

GURMAT CHETNA CAMP MANUAL (Punjabi)

Edited by Dr Kharak Singh
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A Review by Dr Jagjit Singh

Gurmat Chetna Camp Manual, edited by Dr Kharak Singh, Secretary, Institute of Sikh Studies, has been brought out with the specific purpose of educating the Sikh youth, on the rich Sikh heritage, religion and philosophy in a simple language and lucid style. As is clear from its title, the manual is meant for use in the 'Gurmat Chetna Camps' being organised in all Khalsa schools and colleges of the Punjab state, perhaps for the first time in Sikh history, to assist the organisers as well as participants.

Sikhs are passing through a critical time politically and socially. The moral and spiritual values that the Sikh Gurus preached and practically demonstrated through long years, are getting obscure.

The state policies under the guise of secularism, constantly threaten the very identity of the Sikhs and the Sikh way of life. The media — radio, television and newspapers, are never tired of churning out anti-Sikh material, projecting Sikhs as a sect of Hinduism, labelling Sikhs as fundamentalist, etc. After the tragic events of 1984, the sinister propoganda did not spare even the established Sikh tradition of *Amrit*, and people were warned to beware of the *Amritdhari* Sikh, as if he were some kind of a dangerous creature perversely determined to subvert the country. The calculated motif is to cause disaffection between Sikhs and other communities. The confusion and fear psychosis seem to have gripped the ignorant Sikh youth, and encouraged apostasy, and indifference towards Sikh symbols, in an illusory quest for personal safety and modernity. No Sikh organisation has made a serious attempt to bring home to the intelligentsia and the Sikh youth what initiation into Khalsa brotherhood really implies. Through this volume and Gurmat Chetna Camps, the Institute of Sikh Studies has accomplished a laudable task. The volume includes articles on the true nature of Sikh Rahit Maryada, salient features of Sikhism and the Sikh way of life. Dr Kharak Singh, in his article, calls it a war against apostasy and studies the problem thread-bare.

Sikhism is essentially a sovereign religion with a distinct identity as proclaimed by the Sikh Gurus time and again. The Fifth Guru declared:

Dr H.S. Shan, in his article entitled, 'Sikhism: a Religion of New Age' in his typical scholarly manner establishes Sikhism as a sovereign, independent, new religion — "which contains fullness of Truth, and a universal religion for the present space age". Dr Sarabjot Kaur, Prof. Prabhjot Kaur, Principal Surjeet Singh, S. Sarup Singh Narang and Hari Singh Jachak have worked hard to bring out the basic values and salient features of Sikhism, which form the rich Sikh heritage, the youth ought to know. Dr Kirpal Singh, a renowned Sikh historian, has presented a very impressive survey of Sikh history. Other subjects covered in the manual are the Sikh Worldview, Guru Granth Sahib, the *Nitnem*, worship of the One Sole Timeless, *miri-piri* doctrine, Sikh Classics and scholars, besides *Kes and Dastar*. A special article in the end on drinking and drugs, by Dr Darshanjot Kaur, and on Career Guidance by S. Mohinder Singh, greatly add to the value of the publication. The topics have been selected very carefully, and all the articles are very informative and illuminating.

An appeal by the high dignitaries of the Sikhs to Sikhs at large and the youth in particular, to adopt the Sikh way of life, to follow the Sikh principles and tenets, to abhor tobacco and other intoxicants, to perform *Nitnem*, to attend gurdwara congregation, to recite the Divine *Naam*, to worship Guru Granth Sahib alone as an embodiment of the Sikh Gurus, and to pray for the welfare of the *Panth* and humanity, is given as an Appendix.

The volume is a remarkable product; future editions of which are expected to follow shortly because of its demand, will show further improvement. All Sikh homes need to procure and preserve a copy of it. It is hoped that an English translation of this volume will appear in the near future.

TRUE FRIEND

Should we narrate to another the state of our woes, His
own tale of manifold troubles he narrates; Your tale of
woes to the Lord narrate, Who in an instant your
suffering shall annul.

— Guru Ram Das