

“Solar power is the last energy resource that isn't owned yet — nobody taxes the sun yet”  
— Bonnie Raitt

# THE SPEAKING TREE

A TIMES OF INDIA PUBLICATION <http://www.speakingtree.in>

SPIRITUAL PROMOTIONAL FEATURE | NEW DELHI, SUNDAY, APRIL 9, 2017, PAGES: 8 PRICE: ₹3.00



## BRIEFLY Smart Apes

Apes are on a par with human infants in being able to tell when people have an accurate belief about a situation or are actually mistaken, researchers say. While previous work has shown that great apes understand the goals, desires and perceptions of others, scientists say the latest finding reveals an important cognitive ability. “For the last 30 or more years people thought that belief understanding is the key marker of humans and really differentiates us from other species — and this does not seem to be the case,” said David Buttelmann, co-



author of the research from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology in Germany. The results follow on the heels of a study published last year which also suggests that apes understand the concept of false beliefs — after research that used eye-tracking technology to monitor the gaze of apes exposed to various pranks carried out by an actor dressed in a King Kong suit. But the new study, says Buttelmann, is an important step forward, showing that apes not only understand false beliefs in others, but apply that understanding to their own actions.  
— [theguardian.com](http://theguardian.com)

## Here Comes THE SUN

At Abu Road to celebrate 80 years of the founding of the BRAHMA KUMARIS spiritual movement, REENA SINGH visits their spanking new solar thermal plant, a pioneering, revolutionary technology on renewable energy, the first in India

**B**K Golo Pilz, a regular at international climate change conferences, often made spirited presentations on the India One Solar Thermal Power Project that had been underway at Abu Road in Rajasthan since many years. And now, finally, the solar plant commissioned in March 2017, marks the beginning of a new thrust in India's quest for renewable sources of energy. Golo Pilz, the plant's project head first explains the workings of the solar thermal plant, and then devotes an equal amount of time in convincing his audience that “we are all part of one world” and that the responsibility of making it a “better place” lies with us.

The renewable energy showcase project is researched and designed by the World Renewal Spiritual Trust, a sister organisation of the Brahma Kumaris. With “Om Shanti” as motto, all team members from across the world and India, working on the project, are offered meditation classes as a matter of course.

It was there just two weeks after the 1 MW project's commissioning, to participate in the Brahma Kumaris' 80-year celebrations. Students, professors and experts from the government were also hard at work at a three-day workshop at that time. “The plant is an engineering marvel,” is how IIT Bombay professor Shireesh B Kedare, who was there to attend the workshop, described the project.

### Save The Earth

The decade-long research and development done by a green team of dedicated BK brothers and sisters, most of them hardcore engineers, has paid off. They are proving to the world that if India can take to solar thermal plants, it can take the lead in preventing global warming, save precious fossil fuels, and help prevent unnatural climate change.

The Brahma Kumaris, better known for their deep, intense Raja Yoga meditation, have been working for several years in the field of renewable energy. Back in 1996, they set up small, parabolic mirror Scheffler dishes, focusing their heat into heavy cast iron blocks that had metal coils filled with water passing over it. The steam so produced was harnessed to generate power to cook food. By 1999, they had set up a much larger system at their Shivan complex in Abu Road and were cooking up to 35,000 meals daily with this revolutionary Ger-



man technology that had been adapted to suit Indian conditions.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who inaugurated the 80th anniversary celebrations of the BKs — appropriately titled, “God's Wisdom for World Transformation” — through video conferencing, spoke of harnessing solar energy in the country and urged the Brahma Kumaris to lead the initiative.

The PM said, “Under the leadership of the Brahma Kumaris, we can bring about an energy revolution and



a revolution in human lives.” He was acknowledging the new solar thermal plant and the solar cooking applications being used there since 1997. “India has set the target of producing 175 gigawatts of energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030,” PM Modi added.

How does the team combine a spiritual lifestyle with an advanced scientific project? Says BK Jayasimha, CEO, India One Solar Thermal Power Plant, “We have been working with solar energy since the last 22 years. As a spiritual organisation, our objective is to always develop something that is indigenous. Our aim was to develop something connected to the people here and to involve them.” The plant was built by the local people. “Make the project a part of their own story, their own project and let the local community identify itself with clean technology, then it gets accepted,” is how the BKs see it.

Adds Jayasimha, “We have trained many people including engineers, free of cost, since the last 20 years. We developed our first solar cooker in 1997 at Gyan Sarovar, Mt Abu, and in 1999, the biggest solar cooker was put up at our Abu Road headquarters in Rajasthan. Then, we helped set up at least

500 solar cookers all over India in large organisations. We supported them technically. The unique thing about this plant is that because we use steam, we are able to store energy for the night.” Conventional solar plants still use coal, and batteries for storage for power requirements at night.

Vinayak Bhai, another “surrendered” BK — the word they use to describe the almost 10,000 brothers and sisters who are re-nunciate and have given up family life and material pleasures to serve the community — gives us some technical specifications of the project: “The plant has 765 parabolic reflectors called Scheffler dishes, each with a mirror surface area of 60 sq mt and is built on 55 acres of land.”

### Reuse Is The Key

The term ‘reuse’, synonymously with such projects is, naturally a keyword here. Vinayak Bhai tells us that the area between the reflectors too will be used to grow vegetables. Moreover, the plant is completely pollution-free and truly harnesses nature's power. “Even the packing pine wood of the mirrors that came from Germany has been used to make furniture and other structures,” he points out. The project cost was

around Rs 80 crore — with contributions from the German and Indian governments and from the BKs.

Projects like these give hope that India, with its abundance of sunshine, can easily lead from the front, supplying clean energy for all of the country's needs. The goals of the BKs are in synergy with the government's goal of energy generation from alternative sources. BK Aneta Loj, from Poland, is their manager, research and development at the solar plant. She said, “PM Modi mentioned so much about solar energy and said that we must do more and that we must support the government's initiatives.”

It isn't always that a spiritual organisation leads in a cutting-edge field such as solar power generation. The BKs are also the largest institutional user of solar energy in the country. They realise that the world is in trouble, with the population of planet earth using up the resources of not one, but 1.6 earths. The BKs warn that trends towards materialism and overconsumption, will lead to a crisis, reminding us of M K Gandhi's words, spoken 80 years ago: “Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's needs, but not every man's greed.”

Follow the Brahma Kumaris at [speakingtree.in](http://speakingtree.in)

## ‘Celebration of freedom from bondage’

RABBI EZEKIEL ISAAC MALEKAR traces the importance of the Jewish Passover ceremony



**T**he name Pesach means, ‘Passover’ and refers to the account in Exodus Chapter 12, that when the Angel of Death killed the firstborn of the Egyptians, he ‘passed over’ the houses of the Israelites, which had all been carefully marked with a sprinkling of lamb blood. Another name of the festival, Chag Hammatzoth — the feast of the Unleavened Bread — grows out of the Biblical narrative of the manner in which the Jews were driven in haste out of Egypt and carried with them dough that was still unleavened. As a yearly remembrance of this emergency, the Jews were commanded to eat only unleavened bread for a period of eight days. The Passover is also known as Hag-Ha-Avin, the Festival of Spring.

The Passover is the first of the three main festivals of the Jewish Year. It commemorates the Exodus from Egypt and will be observed for eight days from Monday, April 10. The first and last two days are sanctified days and the intervening four days, are semi-holy. The Passover Festival commemorates the deliverance of Jews from Egyptian bondage and becoming a free people awakened to the determination to serve none but the One God.

The historic events and ancient rituals are recounted during the Passover dinner called Passover Seder. After prayers, Jews remember that in every generation, it is one's duty to remember that he had personally come out of Egypt.

The most ancient portions of the text are at least 2,500 years old. It is the eternal mes-

### JEWISH PASSOVER



KIDDUSH CUP, SEDER PLATE AND MATZO FOR PASSOVER

sage of hope that saves the Jews from despair even in the darkest hours. It again resolves itself to the impressive statement: “Thou art the man, and upon thee, everything depends. Thou can create the world and thou can destroy it.”

Pesach is initiated by a service in the synagogue, followed by the home Seder that literally means Order, a special meal with a com-

memoration of the Exodus. During the Seder, the tale of Passover is read. The ceremonial meal begins with the chanting of the sanctification prayer. After washing their hands, participants take the leaf of parsley or watercress symbolising growth and dip it into salt water, recites prayers and eat it. The salt water is a reminder of tears shed by enslaved Jews. On the Seder plate, are symbols of sacrifice reminding one of the bitterness of slavery.

Then, the first cup of kosher wine is drunk. The head of the house breaks the middle of the three Matzoth, part of which is called Aphikomen. As he lifts the Matzah, he recites, “This is the bread of affliction. The youngest person present asks questions on the significance of eating the unleavened bread and bitter herbs and about the Seder?”

The leader answers the questions by relating the story of Israel in Egypt and of the Exodus. The bitter herbs help participants recall that the Egyptians embittered the lives of our forefathers in Egypt. And with this, the Hallel (Psalms 113-114) is sung and the fourth cup of wine taken. During the Seder, the spiritual presence of Prophet Elijah Hanani, the forerunner of the Messiah, is felt in the house.

The Seder has survived in Jewish homes over centuries, and remains an emblem and promise of freedom. ■

## Baisakhi Is Here!

SATISH K KAPOOR

**F**or the Sikhs, Baisakhi has a special, sacred significance. Guru Amar Das, third Sikh Guru, chose this day for his disciples to come together at his place every year to promote understanding and goodwill. Guru Arjan Dev, fifth Sikh Guru, instituted the celebration of Baisakhi at the Golden Temple, Amritsar, insisting that the spiritual aspect of the festival must always be kept in mind.

However, it was Guru Gobind Singh, tenth and last of the Sikh Gurus, who gave Baisakhi extraordinary religious importance by creating the Khalsa brotherhood at Anandpur Sahib in 1699. He commanded the gathering to always wear the five K's — kesha, long hair; kanga, comb; kada, steel bracelet; kacha, shorts; and kirpan, sword. He introduced the greeting: *Wahe guru ji ka khalsa, wahe guru ji ki fateh* (“The pure belong to god; victory is forever to god”).

He also introduced a new system of initiation with *amrita* or pure water stirred with a double-edged sword, of which five palmful had to be sipped by the one getting initiated. *Panj Pan* or the Five Beloved Ones were chosen, and the Guru himself received baptism at

their hands, as did the congregation. The guru merged in the Khalsa and the Khalsa merged in the Guru.

Whenever the Sikhs underwent persecution at the hands of the Mughals, Baisakhi became an opportunity for them to reunite and strengthen themselves. When Ahmad Shah Abdali destroyed the Golden Temple with gun powder, the plan to rebuild it and to clean *Amrit Sarovar* or sacred pond, polluted by enemies was made on Baisakhi day. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Punjab's ruler, chose to be coronated on Baisakhi.

Baisakhi *melas* and fairs, held in Punjab are marked in particular by the vigorous *bhanga* by men and *gid-dha* by women. The most spectacular Baisakhi gatherings are held at Pandori Mahant in Talpur in Gurdaspur district and at Damdama Sahib near Bathinda, where the personal belongings of Guru Gobind Singh and his family are exhibited.

Guru Arjan Dev summed up the spiritual significance of Baisakhi, “*Hinhalaha* is joyful and fragrant only if we have the touch of the Eternal Lord. (Guru Granth Sahib, *Bani Maha, Mugh Mahala 5*)” ■



### FESTIVE SPIRIT

