

HEMKUNT

Also known as Hemkund is a high altitude mountain in the Himalayas where Guru Gobind Singh Ji is said to have meditated for thousands of years and worshipped some goddess Maha Kaal Kalka in His previous incarnation. The completely baseless story is narrated in a book called Bachittar Naatak which is a part of “Dasam Granth” – a book which is claimed to have been written by the Tenth Master Himself. With the exception of one or two compositions which might have been written by Guru Sahib Himself, the rest of the book is a filthy and totally against the Principles of the first nine Guru Sahiban and of Guru Granth Sahib. It is highly blasphemous if someone claims that the book has been written by the Tenth Master.

Most likely the book has been written by some mischievous person(s) who somehow want to associate Guru Sahiban to Hindu gods so that Sikhs may never claim to have an independent religion. The Book (Dasam Granth or the book authored by the Tenth Master) also portrays an immoral character of Guru Gobind Singh which is highly reminiscent of the Hindu gods. Many enlightened Sikhs have rejected the claim that the Book has been authored by the Tenth master, but some of the Sikh leaders are not willing to accept this because either of their ignorance or some vested interests. Heads of many deras (centres of self-appointed Sikh saints) also oppose the move. So, no final decision has been made in this regard.

Because of this apathy on the part of the Sikh leadership, Hemkunt is being highly promoted as one of the holiest (if not the holiest) place of Sikhs, and as a result several thousands of ignorant Sikhs go there every year to pay obeisance to the place. Without going into too much detail about the objections to the claim that Hemkunt is a very holy place for the Sikhs because the Tenth Master had spent thousands of years there worshipping some goddess, let us focus only on a few

1. None of the first nine Gurus felt any need to reveal anything about their previous incarnations, so suddenly what crucial need was there for the Tenth master to do so? Were Sikhs somehow questioning His Guru-like qualities that He had to prove them by revealing His extremely hard labour in the previous incarnation? Even if that was true, what was the guarantee that the Sikhs would accept His claim? So, why would He do that?

2. 2. The Tenth Master struggled throughout His entire life against injustice and aggression directed at the helpless masses; and His sacrifices in that regard are unparalleled in the history - not just of India, but the entire world. Should we respect Him for what He did for us as the Tenth Master, or should we pay obeisance to some place which is totally unrelated to us?
He was our Guru and our Saviour in His recent incarnation and not in any previous life!!

3. 3. There are hundreds of holy Shabads in Guru Granth Sahib written by all the Guru Sahiban including His own father, Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib that strictly forbid us to leave our homes and go to jungles or some other secluded place to search for God. The Tenth Master preached exactly the same principle when He was our Guru, then why would He teach us just the opposite by telling us that He left home to go on a secluded mountain and spend thousands of years in search of God?

4. 4. If it takes thousands of years of hard labour to realize God, who can do that? Is not there a fundamental problem here? Who has lived for thousands of years? Our history tells us that the Second Master, Guru Angad Dev Ji, who was a worshipper of Vaishno Devi before he had visited Guru Nanak Dev Ji, attained such a high spiritual level that He succeeded Guru Nanak Dev Ji as the next Sikh Guru in just seven years!! Guru Amar Dass Ji, who used to go to Harduar for Gunga worship every year, realized Waheguru in eleven years with the grace of Guru Angad Sahib, and became the next Sikh Guru. Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib did the same thing. Similarly many Sikhs like Baba Buddha Ji, Bhai Gurdas Ji, Bhai Nand Lall Ji, and many, many other Sikh martyrs attained such high spiritual level that they find special mention in our daily prayer and we have deep respect for them. **So, why did it take several thousand years for the Tenth Master to find salvation?**

5. 5. Further proof that the Book has not been written by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, and is actually the work of some non-Sikh person who wants to tarnish the image of Guru Gobind Singh Ji as a Great Saviour of humanity, and wants the credit to go to his Hindu gods is provided by the fact that he creates a completely bogus and unworthy story to prove a relationship between Guru Gobind Singh Ji's clan- Sodhi- to Lord Ram Chander, thereby trying to kill the independent identity of the Sikhs.

There are many other relevant questions about the sacredness of Hemkunt to which there is no answer. The simple conclusion is that the book, Bachittar Naatak has not been written by the Tenth Master and we show great disrespect to the Great Guru by ascribing the Book to Him. **Hence, Hemkunt is NOT a holy place for the Sikhs and we have nothing to do with that.**

You may visit the place as a tourist for its beautiful surroundings, but not as a devotee.

NOTE: Dr Devinder Singh Sekhon presented a paper on Bachittar Naatak in 2000 at an International Sikh Conference in Vancouver. He has explained in detail the reasons why the Book could not have been authored by the Great Tenth Master. If you want to read the article in detail, go to Google, and then type: Bachittar Naatak: An Analysis by Dr. D.S. Sekhon

DOOKH-BHANJANI BERRY

Have you ever been to Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) in Amritsar? If you have been there, you might have noticed that a large number of people bow to a berry tree, massage it, and take a dip in the holy Sarovar at that spot. The Berry tree is located almost directly behind the Golden Temple on the other side of the Sarovar. This is another successful attempt by some vested interests to fool the Sikhs and reduce the importance of not just the holy Sarovar and Guru Granth Sahib, but of the Guru Sahiban as well. There have been attacks on the Gurbani since day one because the holy Gurbani exposed the misdeeds of the Brahmans as to how they mislead the innocent people and rob them at every opportunity with their claims as agents of God who could either bless or curse the people. They complained to the rulers including Emperor Akbar against Gurbani that it preaches against Islam and Hinduism. Akbar did investigate the complaint at the time of Guru Amar Dass Ji, but rather than finding anything objectionable, He liked it very much and traveled from Lahore to Goindwal Sahib to meet with Guru Amar Dass Ji and pay respect. Akbar also gave some land to Guru Sahib where the present city of Amritsar is located. Guru Sahib advised Bhai Jetha Ji (later the Fourth Master, Guru Ram Dass Ji) to dig a sarovar (pool of water) on the land so that a city could be developed there. A pool was dug there soon and the city of Amritsar began to be developed there. Guru Ram Dass Ji planned to build a beautiful place (Harmandir Sahib) at the centre of the Sarovar for the Sikhs to assemble there, listen to the Guru's Divine Message, and sing the praise of Waheguru. The Sikhs worked very hard to complete the entire project in a few years, and the popularity of Harmandir Sahib in the middle of the beautiful Sarovar began to grow very quickly. This was a huge setback to the opponents of the Sikh Faith.

When such people with evil thoughts failed to cause any harm to the holy Gurbani and Guru Sahiban, they began to look for some other ways to reduce the importance of Harmandir Sahib and that of the Sarovar, and concocted a highly baseless and unbelievable story to achieve their evil goal. They began to promote that after churning the ocean millions of year ago, the gods claimed the vessel containing "amrit", and when they were flying over the present city of Amritsar with the vessel, some amrit fell over the ground where the holy Sarovar was later dug. Thus, according to the claims of the opponents, the holiness of the Sarovar is due to the

presence of amrit in the Sarovar and not because it has Harmandir Sahib at its centre where the holy Gurbani is recited all the twenty-four hours a day.

To give further credence to their claim, they concocted another equally baseless story of some Bibi Rajni who was the youngest of seven daughters of Duni Chand, a small raja of Patti, a small town about 55 km south-east of the present city of Amritsar. He got very unhappy with Rajni because she loved Gurbani and told her father that it was not him, but Waheguru, who was the real provider. So, to punish her, Duni Chand married her off to a leper who was also lame. Rajni put her husband in a basket and carried her all the way to the present city of Amritsar which was all jungle at the time. She left her husband under a berry tree by a small pond, which has been replaced by the holy Sarovar now, and herself went to beg food from the nearby village, Toong, which was more than 5 km away. When she was gone, her husband saw a miracle, when black crows took a dip in the pond, and they turned into majestic white swans. He saw this many times and drew the conclusion that the pond must have some magical powers. He rolled his basket and dropped himself into the pond. Lo, all his leprosy was gone and he was perfectly healthy!! Not only that, he could now walk on his two legs. This is the story that was promoted and many of our ignorant Sikhs quickly believed it. The only reason they believed it was the misleading element in the story that Rajni showed a great respect for Gurbani which was cunningly made a part of the story by the promoters to fool the trusting Sikhs who have a great faith in the holy Gurbani and they will buy anything sold under the name of Gurbani. It is believed that the berry tree in the holy Sarovar is the same as the one under which the leper was made to wait.

WEAKNESSES in the Story: There are many, many obvious weaknesses in the story, but let us focus only on a few.

1. 1. The holy Gurbani does not believe in any “amrit” other than the Naam Amrit i.e. singing the praise of Waheguru with full faith and dedication.
2. 2. Let us believe for a short moment that there was some liquid called amrit in the pond, what has happened to that amrit now? Why don't crows change into swans now? There are scores of lepers in the holy city even today, why aren't they healed now? Is there a different God now?
3. 3. Why did it take millions of years for this “amrit” to be discovered in the pond after it was spilled? Why wasn't it discovered before the holy Sarovar was dug so that the believers (devotees) of that amrit could have built their own temple there?

4. 4. There are twelve places in India where the “amrit” retrieved from the ocean is known to have been stored or mixed with water. These holy places are known as Kumbhs (vessels of amrit) and a fair is held every 12 years to commemorate the date. Why don't crows change into swans, and lepers heal at those “holy” places where the bulk of “amrit” was stored?

5. 5. The village, Toong, is on the way to the present city of Amritsar from Patti; why did Bibi Rajni overshoot it before she set her husband by the pond? Let us assume that she lost her way, then why did she leave her disabled husband in a very dangerous place as it was all secluded and carnivores abounded in that area those days?

6. 6. As a pretty young woman, she was at a serious risk herself? Why did she leave the inhabited area to go to an isolated place?

7. 7. If, she really respected Gurbani, she would not go begging because begging is strictly prohibited in Gurbani. If she had so much faith in Waheguru as the real provider, then she should have waited for His kindness. Clearly, the pieces do not add together, and the whole story is a bogus one.

9. 8. Finally, even if we believe in the far-fetched story for a short moment, what is the significance of the berry tree? It was not even in the pond. Rajni had simply set her husband under that tree. So, why should it be worshipped or even respected?

10. The shameful thing for the Sikhs is to call it Dookh-Bhanjani berry which means the killer of all diseases or discomforts. There are quite a few Shabads in Guru Granth sahib which say very emphatically that only Waheguru's Naam is Dookh-Bhanjan and nothing else. So, how can a tree be Dookh-Bhanjan?

11. Even more shameful thing is, that only a few steps from the berry, Guru Granth Sahib is radiating its Divine light. Most people will bow to the tree, but very few do so to Guru Granth Sahib. **What bigger disrespect can we show to our revered Guru Granth Sahib which is a manifestation of Waheguru?**

HEMKUNT AND DOOKH-BHANJANI BERRY

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CONCLUSION: The so called Dookh-Bhanjani Berry is only a tree like any other tree and does not need any special consideration, let alone worshipping it. The people must be educated against worshipping it. Better still, if the berry is removed from the holy Sarovar.