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FOOD

There are no special taboos about our food and drink in Sikhism. The first Satguru says in *Var Asa* :

All foods and drinks are pure, that God has bestowed for sustenance.

ਖਾਣਾ ਪੀਣਾ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰ ਹੈ ਦਿਤੋਨੁ ਰਿਜਕੁ ਸੰਬਾਹਿ ॥

The only condition is, as stated in *Sri Rag* by Guru Nanak Dev :

O friend, that food and pleasure are vain,

ਬਾਬਾ ਹੋਰੁ ਖਾਣਾ ਖੁਸੀ ਖੁਆਰੁ ॥

which corrupt the mind and pain the body.

ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਧੈ ਤਨੁ ਪੀੜੀਐ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਚਲਹਿ ਵਿਕਾਰ ॥

Sikh history tells us that Guru Nanak cooked venison at Kurukshetra. When Pandit Nanu created a row about it, the Satguru explained to him the reality and the hollowness of his false beliefs. This is given elaborately in two *shloks* of *Var Rag Malhar*. A few excerpts from these *shloks* are given below :

Simpletons who do not understand reality, quarrel over the question of flesh, meat;

ਮਾਸੁ ਮਾਸੁ ਕਰਿ ਮੁਰਖੁ ਝਗੜੇ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਣੈ ॥

Knowing not what is meat and what is vegetable and wherein lie sins.

ਕਉਣੁ ਮਾਸੁ ਕਉਣੁ ਸਾਗੁ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਕਿਸੁ ਮਹਿ ਪਾਪ ਸਮਾਣੈ ॥

They offer meat of rhinoceros which is cherished by the Gods at their *Yag* ceremonies.

ਗੈਂਡਾ ਮਾਰਿ ਹੋਮ ਜਗ ਕੀਏ ਦੇਵਤਿਆ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੇ ॥

Those who discard meat and sniff at its smell, swallow

men in the darkness of the night.

ਮਾਸੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਬੈਸਿ ਨਕੁ ਪਕੜਹਿ ਰਾਤੀ ਮਾਣਸ ਖਾਣੇ ॥

According to the *Puranas* and the *Semitic* texts throughout the four ages flesh has been used.

ਮਾਸੁ ਪੁਰਾਣੀ ਮਾਸੁ ਕਤੇਬੀ ਚਹੁ ਜੁਗਿ ਮਾਸੁ ਕਮਾਣਾ ॥

In *Yag* ceremonies, and wedding festivals, meat has been the cherished dish.

ਜਜਿ ਕਾਜਿ ਵੀਆਹਿ ਸੁਹਾਵੈ ਓਥੈ ਮਾਸੁ ਸਮਾਣਾ ॥

Sikh History tells that from the time of the second Nanak, Guru Angad, meat was served in *langar*. Principal Teja Singh and Dr Ganda Singh in their *History of the Sikhs* have even stated that Sikhs are essentially non-vegetarians. This can be very well-justified because the Sikhs are a militant people. Wielding arms and hunting, as the sixth and the tenth Gurus used to do, cannot fit in with vegetarianism and revulsion from meat. The first shock that the tenth Satguru gave to Madho Das at Nanded who later became Gurbakhsh Singh, became renowned as Banda Singh Bahadur, was to get his goats slaughtered for the consumption of his Sikh forces who were feeling hungry after a long march. Still, in Sikhism, no spiritual value is attached either to eating meat or to give it up. By discarding meat no one can get a visa to heaven, nor will those who eat flesh be doomed.