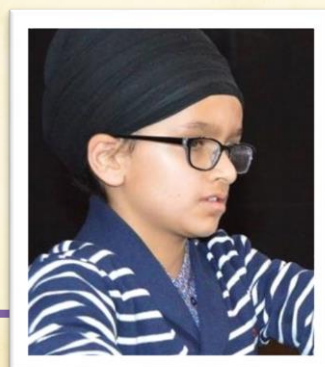


By Japsimar Singh

ਧੰਨ ਮਾਤਾ ਗੁਜਰੀ
ਪੋਤੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਜਿਨੇ ਹਥੀਂ ਤੋਰੇ
ਮੌਤ ਨੂੰ ਕਰਨ ਸਲਾਮਾਂ
ਇੱਕ ਦੂਜੇ ਤੋਂ ਹੋ ਕੇ ਮੁਹਰੇ
ਸਮਝੀ ਨਾ ਸਮਝੀ ਸੂਬਿਆ
ਕਿ ਪਿੱਛੇ ਪੱਥ ਧਰ ਜਾਣਗੇ
ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਦੇ ਲਾਲ ਸੂਬਿਆ
ਸਮਝੀਂ ਨਾ ਡਰ ਜਾਣਗੇ।

By Jujhar Singh

Mata Gujri followed the three golden rules
Always kind, never cruel
She meditated every hour
And was kept at the tthanda tower
To Aurangzeb's threats she was immune
And sang the shabad tune
She is very forgiving
Helpful & loving
Her light never dies
Her light never dies

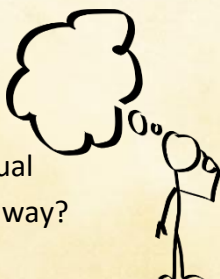


Gurleen Kaur, our advanced kirtan class teacher and volunteer, recently submitted a poem for the Nishaan poetry competition 2015-16. Nishaan is an inter-university Sikh society network, and they organise this national poetry competition every year. Here is Gurleen Kaur's winning entry, entitled 'My Sikhi':

I am a Sikh.

Almost every morning
I get up at dawn
Having picked out my clothes
I do my ishnaan
I wake up my Guru
And do the ardas
With nitnem on my phone
I head out to class
In class I am a normal student
I prove Sikhi does not hold me back!
I can do all that I want to do
(As long as my studies are on track)
Sikhi is a big part of my life
Without it I wouldn't be who I am
It gives me strength and courage
And helps me through exams!
I follow the rehat fully
I do not smoke or drink
I keep my hair uncut
Of eating meat, I cannot think
I am proud of being a Sikh
I wear a tall dastaar
I sing and listen to kirtan;
No rainsabai is too far
I follow important Sikh issues
I attend every protest
I have pledged orange
This Diwali, in black I dressed
I hope Guruji is proud of me
Though I am but a humble servant
With Guruji's blessings and kirpa
As a Sikh, I've remained observant
But...

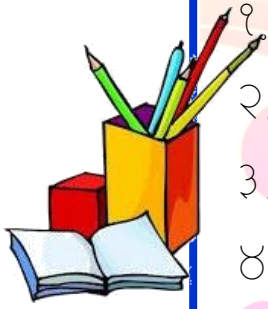
Something doesn't seem quite right lately
It's been preying on my mind
I feel as though for years and years
I've been completely blind...
So what if I wake early?
So what if I wash each day?
When later on this morning ritual
Has made no difference in any way?



And what is the use of doing paatth
If I don't understand the words?
Even with the 'translation' provided
Why can't I then act on what I've heard?
And as for being 'normal'
Is that what my Guru wants of me?
Someone known only for being 'successful'
And achieving a top university degree?
Is it possible for Sikhi to be a 'part of my life'
As though tucked tidily away on a shelf?
Does the Guru's word not apply 24/7?
Is it applicable only to myself?
And why do I follow this 'rehat'
Without understanding its basis?
Am I foolish or faithful to ask no questions?
Does it count if I've always done this?
Don't 'bani' and 'bana' go hand-in-hand?
Yet appearances seem so vital...
Is my dastaar a crown if I don't know its background?
Is 'sardar' just a title?
And what do I enjoy about kirtan?
Is it the message or the music that I hear?
When I sit in the darbar or langar hall
Is it true sangat that I find there?
Are only Sikh issues worth fighting for?
Aren't Sikhs meant to help all those in need?
Do I know what I'm protesting against?
Or am I just following the crowd indeed?
Is it not haumai to say that I'm humble
And that by Guruji I've been 'blessed'?
What do 'kirpa' and 'blessings' even mean?
Am I somehow better than all the rest?
Do I really know what Sikhi is?
Have I ever spent time to reflect?
Without reading, *understanding*, and following my Guru,
How can I know what is correct?
Is it enough to be outwardly 'observant'
To keep my Sikhi intact?
As the wise always say; I need to
Think before I act

Am I a Sikh?





Activities Page!

੧. ਦਿਸਾਖੀ
੨. ਅਨੰਦਪੁਰ
੩. ਖੰਡਾ
੪. ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ
੫. ਖਾਲਸਾ
੬. ਕੌਰ
੭. ਸਿੰਘ
੮. ਕਰਾਰ
੯. ਵਟਿਆ
੧੦. ਧਰਮ
੧੧. ਹਿੰਮਤ
੧੨. ਮੋਰਚਾ
੧੩. ਸਾਹਿਬ

April is the month in which we celebrate Vaisakhi. Here is a fun Vaisakhi-themed word search for you to enjoy! Answers will be in the next issue.

ਸਿ	ਗ	ਮੋ	ਰ	ਕ	ਮ	ਵ	ਟੈ	ਰ	ਘ
ਗ	ਸਿੰ	ਅ	ਗ	ਡ	ਕ	ਇ	ਸੀ	ਖਾ	ਤ
ਖੀ	ਪ	ਘ	ਰ	ਧ	ਰ	ਆ	ਸਾ	ਲ	ਇ
ਅ	ਮੁ	ਕੋ	ਲੋ	ਮਿ	ਉ	ਮੁ	ਰੋ	ਸਾ	ਮੁ
ਲੋ	ਨੰ	ਥੋ	ਦਿ	ਸਾ	ਖੀ	ਬ	ਰ	ਐ	ਗ
ਫਾ	ਖ	ਵ	ਧੋ	ਮਿ	ਸ਼ਿ	ਧ	ਰ	ਮ	ਯੋ
ਲ	ਅੰ	ਨੁ	ਪੁ	ਟੈ	ਕ	ਆ	ਡਾ	ਧੀ	ਮਾ
ਸਿ	ਮਿ	ਕੋ	ਟੀ	ਰ	ਕੋ	ਕਾ	ਸਿੰ	ਦ	ਹਿੰ
ਘ	ਤ	ਥੋ	ਰੰ	ਡਾ	ਚੀ	ਨੀ	ਰ	ਚੀ	ਮ
ਕੋ	ਨੂ	ਮਿ	ਖੰ	ਡ	ਸਾ	ਰਿ	ਬ	ਛ	ਤ

Do you remember the short poem by Giani Amritpal Singh which was in the last newsletter? The poem had a very important message for us. It was about how some people use different labels to define themselves as a certain 'type of Sikh', but the only type of Sikh we should want to be is our Guru's Sikh – a Sikh who truly follows the Guru Granth Sahib!

Did you manage to spot the differences in this picture in the previous newsletter? Here are the answers!

