

July 21, 1988

Dear Sadh Sangat-ji,

Sat Nam! I am writing to you as heads of ashrams and Khalsa Council members in order that I hold true to the principles I love most within Sikh Dharma: those principles essentially being honesty and courage.

When I was suspended from Khalsa Council this last Baisakhi Day and when this enclosed open letter to the Siri Singh Sahib and our family was not made available at those Khalsa Council meetings, I "gave up". My thought was "OK. Why force the issue of openness when no one seems interested?"

Then when I heard that Premka's case was settled out of court by so-called third party Indian Sikhs paying her a settlement fee, I had information to the contrary that this just wasn't the case, that both Kate and Premka were paid large sums of money (\$100,000 to Kate) by us or the Siri Singh Sahib. Third parties were used only to cover up this transaction.

Again, as I said in my open letter to the Siri Singh Sahib, my issue is not so much did we pay out these settlements or not, but can we openly ask whether we did without punitive measures being taken against us (like being suspended from Khalsa council). In a nutshell, as much as I dislike asking the loaded question, can we openly question our spiritual teacher's actions within our family/organization?

My answer to this is that we not only can, but we must if we are to remain Sikhs. Those who lead the most are the most accountable. If we hold any leader "above" this accountability, we move from being in Dharma to being in a cult.

To me, his kind of questioning of our leaders' actions is not "anarchy", it's common sense, and it's not "intellectual" if it is done with kindness - without blame or bitterness.

I know I come from this heart space in asking these questions. So I am again writing to ask any of you who will respond to ask for an investigation into this matter of pay-outs to Premka and Kate at the next Khalsa Council meeting in December. There are very easy ways to determine the truth in these matters if there is the courage to honestly ask the questions.

I am writing to you as a Sikh minister and as a long-time friend. I understand and share the personal pain and the far-reaching implications of raising this issue within one's self.

May God and Guru continue to bless and protect all of us.

Humbly yours,



M.S.S. Gurutej Singh Khalsa
Toronto

March 25, 1988

An Open Letter to:
Siri Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singh Khalsa, Yogi-Ji

Dear Sir,

This letter was originally to request a leave of absence from my post as Canadian regional director and head of the Toronto ashram. Because you have already appointed Gurudhan Singh to take my place I'm not sure that this request is necessary, but I do want to express openly and publicly the reasons behind my asking for this temporary leave.

A little over two years ago, I went through the most traumatic and painful experience of my life. I called Premka after she had moved to Hawaii and asked why she had left the Dharma. When she told me her allegations against you, I felt like I had just swallowed a bomb that went off inside me. I couldn't find anything in her voice that suggested she was lying. I tried to shut out what I heard but something deep within me wouldn't allow this.

Later, when I heard Kate's story, I felt too much pain within her to write it off as "pure fabrication".

When I talked with you about what both women had told me, you mainly spoke of how mentally sick they were. When I felt sick inside at your response I went deeper into my own confusion.

I lived in hell for the next six months due to my unwillingness to reconcile what I had believed for sixteen years and what I was now sensing. Then, more personally, as I looked back over the years I was aware of my own bewilderment and disagreement about the way we have been organized hierarchically in Sikh Dharma. I never understood the seemingly feudal system of the organization in which most of the temporal affairs of the Dharma seemed controlled by you with little input or consensus participation from the rest of us. I thought this would change as we matured, but it didn't. Regionally, most of us who were entitled by you as ministers tried to copy your model of absolute authority within our ashrams, but the system never worked. It certainly didn't work in Toronto. From my perspective we began stagnating as an organization. Then, when we locally began to move away from this structure in the early eighties, it was not so much through your direction or example, but more in spite of it. The way you administered the Dharma from L.A. didn't seem to change. For example, the Khalsa Council never really became empowered over the years to make meaningful decisions. From my experience, it's you who decides how money is spent and thus what our organizational priorities are, without much formal involvement from anyone other than the informal input from your secretarial staff. The constitutional by-laws of Sikh Dharma very clearly institutionalize this one person rule in your hands.

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After those first six months since talking with Premka, I took the next year and a half to quietly assess the relationship I have with you as my spiritual teacher and as the head of this Dharma.

The most difficult issue I have wrestled with has to do with what you call "Slander."

My experience has been that if I or others question your personal conduct or your organizational judgement, you put out very strongly that to do so is "slanderous". You have also made it clear repeatedly that the penalty for slandering you, our spiritual teacher, is basically spiritual death: a pretty harsh sentence knowing how seriously everyone in this family takes both their spiritual lives and your word concerning their lives.

So for the past two years I have felt split inside, a lot of internal tearing and self-doubt, for how could I even entertain the possibility that you my spiritual teacher and model of truth are not telling the truth about Kate and Premka; yet that is what I was feeling.

If I tried to talk with anyone in the family about this possibility I seemed to threaten them as if they needed to believe in you, so I avoided any real dialogue about this. Who am I to tamper with someone else's need to believe? For if I did, I would just end up with heresy on my beard and treatment to varying degrees of "shunning".

If I state that I think it's healthier for us as an organization to have the Khalsa Council share much of the power you now hold alone, I've experienced that my "faith" in you "or lack of it" becomes the issue rather than the questions I am raising.

I am aware that you or others may consider this letter itself to be slanderous, that by saying all of this openly, I'm in Shahti Padh, I'm aiding the "enemy", or I've lost my faith.

This to me is dangerous, for when I don't share openly what my thought and feeling processes are because I fear the consequences if I do, then I die inside. So does any community that collectively fears speaking out.

When I refuse to undergo the painful process of questioning my deepest beliefs, then these beliefs become the prison bars that keep me from Truth. So what I actually want is encouragement from you to question what you do so that the precedent is set that no-one is above such questioning. (Aren't these Guru Gobind Singh's teachings?)

My heart has told me for years but my head has been hesitant to listen, that you may long to be enfolded in the lap of true community/brotherhood/Khalsa as much as any one of us: the role you play as S.S.S. may be keeping you from true dialogue with those of us who love you most.

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I finally had to write this open letter to you when I heard that Gurujot had been arrested. Enough is enough and I've had enough of my own self-doubt and hesitation.

Whether Gurujot is guilty or innocent, I don't know. I do know that my opinion about this is meaningless. I wasn't "there". In the same vein, I don't know what happened between you, Premka and Kate. I wasn't "there" either, so my guesses mean nothing here as well.

I do know one thing from my own experience, and that is wherever Gurujot went, he seemed to create around him a climate of secrecy and intrigue: so much so that it became a family joke.

I don't know what you encouraged him to do or not do, but again, from my experience you seemed to share that same secrecy and intrigue when he was around you. You had him partner with Al Ellis knowing Al's drug background. You lived in their expensive quarters and experienced their free-flowing money. You encouraged them to travel to Thailand together with Premka and Ram Das Kaur where the two men carried on "business" while the women played Kirtan. In general, you gave Gurujot license to be secretive by creating for him the office of National Affairs Advisor, a post secretive by its very nature.

Outside of Gurujot, I'm aware of the degree of secrecy that exists elsewhere in our organization. The amounts of money we raise and how we spend it is kept secret; you don't disclose our financial statements. Our dealings with the Indian, U.S. and Canadian governments are secretive; these dealings only you know about in full. Our positioning and relationship with the Indian Sikh community is secretive; one minute we are sending telegrams of encouragement to the President of India after he signed the order to storm the Golden Temple and the next we are working with the Babbar Khalsa, an alleged terrorist group. No explanation for the discrepancy is talked about openly.

In the same way, when so many of our leaders left, like Lehri, Wha Guru, Gurushabd, Premka, Gururaj, Guruliv, etc. we never openly discussed either the reasons for their leaving or the impact their leaving had on us organizationally and personally. We kept it all inside ourselves as you appointed someone "more loyal than they" to take their place. We didn't even openly share our grief that they were gone: these our closest friends. The irony is we often slandered them as they left. When Wha Guru left it was because of some weird group sex trips. Gurushabd left supposedly because he wanted his father's liquor business. Premka left because she was in her second Chakhra.

So when you get called to court by Premka and Kate and when Gurujot gets arrested by federal narcotics agents, I'm clear that my faith or trust in you and Gurujot Singh is not the issue. And I'm certain that the secrecy itself sets us up for all this. I am also certain this affects all of us who call ourselves Sikhs, both personally and organizationally, yet we don't talk about it.

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To me the only real response to all this is to create an environment of openness wherein everyone in the family is encouraged to ask the questions that naturally arise by these momentous events. This questioning may be painful, but we have to do it.

If we call such questions "slanderous" or a product of "losing trust" punishable by spiritual death, then we no longer can call ourselves Sikhs. We lose that privilege. For a Sikh seeks the Truth, even in the face of death.

Sir, do you know how much it hurt when I was told that five of my brothers were coming to Toronto on a mission to talk with me about my "faith"? Why was my faith being questioned if not to reinforce the idea that to question your conduct and connection with Gurujot is heresy? I didn't get arrested, nor was I being sued.

What does it matter that everyone in Washington, D.C. "trusts" that Gurujot is innocent of any wrongdoing when the fact of the matter is, no-one knows if he is or isn't because he surrounded himself in such secrecy.

How can we say we "trust" in you when we fear being in open dialogue with people who don't? It's like believing we will be terminally infected by their lack of faith: some kind of spiritual AIDS.

What I and many others fought against in the 60's was not so much the Vietnam War, but the climate of secrecy that spawns Vietnam Wars: the suppression of Truth in the name of national security or interests.

I want openness in the community to which I belong, where Truth prevails not as a slogan but as my own moment-to-moment willingness to question all my beliefs in order that I live in reality of truth. I want open communication with everyone in my community because community only happens when this exists. Openness is the essential ingredient. Khalsa is pure democracy and can only exist where individual honesty, integrity and openness collectively exist.

I am taking a leave of absence from my organizational responsibilities but not from my commitment to participate in building a Khalsa world. I am making this an open, public letter to you to demonstrate my longing for this kind of open dialogue with everyone in our family.

I want to remain on Khalsa Council and involved in the Toronto ashram community for I don't believe in the concept of "leaving the Dharma" any more than I believe in your concept of "slander".

What I do believe in and trust is the vision and message that seems to be coming through more and more people everywhere, and through me too, is that there is but one God, we are that God, so we can all relax and enjoy our stay.

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I pray to Guru Ram Das for clarity, strength and protection as I learn myself to embody this vision and message more. My prayers join with yours and all those "others" who long to belong in the spirit of Khalsa.

Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa.
Wahe Guru Ji Ke Fateh.

Humbly yours,



Gurutej Singh Khalsa