



CARDIFF PLAY FORUM NEWSLETTER

December 2009

ISSUE: 45

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This is the 5th newsletter for 2009 / 2010

The next meeting/ workshop of the Cardiff Play Forum will be held

On: Wednesday 3rd February 2010

At: 12.00pm

At: Hailey Park, Llandaff North, Cardiff.

Meeting point Radyr Road car park at 12.00pm. (Please be on time, as Gareth is giving up his time to facilitate this workshop) I will have my mobile on me if you need to contact me, mobile number on back page.

Explore the woodland and grassland in search of creepy crawlies. All bug hunting equipment will be provided.

It will be February so wrap up warm & I suggest you bring a flask of hot drink with you too. On this occasion, as we are outside refreshments will not be provided.

Please remember all workshops are free, but need to be booked in advance, this is so we know how many people to cater for in terms of space, handouts, equipment etc. If you would like to attend this workshop please contact Tanya (Contact details on back page) with your name, group & contact details.

This workshop will be facilitated by Gareth from Cardiff Councils Parks department, who is giving up his time to help & support Cardiff Play Forum members. Please support Gareth by coming to the workshop.

Thank you.

SIKH WORKSHOP

On Tuesday 3rd November we held a Sikh workshop for the Cardiff Play Forum at AWETU, (All Wales Black & Minority Ethnic Mental Health Project) Broadway, Cardiff, here is some information about the Sikh religion.

Neeta ran this workshop & a big thank you to her for hosting this workshop. She has lots of books & resources, which she is willing to lend out.

A teacher called Guru Nanak founded Sikhism in the early fifteenth century. He was firmly of the belief that all people were born equal and should have equal opportunities. Guru means "spiritual leader" and he guided his people in the way of God's will believing there was one God. There are over 20 million Sikhs worldwide and the religion is open to anyone.

After Guru Nanak there were ten other gurus:

Guru Nanak	1469-1539
Guru Angad	1539-1552
Guru Amar	1552-1574
Guru Ram	1574-1581
Guru Arjan	1581-1606
Guru Har Gobind	1606-1644
Guru Har Rai	1644-1661
Guru Har Krishan	1661-1664
Guru Tegh Bahadur	1665-1675
Guru Gobind Singh	1675-1708

The last of the gurus, Gobind Singh started a new brotherhood of Sikhs known as the Khalsa or "Pure Ones". He instructed them to wear the five Ks, which is a sort of uniform, which makes them all recognise each other as members of one community.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539)

Guru Nanak was born into a Hindu family, but did not take part in the ceremony to initiate him into the Hindu religion. The Brahman priest performs the initiation ceremony; this involves a sacred thread being placed over the person being initiated. Guru Nanak said he was neither Hindu nor Muslim. The Brahman priest who came to his house to perform the ceremony was asked by Guru Nanak to provide a thread that would not break, he could not and therefore the initiation ceremony could not be done. He worked for a Muslim as he grew up so he learned about the Muslim religion too. Eventually he became a religious teacher, teaching about a new faith using ideas from both Hinduism and Islam. This new religion, called Sikhism, was based on one God and on the equality of all human beings. Nanak traveled far and wide to teach about the new religion, he wrote hymns about it. He became known as a guru. His most famous hymn is the Japji, which Sikhs say at dawn each day.

The Sikh faith started as Guru Nanak realised that people were losing sight of God in their lives because of greed and superstition. He set out a list of new rules to bring people closer to God. These were based on the fact that there is only one God, responsible for all and that all people are equal and should have equal opportunities.

Three of the most important teachings of Nanak are known as nam simran, kirt karo, and wand chako.

Nam Simran:

Think about God. ("Listening to the name gives truth, holy wisdom, contentment... by listening to the Name, sorrow and sin are destroyed." Guru Nanak)

Kirt Kaara:

Live a normal life.

Earn a living through honest means and hard work.

Wand Chhako:

Share with the needy whatever you can spare. Treat all men and women as equals regardless of nationalities, religions or creed.

A simple breakdown of his teaching is:

There is only one God.

We should worship and pray to the one God and no one else.

Work hard and help others.

Be honest

Everyone is equal in the eyes of God, there is no rich, poor, male, female, black nor white. The

Only difference between people is in their actions.

Be kind to all; birds, animals and people.

Fear nothing, pray for the good of all.

Be simple and honest in your daily life.

Before he died, Nanak told his most trusted follower, Lehna, that he must be the next guru. Lehna was given the name Guru Angad.

The Amrit Ceremony The Baisakhi Festival

One of the main Sikh festivals is Baisakhi, which traditionally was the end of the wheat harvest but became extra special because it was chosen by Guru Gobind Singh as the day to start the Khalsa fellowship.

On April 13th in the gurdwara a special ceremony takes place as a reminder of the first Amrit Ceremony. The first Amrit Ceremony took place in India in 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh asked a gathering of Sikhs who was prepared to die for God. At first there was a hesitation then one man stepped forward...he was taken into the tent, Guru Gobind Singh reappeared on his own with blood dripping from his sword. He asked again, and again, again and again. He took the fifth man into the tent and then reappeared with all five men, alive, well and dressed like him. These five men became known as Panj Pyares or Beloved Five. They were initiated into the "Khalsa" or community of Sikhs by receiving amrit...a mixture of sugar and water. Sikh men were then given the added name "Singh" meaning "lion" and ladies received the extra name "Kaur" meaning "princess".

These days on the morning of the ceremony everyone take a bath, wears the five Ks and attends a ceremony of promises when the members of the community renew their promises to God.

The five Sikhs that are performing the ceremony mix the amrit. When the water and sugar has been mixed all of the five Sikhs stir it with a double-edged sword while hymns are being sung and readings are read from the Guru Granth Sahib.

New members who wish to become initiated come before the five Sikhs that are performing the ceremony. Amrit is sprinkled on their eyes and hair, finally they drink the mixture. Everyone recites the Mool Mantra and the new members must then wear the five Ks. Prayers are said, speeches made, reading listened to and finally the whole community will share a meal, the langar, with everyone present Sikh and non-Sikh.

The Five Ks

Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the ten gurus, told all members of the Sikh brotherhood to wear the five Ks as a symbol to all of their faith.

The Kesh

Kesh is hair. Sikhs promise not to cut their hair but let it grow as a symbol of their faith. Because during their lifetimes it will get very long they wear turbans to keep it tidy. They believe that this demonstrates their obedience to God.

The Kanga

The kanga is a small comb used to keep their long hair tidy, but it is more than that, it is a symbol to remind them to keep their lives in order and "comb" away impure thoughts.

The Kara

The Kara is a steel bangle worn on the right arm. It is a closed circle with no beginning and no end...as with God there is no beginning and no end. It is a reminder to behave well, keep faith and restrain from wrongdoing. Wearing it will remind a Sikh of his duties.

The Last two are a reminder that Sikhs are warriors and always fight for righteousness.

The Kaccha

The kwacha is similar to a soldier's under shorts, a loose, white, cotton undergarment symbolising a high moral character and spiritual freedom. Obviously as any family would be sensitive the Sikh family do not really like their undergarments on display to the world. This garment is made in the style of, but not a genuine article. When it was introduced by the Guru it was a knee length garment but recently it is shorter more like western boxer shorts. All baptised Sikhs wear a similar item, they are loose fitting and so cool in a hot climate, and remind Sikhs of their lifelong battle to do right.

The Kirpan

The warrior's sword. These days a very tiny one is worn as a symbol of dignity and self-respect. It demonstrates power and reminds Sikhs that they must fight a spiritual battle, defend the weak and oppressed, and uphold the truth.

Sikh Beliefs

Sikhs believe that there is one God.

They believe that God is all-powerful. The universe exists because God wills it. He made the universe for humans to enjoy.

God is pure being - without qualities.

God is known to the people by the Gurus' teaching - God is self enlightened so he is the enlightener.

Humans need the Gurus to lead the way to truth.

Human beings come into existence because it is God's will.

Birth and rebirth are caused because humans base their lives on desire, the process can be stopped by replacing objects of desire with devotion to God.

Human beings are unique - within them is a divine spark, they have intellect, they have morality - but they still struggle to meet God.

Human beings seek God but often do not find him.

The Gurus are for everybody, they are messengers from God, God's servants and enlighteners.

The Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Granth Sahib is the Sikh's Holy Book. If it is not in use it is wrapped in decorative silks and placed on a platform. During the day the book is opened on cushions (manji). If it is not being read it may be covered with a cloth called a rumalla. Whilst it is being read a fan called a chauri (a sign of authority) may be waved over it.

The book is made up from the sacred writing of six of the gurus. it contains 1,430 pages, 3,384 hymns and is always exactly the same. The language it is written in is Gurmukhi (literally "from the mouth of gurus")...a written form of the Panjabi. It is treated like a live guru; with great respect. Wherever the book is can be considered a meeting place for Sikhs.

The Mool Mantra

The Mool Mantra is the opening of the Guru Granth Sahib. It is a statement of Sikh belief.

IK OKAAR

SAT NAAM

KARTA PURKH

NIRBHAU

NIRVAIR

AKAAL MOORAT

AJOONI SABHANG

GUR PARSAD

There is only one God

Truth is his name

He is the creator

He is without fear

He is without hate

He is timeless and without form

He is beyond death - the enlightened one

He can be known by the guru's grace

Reading the whole of The Guru Granth Sahib is a special part of a ceremony. It takes 48 hours and is done on special occasions such as after giving birth or moving house as well as before festivals. Readers take it in turns to read the text, men and women will take part. The total reading in forty-eight hours is called the Akhand Path. Reading it in a more leisurely fashion over about ten days is called the Sahaj Path. It may be read either at the gurdwara or at home.

Childhood and the Naming Ceremony

Soon after the baby's birth the parents go with the baby to the gurdwara or place of worship to take part in the weekly worship with other Sikhs. Towards the end of the service the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy book) is opened and a random reading read from it. The first letter of that reading will be used as the first letter of the baby's name. The naming ceremony can be performed anywhere in the presence of the Guru Granth Sahib because anywhere that is considered sacred. That is the same with all Sikh ceremonies.

A Sikh child will start to learn the language of the Guru Granth Sahib at about the age of seven. The children are brought up to obey the rules of Sikhism.

Sikh children have the support of extended families all living very closely. The weekend has meetings at the Gurdwara, weddings, birthdays, engagements are family occasions. Unlike many communities, girls are expected to achieve the same as boys. The sexes are equal.

Marriage

Marriage is sacred, a bond between the man and the woman and an equally strong bond between the families. It is normal for Sikhs to have arranged marriages where the parents chose partners for their children based on mutual interests, similarities in life style and culture. Divorce is against the teaching of the guru.

The wedding ceremony is very simple. The Guru Granth Sahib is in front of the couple. The Granthi (the person who looks after the holy book in the Gurdwara) reads special wedding hymns and prayers. The couple walk slowly round the holy book and on the final lap friends and family throw rose petals over the couple.

Similar to the customs in Hinduism the bride wears red as a symbol of health and wealth and after the ceremony sweets called parshad are given out.

Growing old and Death

Older members of the community are treated with great respect. They will very often look after the young whilst their parents are out at work. When a Sikh dies they will be cremated wearing the five Ks. They believe in reincarnation and hope that if they live by the teaching of the Guru to break out of the cycle of birth and death to achieve a union with God.

The Gurdwara

The Gurdwara is a Sikh meeting place. Gurdwara means "the house of the guru", the guru that is there is of course the Guru Granth Sahib. It serves as a place of worship, school, meeting room, communal kitchen and if necessary a place for people to sleep. The kitchen is a place where festival food, donated, prepared and cooked by the Sikh families of the community is shared with any visitors to the gurdwara on that day. This meal is always vegetarian and is called the langar. The gurdwara usually has four doors to show that it is open to all. When people enter they take their shoes off. Everyone who enters covers their head. There are no chairs, everyone sits on the floor. Alcohol and tobacco are not allowed inside. Gifts are often offered. The flag of the Khanda always flies outside. (This is the Sikh symbol) In Britain many gurdwaras hold their services on Sundays so that Sikhs working in the community can still take part in their own celebrations. The gurdwara is kept by the Sikh community. They pay for its upkeep, conduct services and look after it altogether. People working in the gurdwara are doing their SEWA...service to others.

The Guru Granth Sahib is kept there most of the time. It may be taken out for a wedding or naming ceremony. When people enter the gurdwara they usually take their shoes off, wash their hands and then go up to the Guru Granth Sahib and offer their gift. They will then touch the floor with their forehead and sit, men on the right, ladies and children on the left. They greet each other with "Sat Sri Akal" which means "Truth is eternal". The Golden Temple of Amritsar is the most famous Sikh temple. It is a place of pilgrimage. The focal point of a gurdwara is the canopy over the platform on which the Guru Granth Sahib is placed. In front of that are gifts of food for the langar and a box for offerings of money. Beyond that are mats where the community will sit facing the Guru Granth Sahib.

The Punjab

The Punjab (Panjab or Panj) is an area of Northern India where the Sikh religion was founded. Five rivers run down from the Himalayas into the Indus valley, Punj means five, ab means water. When India split into sections in 1947 part of the Punjab became a part of Pakistan and part of India. It is a fertile area because of the quantity of water flowing through it. The main industry of the area is farming. Historically the area was Hindu but Muslims invaded trying to spread their religion. From the battle between the two main religions the new religion: Sikhism, was founded. The next battles were with the British who eventually took over and ruled India for a long while. Many Sikhs became members of the British army and spent time in England. After the partition of their homeland many returned to England to live.

Sikh Symbols

The special Sikh sign is made up of several images:

The Khanda, which is a double-edged sword. This represents the belief in one God.

The Chakkar, like the Kara it is a circle representing God without beginning or end and reminding Sikhs to remain within the rule of God.

Two crossed kirpans representing spiritual authority and political power.

This symbol reminds Sikhs that there is only one true God. It says "IK OANKAR", "God is One Being"

Sikh Words

Rumalla	A cloth to cover the holy book when it is not being read
Chauri	A fan to wave above the holy book
Manji	Cushions on which the holy book rests
Gurdwara	Place of worship
Granth	Collection
Guru	Spiritual leader
Gurbani	Hymns
Kirtan	Hymn music
Sewa	Service to others
Panjab	Area of Northern India where Sikhism began
Punjabi	The language of the Panjab area
Ragi	Musicians who play the kirtan
Nishan Sahib	The Sikh Flag
Langar	Free kitchen...the communal meal shared by all.
Baisaki	Spring Festival celebrating the formation of the Khalsa
Sikh	Disciple or follower
Gurpurb	Celebration for the main events in the lives of the ten Gurus.
Amritsar	Important Sikh city where the Golden Temple is
Khalsa	The Sikh fellowship

Sikh Links

Here are a few useful links for the Sikh religion that are suitable for children.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/religion/sikhism/> The BBC website on Sikhism for schools
[12 Sikh stories for kids](#)

<http://www.canteach.ca/elementary/sikhism4.html>

<http://www.sikhs.org/topics.htm>

<http://www.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/Homework/religion/calendar.htm#may>

The above web site has lots of information on other religions & festivals.



Merry Christmas & Happy 2010
to all
Cardiff Play Forum Members

Thanks to you all for your continued support.



December 2009

Please send any articles to:
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www.re-create.co.uk
(Click on Cardiff Play Forum on
Left-hand side)

The Cardiff Play Forum was set up to help & support play workers in Cardiff. So if you work or live in Cardiff & are involved in Play in any way, this network is for you.

If you have any questions or problems, or there are any workshops or training you would like to attend, please get in touch or come to the next meeting.

If you would like to advertise events, training, jobs or write an article please send any information to be published in the next newsletter, or to be sent out via Cardiff Play Forum Email.

Deadline for Articles: Friday 22nd January 2010

The next meeting & workshop of Cardiff Play Forum will be:

A Bug Hunting workshop

On: Wednesday 3rd February 2010

At: 12.00pm

At: Hailey Park, Llandaff North, Cardiff.

Meeting point Radyr Road car park at 12.00pm. (Please be on time, as Gareth is giving up his time to facilitate this workshop) I will have my mobile on me if you need to contact me, mobile number above.

Explore the woodland and grassland in search of creepy crawlies. All bug hunting equipment will be provided.

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Please book this workshop if you wish to come by contacting Tanya on above details.