

In the above quote the word 'Kuthha' has been qualified with the adjective 'Abhakhya Kaa'. This means that 'Kuthha' refers to simple meat of the killed animal, while the 'Abhakhya Kaa' qualifies the meat to be Halal. Almost all the renowned translators of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, for example, Bhai Sahib Vir Singh, Professor Sahib Singh and S. Manmohan Singh have interpreted this couplet in this way.

It is thus clear that the word 'Kuthha' means simply meat of the killed animal and does not go into the detail of how the animal is killed.

One hymn in the Guru Granth Sahib which takes a neutral view on meat eating

The only hymn in the whole of Sri Guru Granth Sahib that is specifically cited by meat eaters in support of eating meat is the hymn of Guru Nanak in the Vaar of Raag Malhar beginning with the couplet:

"Only the fool quarrels over the question of eating or not eating of the meat. He does not have the True Wisdom. Without True Wisdom or Meditation, he harps on which is flesh and which is not flesh and which food is sinful and which is not" (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, pp.1289-1290).

The Guru is addressing a Vaishnav Pandit who believes that he can achieve nirvana only by avoiding meat as food and not trying to obtain the true wisdom through meditation. He has stressed that only avoiding meat will not lead one to the achievement of Spiritual Bliss.

Conclusion

The word 'Kuthha' used in the Sikh Code of Conduct does not refer to Halal or sacrificial meat at all, but refers to meat and allied products as a whole. It means simply to slay or cut the animal irrelevant of the method of slaugh-

ter. The use of the word in the same sense at a number of places in Gurbani brings out this point beyond any shadow of a doubt.

Accordingly, eating flesh in general (and not only Halal) is totally prohibited for the Sikhs and is one of the four noble blessings enunciated in the Sikh Code of Conduct.

Halal vs Jhatka Meat



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Introduction

The controversy in the Sikh community (Khalsa) over being a vegetarian or non-vegetarian has arisen due to the difference in the interpretation of the word 'Kuthha' which some Sikhs understand to mean halal meat as opposed to meat in general.

What is Halal meat?

Halal meat is meat obtained by the Muslim method of slaying an animal. This method of slaughtering animals consists of a swift, deep incision with a sharp knife on the neck, cutting the jugular vein and carotid arteries of both sides but leaving the spinal cord intact, while reciting religious formulae. Muslims claim that this is the most humane method of animal slaughter.

What is Jhatka meat?

The Jhatka method of slaying an animal has been described as killing an animal with one stroke of a weapon without exciting fear glands which secrete poisons into its bloodstream and without causing harmful psychic waves to emanate from the animal's mind. The words Sat Siri Akal are also recited at this time.

Halal meat as a taboo

Some Sikhs who choose to eat meat argue that one of the cardinal sins is to eat Halal meat as opposed to eat meat in general. The primary reason for this is that Halal meat is considered a cruel way to kill an animal due to the length of time it takes for the animal to die.

Sikhs generally hold the view that the Halal method of slaughter is indeed cruel. Other groups such as the 'The Farm Animal Welfare Council' (FAWC), which advises the UK government on how to avoid cruelty to livestock,

hold the same view and say that the way Kosher and Halal meat is produced, causes severe suffering to animals. In addition, the Humanists movement, which has previously called for the abolition of ritual slaughter, says ethical values should be put above religious ones.

Sikhs do believe it is good practice for society to move away from this type of ritual slaughter of an animal. But below is presented evidence from Sikh scriptures and edicts from the Gurus which encourage and promote a lacto vegetarian diet as the best for a human being.

The 6th and 10th Gurus commandments

In two Hukamnamas (orders) of Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji, there are clear cut instructions prohibiting the eating of meat and fish. It says, *"Do not go near meat or fish"*.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji's request to Bhai Daya Singh Ji which is mentioned in 'Sudharam Marag Granth', and also found written in some old handwritten volumes of Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji are:

"One who does not: (a) Steal, (b) Commit adultery, (c) Slander anyone, (d) Gamble, (e) Eat meat or drink wine, will be liberated in this very life (Jeewan Mukh)".

Quotes from Guru Granth Sahib which promote vegetarianism

"They (the truest of the true) burn away the bonds of the world and eat a simple diet of grain and water" (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.467).

"Do not say that the Vedas are false, false are those who do not reflect. If in all is one god, then why does one kill the hen?" (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.1350).

"You kill living beings and worship lifeless things, at your very last moment, You will suffer terrible pain" (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.332).

"Sayeth Kabir, that the best food is eating kichree (daal/lentils) where nectar sweet is the salt. You eat hunted meat, but which animal is willing to have their head cut?" (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.1378).

Interpretation of the word 'kuthha'

Etymologically, the word 'Kuthha' (killed) is a past participle which has been derived from the root 'Kohna' which means to slay or kill. This word does not mean to slay slowly or according to the Muslim method. In fact, this word has never been used in the Muslim literature or in their general language to refer to 'Halal' meat. The word 'Kuthha' literally means meat obtained by killing animals with any sharp weapon irrespective of whether any holy hymns are read at that time or not. In Gurbani the word 'Kuthha' as well as 'Kohna' have been used at a number of places in this sense: *"The sinner will certainly be ruined or destroyed. The angel of death will seize and kill them."* (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.109)

"He (Pandit) recites the Vedas very sweetly, but he does not hesitate to kill life." (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.201)

In the above two quotes the word 'Kuhat' and 'Kuthhey' simply means to kill and does not refer to killing via the Halal way.

A specific reference to Halal meat in the Guru Granth Sahib

"They eat the meat obtained while uttering the unspeakable word (referring to Qalima of the Muslims which the Hindus considered as unspeakable) and allow none to enter their kitchen square" (Guru Granth Sahib Ji, p.472).