

# NISHAAN

11/2004

NAGAARA

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Guru Angad Dev & Khadoor Sahib  
1984 Revisited





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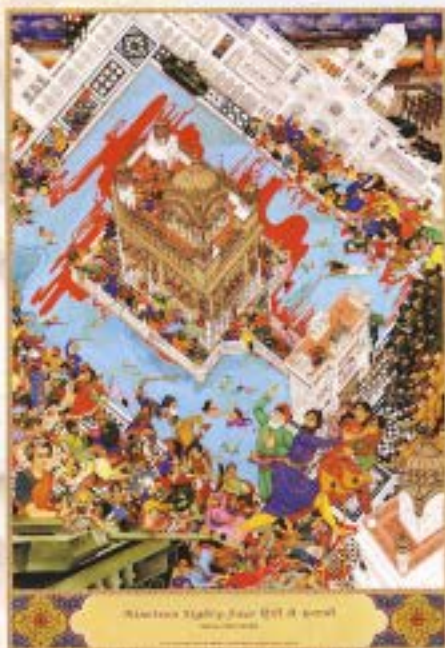
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The Mool Mantar  
Tempera on silk by Siddarth.

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**Published by**  
**The Nagaara Trust**  
16-A Palam Marg  
Vasant Vihar  
New Delhi 110 057, India

**Designed by**  
Kraftwerk  
kwerk@mantraonline.com

**Printed by**  
Aegean Offset  
F-17, Mayapuri Phase II  
New Delhi 110 064

The opinions expressed in the articles published in the Nishaan Nagaara do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of The Nagaara Trust.



# Guru Angad Dev

## as Guru Nanak's Successor

ਬਾਪਿਆ ਲਹਿਣੀ ਜੀਵਦੇ ਗੁਰਿਆਈ ਸਿਰਿ ਛਡੂ ਫਿਰਾਇਆ  
ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤੀ ਮਿਲਾਇ ਕੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕਿ ਰੂਪੁ ਵਟਾਇਆ ।  
ਸੋ ਟਿਕਾ ਸੋ ਛਡੂ ਸਿਰਿ ਸੋਈ ਸਚਾ ਤਖਤੁ ਟਿਕਾਈ  
ਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਮੁਹਰਿ ਹਬ ਗੁਰ ਅੰਗਦ ਦੀ ਦੋਹੀ ਫਿਰਾਈ ।

ਵਾਰ ੧, ਪ: ੪੫, ੪੬

Angad had the sacred mark on his forehead  
And hallowed umbrella over his head.  
He ascended the throne of Guru Nanak,  
The Guru's spirit had entered the disciple.

Bhai Gurdas

One of the most significant, *sui generis* Sikh phenomena in the history of world religions is the manner in which the Founder of the Faith, Guru Nanak Dev, envisaged a creation of the *gur-gaddi*, and initiated the concept of successive *gurus*, each a Nanak recreated (*Jyoti* to *Jyot* or from light to light), each a spiritual image or being of the First Pontiff. It's a sort of divine relay-race in which the holder of the *gur-gaddi* or pontificate hands over charge to the next till the divine order comes full circle with Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth and Final Master. Having seen the dangers of *gur-gaddi* falling into the hands of undeserving and evil hands, he passed on the *gurudom* to the *Adi Granth*, thus terminating the institution of human *gurus*. The written scripture carrying the hymns and couplets of the successive *Gurus* was, then, given a finality, leaving no scope for further additions, alterations or interpolations. The Word (*Shabad*) had become the Sikh's *Guru*, complete, inviolate.

This preamble was, I think, needed to point out the genesis and spirit of the succession issue. And that's where begins the story of Guru Angad Dev whose Quincentenary is being celebrated this year by the Sikh community in India and abroad with great *eclat* and enthusiasm. Lectures, conferences, seminars, *kirtan* darbars are already afoot to commemorate the advent of the Founder's successor. Born in an orthodox Hindu family and named Lehna by his father Pheru Mal, a devout *bhakta* of the Hindu goddess Chandi, he imbibed the lore of Hindu classics and in due course, emerged as a great scholar and visionary thinker. His meeting with

Guru Nanak, when seen in retrospect, underscores the providential nature of this fateful encounter with the Master. According to one prevalent story, one morning he heard some hymns in Punjabi being sung by one of his neighbours, Bhai Jodhan and deeply moved by those divine verses, he came to know that the author, Nanak Dev, a prophetic and prolific poet, lived at Kartarpur after he had completed his four missionary travels all across India, Tibet, Iraq and Arabia. Such was the compelling nature of the hymns that in that very hour, Lehna hastened to see the *Guru*, and then remained there in attendance all his life.

The first meeting between the *Guru* and *Chela* has its own moral beauty. Lehna while riding on a horse accosted an old man on his way to Baba Nanak's house, and asked him for the directions to the blessed place. The old man held the reins of the horse, and walking alongside the rider stopped near a tree, and asked Lehna to follow him as he too was going to the same place. As Lehna stopped outside to tie the reins of the horse to a nearby tree, the old man proceeded towards the place. And when Lehna entered the room where the *Baba* was supposed to be in meditation, to his utter surprise – and joy, he found that his co-traveller had been no other than the *Guru* himself. This very act of utter humility on the part of the Master was enough to make Lehna the *Guru's* devotee for ever and ever. This was a decision so profound in its meaning and impact that from that day onwards, Lehna became the *Guru's* scribe, preacher and missionary, and such an act of selfless service and devotion brought him close to the Master.



This turning point in Lehna's life came in 1532, and six years later, Guru Nanak Dev passed on the *gur-gaddi* to him after he had put Lehna, his two sons, Baba Sri Chand and Baba Laxmi Das as well as some other claimants to a few rigorous, awe-inspiring tests. For the Guru knew that the *gur-gaddi* could never become, *ipso facto*, a hereditary institution. The successor had to prove his mettle in letter and spirit. In underserving hands, such institutions soon become weak and degenerate, losing their primal impulse and energies.

According to recorded stories, Guru Nanak devised several tests including the cleansing of sewers and latrines, picking up of dead rats for disposal etc. In all such tests, except for Lehna, no one could stand the ordeal, and still remain calm, committed and focussed in *sewa*. But the test that finally decided the issue had a very frightening aspect. Guru Nanak, seeing a dead body in a coffin at some distance, asked his sons, Lehna, and other aspirants to lift the white sheet and start eating the dead body. It was a moment which could have revolted any person, for cannibalism has always been considered a most heinous crime in almost all societies and cultures. No wonder, then, all the claimants turned their faces away from the coffin, and only Lehna, without any sign of faltering or hesitation, quietly obeyed the Master's orders.

And to his utter joy, he found a dish of *karah prashad* instead of a carcass in the coffin. This episode was enough to convince Guru Nanak that in Lehna he had found the mark of a divine person. The Guru, of course, knew the outcome, and he was prescient enough to see that Lehna along would prove true and faithful. His visionary eye needed no proof as such, but the clamouring claimants had to be silenced in some such dramatic manner. Guru Nanak himself did not believe in miracles, but symbolic acts of this kind were needed to convince the common Sikhs.

(In any case these are *Sakhis* only).

The test thus carried out had already made Lehna a deserving candidate for the *gur-gaddi*, but Guru Nanak had yet another, more strenuous test in view to put the seal on the question of succession. He asked Lehna some days later to meet him at a certain spot, and then the Master told his chosen devotee to wait there for his return. Guru Nanak then walked away and disappeared.

Lehna stood rooted on the spot, and for several days remained standing in that aspect, his eyes revivited on the retreating back of the Master, as it were. Dust settled on his face and head, and tears of joy in that trance kept flowing from his eyes. It was in this state of ecstasy and worship that Guru Nanak found Lehna when he finally decided to clinch the issue. And it was soon after that Lehna was renamed *Angad* or a limb of the Guru's body, his spiritual son and heir. This event took place before Guru Nanak passed away in 1539. It is reported that as soon as Bhai Lehna, now Guru Angad Dev, assumed his divine office, his face began to radiate the same kind of light the *Sangat* had always seen in the face of Guru Nanak.

And now to some of his pioneering achievements. He started the institution of *langar* where all would sit in a row and partake cooked food together irrespective of caste, creed or race. This egalitarian institution as we know, has now come to stay, and in the intervening centuries has acquired an enviable reputation. Another big achievement was the finalisation of the Gurmukhi script, the language in which the *Guru Granth* eventually came to be compiled and written during the apostolate of Guru Arjan Dev. Over 60 hymns and slokas of the Guru, included in the holy scripture, showed his adoration and love for Guru Nanak to whose person he was bonded as an act of will and providence. I quote a couple of lines translated by the eminent Sikh scholar, Kartar Singh Duggal, to illustrate the point:

ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਨਾ ਬਸੰਤੁ ਹੈ ਜਿਨ ਘਰ ਵਸਿਆ ਕੰਤੁ  
ਜਿਨ ਕੇ ਕੰਤ ਦਿਸਾਪੁਰੀ ਸੇ ਅਹਿਨਿਸਿ ਫਿਰਹਿ ਜਲੰਤੁ  
ਸੁਹੀ ਵਾਰ ਮ:੨, ਸਲੋਕ ਮ:੨

*Nanak, spring is for her  
Who has her spouse at home,  
She whose master is away  
Suffers day and night.*

SGGS p.791

ਨਕਿ ਨਥ ਖਸਮ ਹਥ ਕਿਰਤੁ ਧਕੇ ਦੇ।

ਸੋਰਠ ਵਾਰ ਮ:੪, ਸਲੋਕ ਮ:੨

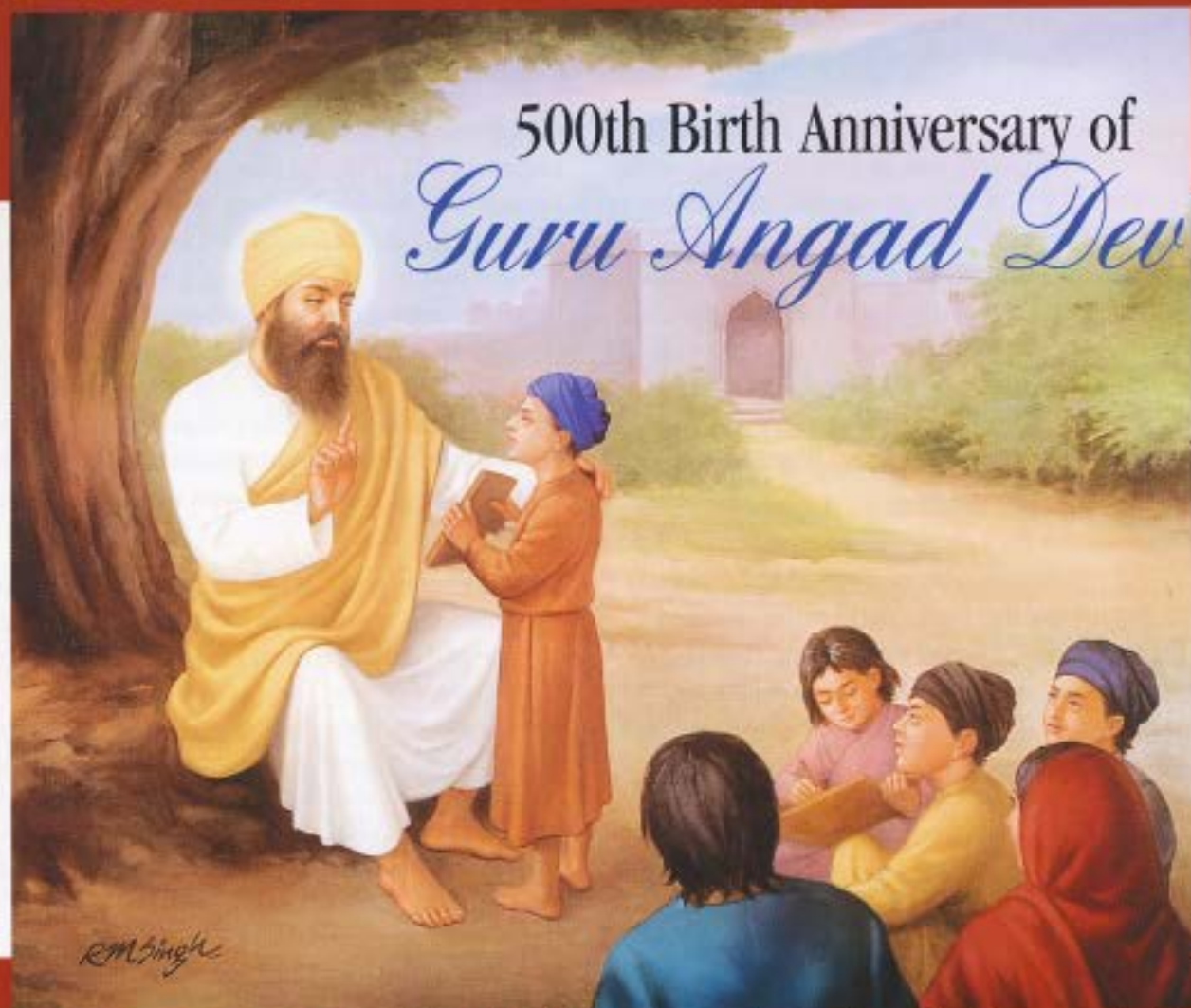
*I have a nose-string,  
It's in the hands of the Master  
He drives me where his likes  
Verily, O Nanak : what God gives man ears!*

SGGS p.653

Darshan Singh Maini



## 500th Birth Anniversary of *Guru Angad Dev*



*Guru Angad Dev propagated the Gurmukhi script, took further the concept of sangat, pangat and langar and devoted himself to teaching children how to read and write. Guru Nanak handpicked him to be his successor, over the claims of his sons, knowing that he alone would be the right person to lead the new faith.*

The man who became Guru Angad Dev was born in Matte de Sarai village, which is now called Sarai Naga in Muktsar district. He was born on Vaisakh Vadi 1st, Samvat 1561, which corresponds to March 31, 1504 AD. His name was Lehna and his father, Pheru Mal was an official of the Nazim of Ferozepore. He became a trader after the family shifted to Khadoor. Lehna's mother, Sabhrai, was a devotee of Goddess Durga. She is referred to as Mata Daya Kaur also. Lehna was very pious, and he used to lead a group from his village to various places of pilgrimage every year, particularly to Jawalamukhi.

Once he heard Bhai Jodha, a devout follower of Guru Nanak, reciting hymns or bani composed by Guru Nanak. Enchanted and intrigued, he decided to try to meet the Guru who had composed the bani.

Kartarpur, a town founded by Guru Nanak, where the founder of Sikhism spent the later years of his life, had by

now become a centre of attraction for seekers of spirituality and people from all over came to meet the Guru.

Lehna too, came to Kartarpur in 1532 AD. He had travelled from Khadoor, a village that was 60 miles from Kartarpur. Lehna then was 28. Here he partook of langar and listened to kirtan, the recitation of holy hymns. He travelled no further.

Lehna devoted himself to the service of Guru Nanak

Born on 5 Vaisakh (31 March 1504) at Sarai Naga (Matte Di Sarai) District Muktsar, Punjab, Guruji's father was Baba Pheru Mal and mother Mata Daya Kaur, Mata Khiwi was his mahal (wife), Baba Dattu, Baba Dassu, Bibi Amro and Anokhi were his children. The date of initiation to Guruship was in the year 1539 at Kartarpur and Guru ji composed 63 *Salokas* (Holy hymns) which are part of the Guru Granth Sahib.



and soon became a true and dedicated follower. He would be seen cleaning the utensils after langar, a service that has been considered among the highest that a Sikh can do.

The seeker had found what he wanted all this while, and in Guru Nanak's presence, he felt tranquil. What was for many others work, became for him the labour of love.

There is an interesting anecdote about Bhai Lehna. Wearing fine clothes which had been sent by his in-laws, Lehna met Guru Nanak in the fields on the outskirts of Kartarpur. The Guru was cutting grass, which had to be carried back to the village to be used as fodder. Lehna took the bundle of grass from Guru Nanak and placed it upon his head, the usual manner of carrying such weight in rural areas.

Since the grass had come from a rice field, it was both wet and muddy. As Bhai Lehna carried the bundle, water and mud streaked on to his clothes. When he went to drop the bundle of grass at the Guru's house, Mata Sulakhni, Guru Nanak's wife, saw his condition and admonished the Guru for making Bhai Lehna carry such a bundle as he was dressed in fine clothes.

To this the Guru said that Bhai Lehna was not carrying a load of grass, but a wreath of sovereignty! The mud on his garments was as expensive and rare as kesar. Sikh lore is replete with anecdotes about the humility and piousness of Bhai Lehna.

Guru Nanak had made up his mind that his sons were not the ones to succeed him. Srichand was a person of great learning, but he had turned towards the path of renunciation and was becoming an ascetic, an Udasi. Lakhmidas was interested far too much in worldly affairs and kept himself occupied in material pursuits. Both were dutiful sons and good human beings, but the Guru perhaps felt that they did not have that extraordinariness that was necessary in his



#### **Pakistani Sikhs at Khadoor Sahib**

*A jatha of 500 Pakistani Sikhs, mostly from Sindh and Peshawar travelled to India to participate in the 500th birth anniversary of second Sikh Guru Angad Dev on the eve of Baisakhi. The auspicious occasion also helped re-union of families separated during the partition of the country.*

*The jatha of 534 Sikh devotees, including women and children, reached Khadoor Sahib from Pakistan, led by S. Mahesh Singh Khalsa, Chairman of Gurdwara Guru Nanak Singh Sabha, Kashmir, District Jacobabad in Sind and a Member of the National Assembly (MNA) of Pakistan.*

*Members and senior functionaries of the SGPC showered rose petals when the Pakistani Sikhs, who brought 36 old Birs of Guru Granth Sahib on their heads for cremation as per Sikh traditions in India, crossed the Radcliffe Line at Wagah.*

*It was an emotional occasion for family members of Harbans Singh, a resident of Amritsar who had come to receive his sister Harnam Kaur, brother Bishun Singh and other relatives who had come to Amritsar for the first time after Partition. Ms. Harnam Kaur said that her wish to meet her relatives in India and paying obeisance at the Golden Temple now stood fulfilled.*

*Baba Sewa Singh of Khadoor Sahib Wale told the deputy leader of the Pakistani jatha, Hari Singh, that his institution was ready to undertake kar seva to renovate Sikh shrines in Pakistan with cooperation of the SGPC.*

*Most of the devotees from Pakistan came to pay obeisance at the Golden Temple for the first time. At the Wagah joint check-post, Mahesh Singh said that Pakistani Sikhs held both the SGPC and the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee in high esteem. Both the Sikh organisations should cooperate with each other for maintaining of the Sikh maryada in shrines of Pakistan.*

*Dalip Singh and Ravinder Singh said that they were overwhelmed by the visit to the holy city of Amritsar. They said apart from Khadoor Sahib, they wanted to visit Anandpur Sahib and other Sikh holy shrines in the Punjab.*

*Pakistani Sikhs performed kirtan for the first time in the sanctum sanctorum of Darbar Sahib at Khadoor Sahib to mark the first day of 500<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary celebrations of Guru Angad Dev.*





The Darbar at Khadoor Sahib



### Mata Khiwi and Langar

All Sikh women are called upon to follow the path shown by their Gurus and acquaint the new generation with their glorious heritage. This was extolled at the Sikh Women's Conference held at Khadoor Sahib on the first day of the 500th birth anniversary celebrations of second Sikh Guru Angad Dev.

Significant contributions and sacrifices made by Sikh women were recalled at the conference. Dedicated to the memory of Mata Khiwi, the conference honoured Dr Inderjit Kaur, chairperson of Pingalwara, with the first Mata Khiwi award in recognition of her services to suffering humanity.

In her presidential address, Bibi Kiranjot Kaur, a member of the SGPC and convener of the conference, recounted the services of women in the role of daughter, sister, mother, guide and preacher in Sikh history.

The conference was addressed among others by Dr Inderjit Kaur Yogi (USA), Principal Manjinder Kaur, Dr Rajinderjit Kaur, Ms Harjinder Kaur, former Mayor of Chandigarh, Principal Harjinder Kaur, Dr Kulwant Kaur and Dr Darshanjot Kaur.

The conference demanded free education for girls in the Punjab up to the plus two level and the opening of more senior secondary schools for girls in rural areas.





*Nagar kiran led by Panj Piaras sets out from Sarai Naga (Muktsar) for Khadoor Sahib. The procession reached Khadoor Sahib after a night halt at Mudki village in Ferozepore district. A number of prominent personalities, students, representatives of various Sikh organisations and thousands of other devotees participated the nagar kirtan.*

successor and did not conform to the requirements of pursuing his sacred mission.

As Guru Nanak compiled *Japji* and *Asa di Var*, it was Bhai Lehna who assisted him in editing the compositions. The Guru saw in his devotion and piety a deep understanding of His Word. Guru Nanak thus chose Bhai Lehna as his successor as in him he found the requisite qualities of piety, humility and devotion. He called him Angad, which literally means a part of oneself.

The *Janamsakhi* tradition has this account of the succession: The Guru came to the banks of the Ravi. He placed five copper coins before Angad and bowed down at his feet. Lehna, the faithful disciple, was thus installed Guru. Guru Nanak gave a manuscript containing his compositions to his successor. This was in 1539.

Guru Angad was asked to go to Khadoor. Tradition has it that that Guru Angad spent six months in seclusion and meditation at Khadoor before he was called upon by Baba Budha and other Sikhs to lead them. He was to be a Guru for 13 years, during which he further refined the Gurmukhi script and propagated the Punjabi language. Since the language and the script were accessible to common people, this helped in making them literate and thereby the society more egalitarian.

He wife Mata Khiwi, contributed mightily to the langar, another institution which was promoted by the Gurus to dissolve differences artificially created by man. Everyone

who came contributed by doing sewa or service at the langar and partook food together.

He had edited the *Japji* and *Asa di Var* in the presence of Guru Nanak. Continuing the great work, he wrote about devotion, love and the wonder of God and over 60 of his compositions are enshrined in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

He also founded Goindwal, which was built on the land given to the Guru by his follower, Gobind. The city had been constructed by Amar Das, who had become a disciple after having been attracted to the gurbani recited by Bibi Amro, Guru Angad Dev's daughter. Bibi Amro was married into Amar Das's family. Some sources make a mention of another daughter, Bibi Anokhi, but generally, one finds references to Bibi Amro in most historical writings.

Just as Guru Nanak, Guru Angad too laid great stress on not only the spiritual, but also the worldly affairs of his followers. He concentrated on children's education and also laid stress on physical fitness for the overall well-being of his devotees. He loved interacting with children. He is also credited with starting the *Janaksakhi* tradition.

Guru Angad passed away in 1552 at Khadoor Sahib. He had two sons, Datu and Dasu and a daughter, but when the time came, he decided that his devoted follower Amar Das would succeed him as Guru.



## Excerpt from

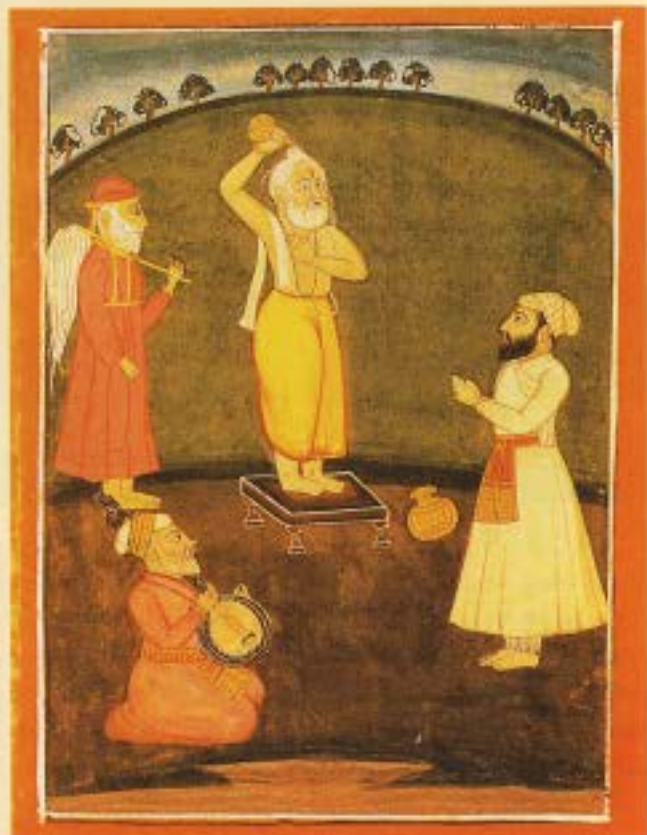
# THE SIKH HERITAGE: A Search for Totality by Dr. Daljeet

Guru Angad Dev, the second of Sikh Gurus, was the chosen one to receive and perpetuate Guru Nanak's legacy, a tradition which bred a truer man, a better society and a stronger nation using love, equality, fraternity and devotion as its soul, *sangat* and *pangat*, devotional congregation, music and song, poetry's emotional appeal and *simran* of *His Naam* as its operative body and the communion with the Supreme, *His* realisation, as the ultimate goal of all created ones. The very name Angad which Guru Nanak gave to his chosen Sikh Lahina suggested that the great Guru considered him part of his own being and the one who could carry the torch to the farthest end.

After Guru Nanak knew that the great extinction was close, just twenty days before his *Nirvana* on 7th September 1539 he held a congregation of his Sikhs. Amid thousands his eyes rose and fixed at Lahina, one of his two beloved Sikhs who had joined him at Kartarpur, the other being Buddaji, popularly known as Baba Buddaji, who had a long tenure of life gaining him honour of applying *tilaka* to five of the ten Sikh Gurus. He summoned Lahina to dais and placed at his feet his head and five paise and a coconut as his offering to the new Sikh Guru. Guru Nanak then gave to the new Guru the *Bani-pothi*, a collection of his own life-time hymns and poems, and a rosary, the symbols of his legacy, and called him by the name Angad, a part of his own being. Suggestively he acclaimed that Angad shared his entire being, his deeds, divinity, vision and thoughts and all his aspirations and objects. Guru Nanak had thus institutionalised the Guruship imparting to it unity and perpetuation, a sort of impersonality beyond individualistic existence, indivisibility and continuity.

Lahina was born on 3rd March, 1504 at Harika, a small village in Ferozpur district of Punjab to a Khatri trader Pheru, popularly revered as Bhai Pheru. He was a devotee of Goddess Durga. One day when passing a lane he heard an enchanting melody sung in an equally bewitching voice. Spell bound Lahina was drawn to the person who sang it. The infatuated Lahina then saw Bhai Jodha, a disciple of Guru Nanak. Fully absorbed he was reciting Guru Nanak's *Asa-di-var*. A determination crept in Lahina's mind. With a sort of compulsion to have a vision of the creator of the great melody he set out on his search. His all time companion Budda too joined him. He reached Kartarpur and was soon with the great

Master. And, as all acclaim unanimously, Lahina was completely transformed into a new being the moment the great Master cast upon him his first glance. There are many who believe that the great Guru had implanted into



Guru Angad paying homage to Baba Nanak

Lahina's person his own being that very moment and had nominated him his torch bearer, the courier of his spiritual legacy. Lahina had been transformed into Angad when he first encountered the great Master.

Guru Angad, before he passed away in 1552, had a short period of just 13 years to work with Guru Nanak's legacy; he, however, carried it forward both in letter and spirit. He mainly emphasised on preserving and carrying to a larger community of people Guru Nanak's *Bani* and thereby converting them to Nanak's great path of *Nam-simran*. Prior to him Guru Nanak's hymns were either inscribed in the script known as *Lande-Mahajani* or contained in his disciples' memory. With no vowel sound this script was rather crude and lacked in uniformity. Guru Angad, in his effort to make it uniform and more communicative, added to it vowels, fixed consonant sound and introduced



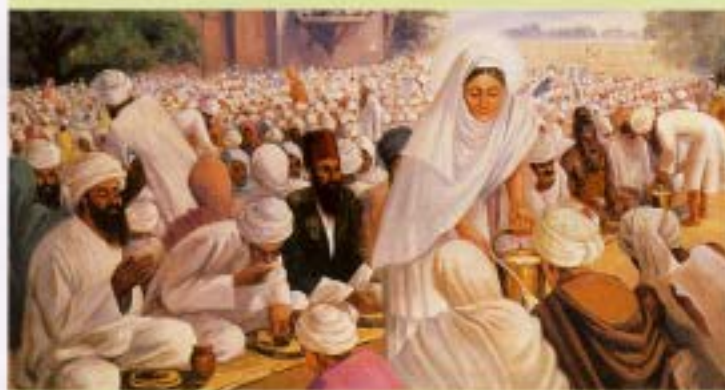
intonations and linguistic structures and thus revised it to a clearer and more uniform vehicle of lingual expression. This revised script of Guru Angad came to be known as Gurmukhi, something emitted from the Guru's own voice. Guru Angad, the originator of the script of Gurmukhi, recorded in this new script Guru Nanak's all hymns then contained in either traders' ledgers or in people's memory. Pursuing the great spiritual and literary tradition laid by Guru Nanak, Angad added to the bani some hymns of his own. This tradition of compiling earlier Gurus' bani by the succeeding Guru and adding to it his own, nucleus of the Sikh faith and the basis of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib concept, was Guru Angad's contribution to the Sikh Panth. The bani of Guru Angad, compiled in chaste Gurmukhi in simple, direct and effective manner was superb in poetic essence and brimmed with exceptional wisdom. It imparted the message that the path to liberation could be sought only by the grace of Guru. Later, when Sri Guru Granth Sahib was compiled, the holy Book included 63 *salokas* of Guru Angad, each a gem of wisdom.

The concept of *langar*, or *Guru-ka-langar*, as it came to be known by Guru Angad's days, the community kitchen, was further consecrated. It was run with offerings that devotees and visitors made, but was looked after directly by Guru's wife Mata Khiwi herself, giving it the sanctity of a divine institution. Thus, this instrument of social communion, the *langar*, operating beyond consideration of caste, creed or status, was made an essential spiritual institution of Sikhism. It bred amongst Sikhs a feeling of social equality and kept them united as one single whole. *Sangat*, the spiritual gathering where disciples met their Guru and commemorated with him *His Naam*, had now greater sacredness and become the supreme form of worship. *Jap, tap, sanjam*, and *ksharna*, the meditation, austerities, abstinence and forgiveness, were subtler instruments of *sangat* to be observed alike both by the Guru who embodied them and the disciples who strove for them for the *sangat* in its very concept which prescribed *sangati*, a common course, during the life and thereafter for all persons alike.

## Langar: Social Value and Humanism

In Sikh tradition most values have been attained in practice rather than in preaching and this began with *langar*, the earliest and the most effective of all institutions, the other one, as much effective though not as much early, being *sangat*. *Langar* gave to Sikhism most of its social values and its humanism while *sangat* effected spiritual elevation through devotion and guided the self to liberation.

Guru Nanak's father once gave him some money for starting his own business with instructions to strike some good



*Mata Khiwi distributing kheer to the Sangat*

bargain, *khara saada*. On his way to the market Nanak met some *sadhus* who had not eaten anything for many days. Nanak bought with the money his father had given him some eatables and fed the *sadhus*. It was probably this incident of Nanak's life that the seeds of *langar* concept were planted. On return, his father asked him of his bargain and profit. Nanak said that he had struck *sachcha saada*, a truer bargain. This incident was Nanak's first step towards Enlightenment.

*Langar*, which is a Persian word meaning an almshouse, was in great prevalence with Sufis during the 12th -13th centuries. Guru Nanak, shared much with Sufis, although as adopted by the Sikh Gurus, came to be far more effective and subtle a instrument of many social reforms and combined with spiritual sanctity, one of Sikhism's most important institutions. By promoting community feasting with no distinction whatsoever, Sikh Gurus sought to equalise all beyond caste, creed, race, religion or social status and mobilised voluntary cooperation to widen later to *kar-seva*. In Sikhism, *langar* has priority over even *sangat* for it eradicates all barriers of the material world and begins the process of the soul's liberation.

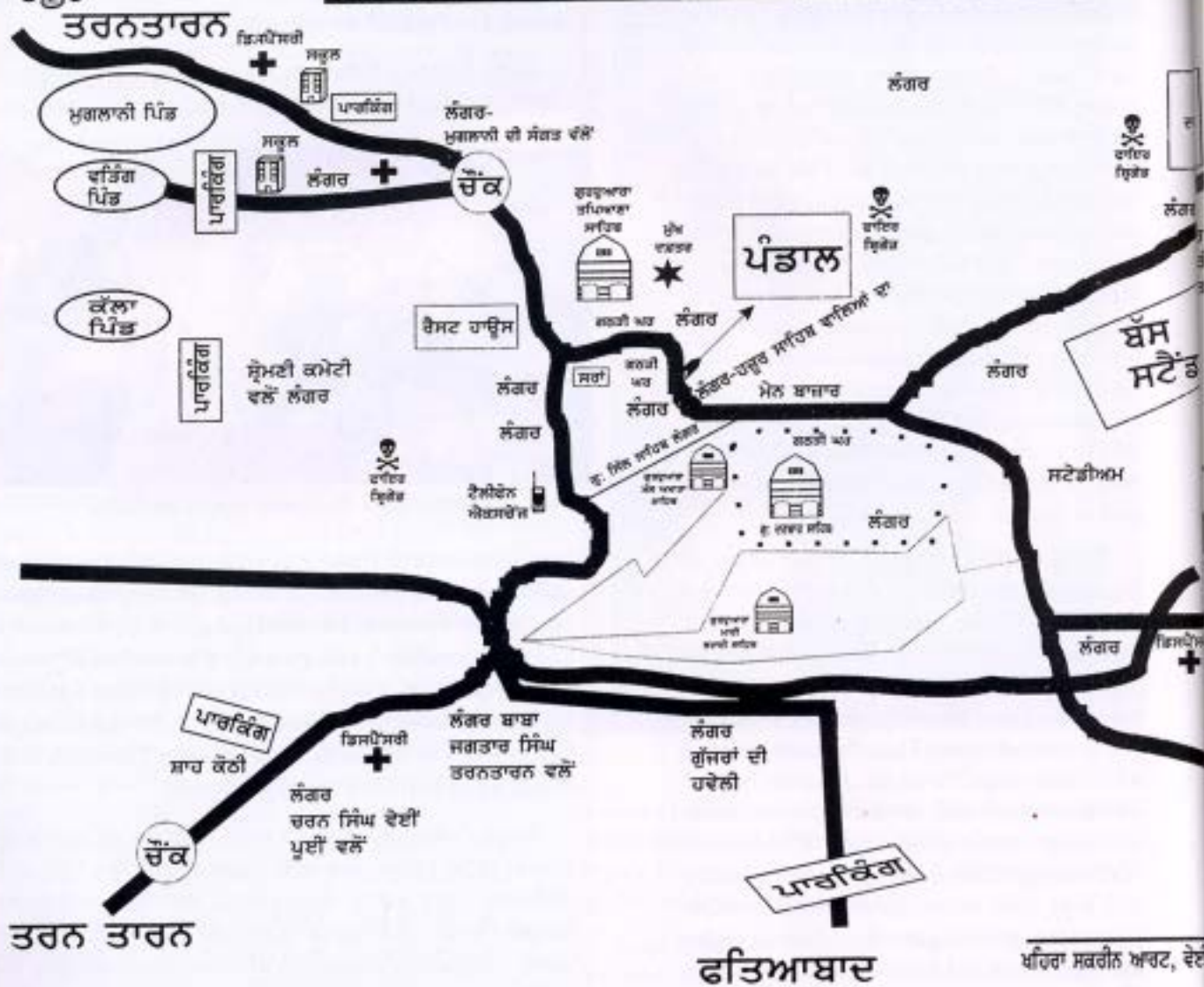
*\*Dr. Daljeet is an eminent art scholar, and curator in-charge of the National Museum's department of paintings at New Delhi.*



## Sri Guru Angad Dev Ji and Khadoor Sahib

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਅੰਗਦ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਦੇ 500 ਸਾਲਾ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼ ਗੁਰਪੁਰਬ ਦੀ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਲੱਖ-ਲੱਖ ਵਾਰ  
ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ।

## MAP OF KHADOOR SA



### Historical Importance of Khadoor Sahib

Khadoor Sahib (District Amritsar) is associated with of the second Master, Sri Guru Angad Dev, a holy place made sacrosanct by the visit of eight Great Masters. This town is easy to approach, being only 38 kms from Amritsar, 22 kms from Jandiala Guru, 20 kms from Tarn Taran, 22 kms from Rayya and 9 kms from Goindwal Sahib. The Second Master spent most of his period of Guruship, about 13 years, at Khadoor Sahib. There is a specific reference to Khadoor Sahib in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib and in the composition of Bhai Gurdas.



(Then the True Guru, the son of Pheru,  
came to dwell at Khadoor).

*Ditta Chhode Kartarpur Baithi Khadure Jot Jagnee*

(Bhai Gurdas Ji)

(Left Kartarpur and came to Khadoor Sahib to preach and enlighten the people)

### Places of Pilgrimage around Khadoor Sahib

**Gurdwara Sri Tapiana Sahib:** This is very sacred as the First Master Guru Nanak Dev Ji sang holy hymns here along with Bhai Bala and Bhai Mardana. It was at this place that Guru Angad Dev got the *Janam Sakhi* (anecdotes) of Sri Guru Nanak Dev written.

**Memorial of Bhai Bala:** This memorial is situated in the circumambulation (parkarma) of Gurdwara Tapiana Sahib where Sri Guru Angad Dev performed the last rites himself.

**Gurdwara Tap Asthan Sri Guru Angad Dev Ji :** Here Guru Nanak Dev ordered Bhai Lehna (earlier name of Guru Angad Dev) to meditate.

**Gurdwara Mai Bharai Ji :** After attaining Guruship, Sri Guru Angad Dev remained interned in the house of Mai Bharai (aunt of Sri Guru Angad Dev). It was Baba Buddha who compelled Guru Ji to appear before the Sangat (devotees).

**Gurdwara Mal Akhara Sahib:** It is at this place that Sri Guru Angad Dev spent most of his time holding religious conference (*divans*) and giving discourse to the Sikh Sangat. It is here that Guru Ji made arrangements for teaching the Gurmukhi script to children and organised wrestling matches

*The last kilometre : the sangat walking towards Khadoor Sahib*



Specially erected 'khat stones' on roads leading to Khadoor Sahib.





*Children offering chhabil and langar to passengers of all passing vehicles.*

to make them physically strong. This place is particularly important as Guru Ji held religious conferences with *Siddhas* and further developed the Gurmukhi script. It was a wonderful place where two *langars* were run simultaneously : the *langar* of Guru Shabad presided over by Guru Ji and the other *langar* run by Mata Khiwi. Even Guru Granth Sahib Ji bears testimony to this practice.

*"Balvand Khiwi nek jan jis bahuti chhao patrali, Langar daulat vandiay ras amrit kheer ghiali* (SGGS page 967). (Balvand says that Khiwi, the Guru's wife, is a noble woman, who gives soothing leafy shade to all. She distributes the bounty of Guru's langar; the kheer, is like sweet ambrosia).

Here Guru Ji demonstrated in practical manner the principle of *Tan Man Thevai Haria* (body and mind blossom forth).

**Gurdwara Sri Darbar Sahib (Angitha Sahib) :** This place is particularly important as Guru Amar Das stumbled here after hitting a stake while carrying a pitcher of water from Goindwal Sahib. The stake of this *Karir* tree became green again by the touch of Guru's feet and still exists.

It is at this place that Sri Guru Angad Dev merged with the Supreme Being and Sri Guru Amar Das prepared his *Angitha* (funeral pyre). Guru Angad Dev proved himself worthy of becoming his successor by bringing a pitcher of water for Guru Angad Dev and serving him here for 12 years. Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev also used to halt here while on their way to Amritsar. Guru Hargobind Sahib after getting his daughter Bibi Veero married at Jhabal, stayed here for some time along with his family. Guru Har Rai Sahib along with his 2200 followers came from Kartarpur to Goindwal Sahib and Khadoor Sahib, and also rested here for a night. The Ninth Master Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib also came from Baba Bakala to visit this holy place.

**Gurdwara Thara Sahib Sri Guru Amar Das Ji:** After performing *Sewa*, Guru Amar Das used to come here to meditate.



**Khoo Bibi Amro Ji :** This holy well was dug by Sri Guru Amar Das on the request of Bibi Amro to fulfill the needs of pilgrims. Bibi Amro was the daughter of Guru Angad Dev.

**Sri Guru Angad Dev Ji Niwas:** For the convenience of pilgrims, this huge residential building is being constructed near Gurdwara Darbar Sahib to provide various amenities.

A grand plan to link all the Gurdwaras with wide roads is being implemented for the convenience of pilgrims. A two way road is under construction from the Darbar Sahib complex and all old shops are being re-constructed.

### **Afforestation**

An extremely important project has been to plant trees along all the roads leading to Khadoor Sahib which was initiated by Baba Sewa Singh. These trees will not only beautify the area but will make it pollution free as well. It is planned to plant 500 acres with fruit-bearing plants. Water tankers have been bought to water these plants. This effort of Baba Sewa Singh to clean and beautify the environment to this massive extent, is perhaps unparalleled anywhere in the world.



# The Adi Granth

## The Greatest Light for Mankind

The *Adi Granth*, which is regarded as the greatest work of Punjabi literature, is largely the work of Guru Arjan, the fifth of the ten Sikh Gurus. He brought together the writings of the first four Gurus and those of the Hindu and Muslim saints from different parts of India. Guru Arjan's successors made a few additions and the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, pronounced that there would be no more Gurus and the *Granth* should be regarded as the living voice of all the prophets: *Guru Vānī*.

William Penn says: 'There is something nearer to us than scriptures, to wit, the word in the heart from which all scriptures come'. Japji says '*gurmukh nādam gurmukh vedam*,' the word of the Guru is the music which the seers hear in their moments of ecstasy; the Word of the Guru is the highest scripture. By communion with the Word we attain the vision unattainable'. Guru Arjan says that the Book is the abode of God *pothī paramesvar kā thān*. The hymns are set to music. We find in *Adi Granth* a wide range of mystical emotion, intimate expressions of the personal realisation of God and rapturous hymns of divine love. The Sikh creed includes belief in the ten Gurus and the *Adi Granth*.

A remarkable feature of the *Adi Granth* is that it contains the writings of the religious teachers of Hinduism, Islam, and others.

This is in consistency with the tradition of India which respects all religions and believes in the freedom of the human spirit. Indian spiritual tradition is not content with mere toleration. There can be no goodwill or fellowship when we only tolerate each other. Lessing, in his *Nathan the Wise*, rebuked the habit of condescending toleration. We must appreciate other faiths, recognise that they offer

rich spiritual experiences and encourage sacrificial living and inspire their followers to a noble way of life. The Sikh Gurus who compiled the *Adi Granth* had this noble quality of appreciation of whatever was valuable in other religious traditions. The saints belong to the whole world. They are universal men, who free our minds from bigotry and superstition, dogma and ritual, and emphasise the central simplicities of religion. The great seers of the world are the guardians of the inner values who correct the fanaticisms of their superstitious followers.

The Hindu leaders neglected to teach the spiritual realities to the people at large who were sunk in superstition and materialism. Religion became confused with caste distinctions and taboos about eating and drinking. The Muslims were also victims of superstition and some of their leaders were afflicted with the disease of intolerance. Saints arose in different parts of the country, intent on correcting the injustices and cruelties of society and redeeming it: *Jñānesvar*, *Nāmdev*, and *Eknāth* in

*Māhārāshtra*, Narsingh Mehta in Gujarat, Chaitanya in Bengal, Kabir in Uttar Pradesh, Vallabhāchārya in Andhra and others. All these stirred the people with a new feeling of devotion, love and humanity. They stressed that one's religion was tested not by one's beliefs but by one's conduct. No heart which shuts out truth and love can be the abode of God.

At a time when men were conscious of failure, Nānak appeared to renovate the spirit of religion and humanity. He did not found a new faith or organise a new community. That was done by his successors, notably the fifth Guru. Nānak tried to build a nation of self-respecting men and women, devoted to God and their leaders, filled with a sense of equality and brotherhood for all.

Japji says '*gurmukh nādam gurmukh vedam*,' the word of the Guru is the music which the seers hear in their moments of ecstasy; the Word of the Guru is the highest



The Gurus are the light-bearers to mankind. They are the messengers of the timeless. They do not claim to teach a new doctrine but only to renew the eternal wisdom. Nānak elaborated the views of the Vaisnava saints. His best known work is *Jap* or *Japji Sahib*, the morning prayer. Guru Arjan's popular composition is *Sukhmani*.

The Sikh Gurus transcend the opposition between the personal and the impersonal, between the transcendent and the immanent. God is not an abstraction but an actuality. He is Truth, formless *nirguna*, absolute, eternal, infinite, beyond human comprehension. He is yet revealed through creation and through grace to anyone who seeks Him through devotion. He is given to us as a Presence in worship. The ideas we form of Him are intellectualisations of that presence. A great Muslim saint observed: 'Who beholds me formulates it not and who formulates me beholds me not. A man who beholds and then formulates is veiled from me by the formulation'. It is the vice of theology to define rather than to express, to formulate rather than to image or symbolise the indefinable. Silence is the only adequate expression of that which envelops and embraces us. No word, however noble, no symbol, however significant, can communicate the ineffable experience of being absorbed in the dazzling light of the Divine. Light is the primal symbol we use, of a consciousness ineffably beyond the power of the human mind to define or limit. The unveiled radiance of the sun would be darkness to the eye that strives to look into it. We can know it only by reflection, for we are ourselves a part of its infinite awareness.

Muhammad adopted the rigid monotheism from Judaism. "Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any manner of likeness of anything that is in the heaven above or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth." Rāmānanda was hostile to the worship of images. "If God is a stone I will worship a mountain."

Kabir says:

*The images are all lifeless, they cannot speak:  
I know, for I have cried aloud to them.  
The Purānā and the Qurān are mere words:  
Lifting up the curtain, I have seen.*

Nānak was greatly impressed by the monotheism of Islam and denounced image worship. One God who is just, loving, righteous, who is formless and yet the creator of the universe, who desires to be worshipped through love and righteousness that is the belief that has dominated Sikhism. When at the temple of Jagannāth, Nānak saw the worship in which lights were waved before the image and flowers and incense were presented on gold salvers studded with pearls, he burst into song:

*The sun and moon, O Lord, are Thy lamps; the firmament  
Thy salver and the oils of the stars the pearls set therein.  
The perfume of the sandal tree is Thy incense; the wind  
Is Thy fan, all the forests are Thy flowers, O Lord of light.*

God is not limited to any one incarnation but sends His messengers from time to time, to lead struggling humanity towards Him. It is the law of the spiritual world that whenever evil and ignorance darken human affairs, morality and wisdom will come to our rescue.

The Guru is the indwelling Divine who teaches all through the gentle voice of conscience. He appears outside in human form to those who crave for a visible guide. The enlightener is the inner self.

Nānak is, for the Sikhs, the voice of God arousing the soul to spiritual effort. Faith in the Guru is adopted by both the Hindus and the Muslim sufis. The latter emphasise the need of a religious teacher, Pir, to guide the initiate in prayer and meditation. The Gurus are human and not divine. They are not to be worshipped. Guru Gobind Singh says: 'Whosoever regards me as Lord shall be damned and destroyed ... I am but the servant of God'.

God alone is real. The world is real because God animates it and is found through it. The created world is not in an absolute sense. It arises from God and dissolves into Him. How came the Changeless to create a world of change? How did the One go forth into many? If the one is compelled to create, it suffers from imperfection and insufficiency. But total perfection cannot have this insufficiency. The question assumes that the Eternal at one moment of time began the task of creation. But *eternity* has no beginning and no end. If its nature is to create, it eternally creates. The idea of a God absorbed in self-contemplation and then for some unknown reason rousing Himself to



create a universe is but a reflection of our human state. We alternate between activity and rest, between inertia and excitement. Divine beatitude consists in a simultaneous union of contemplation and of act of self-awareness and of self-giving. A static perfection is another name for death. Nānak looks upon the creative power of the Supreme as *māyā*. It is integral to the Supreme Being.

The way to the knowledge of God is through self-surrender. It is not ceremonial piety; it is something inward in the soul. Those who, in the humility of a perfect self-surrender, have ceased to cling to their own petty egos are taken over by the superhuman Reality, in the wonder of an indescribable love. The soul rapt in the vision and possession of a great loveliness grows to its likeness. Surrender to God becomes easy in the company of a saintly teacher, a Guru.

Man is a child of God. He is mortal when he identifies himself with the perishable world and body. He can become immortal through union with God; until then he wanders in the darkness of the world. He is like a spark from the fire or a wave of the ocean. The individual comes forth from God, is always in Him as a partial expression of His will and at last, when he becomes perfect, manifests God's will perfectly.

We have to tread the path which saints have trodden to direct union with the Divine. We have to tread the interior way, to pass through crises, through dark nights and ordeals of patience. Nānak says: 'Yoga is not the smearing of ashes, is not the ear-rings and shaven beard, not the blowing of conches but it is remaining unspotted amidst impurity, thus is the contact with Yoga gained'.

Nānak was critical of the formalism of both the Hindus and the Muslims. He went to bathe in the Ganges as is usual with devout Hindus. When the Hindus threw water towards the rising sun as an offering to their dead ancestors, Nānak threw water in the opposite direction. When questioned, he said: 'I am watering my fields in the Punjab. If you can throw water to the dead in heaven, it should be easier to send it to a place on earth'. On another occasion, he fell asleep with his feet towards Mecca. An outraged Mulla drew his attention to it. Nānak answered: 'If you

think I show disrespect by having my feet towards the house of God, turn them in some other direction where God does not dwell'. Nānak says: 'To worship an image, to make a pilgrimage to a shrine, to remain in a desert, and yet have the mind impure is all in vain; to be saved, worship only the Truth'. Nānak tells us: 'Keep no feeling of enmity for anyone. God is contained in every bosom. Forgiveness is love at its highest power'. Nānak says: 'where there is forgiveness there is God Himself.

When Ajita Randhava asked Guru Nānak about *ahimsā*, Nānak replied:

- ❖ *Do not wish evil for anyone. This is ahimsā of thought.*
- ❖ *Do not speak harshly of anyone. This is ahimsā of action.*
- ❖ *Do not obstruct anyone's work. This is ahimsā of action.*
- ❖ *If a man speaks ill of you, forgive him.*
- ❖ *Practise physical, mental and spiritual endurance.*
- ❖ *Help the suffering even at the cost of your life.*

Belief in a separate self and its sufficiency is the original sin. Self-noughting is the teaching of the seers of all religions. Jesus says: 'If any man would follow me, let him deny himself'. Meister Eckhart declared that the Kingdom of God is for none but the thoroughly dead. We should aim to escape from the prison of our selfhood and not to escape from the body which is the temple of God. Until we reach the end we will have other lives to pass through. No failure is final. An eventual awakening for all is certain.

Nānak and his followers believe in the doctrine of *karma* and rebirth. We are born with different temperaments. Some are greedy and possessive, others fretful and passionate. We come into the world bearing the impress of our past *karma*. Circumstances may stimulate these qualities. We may by our effort weaken the evil dispositions and strengthen the good ones. True happiness cannot be found in perishable things. It is found only in union with the Supreme. We are caught in the world of *samsara* or change, in the wheel of births and deaths because we identify ourselves with the physical organism and the environment. We can be freed from the rotating wheel of *samsara* by union with God attained through devotion. We

**Man is a child of God. He is mortal when he identifies himself with the perishable world and body. He can become immortal through union with God; until then he wanders in the darkness of the world.**



must accept God as the guiding principle of our life. It is not necessary to renounce the world and become an ascetic. God is everywhere, in the field and the factory as in the cell and the monastery.

The Sikhs, like some Vaisnava devotees who preceded them, denounce caste distinctions. Ramananda said:

*Jati panthi pucchai nahi koi  
Hari ko bhaje so hari ka hoi.*

Let no one ask of caste or sect; if anyone worships God then he is God's. As God dwells in all creatures none is to be despised. When we become one with God through wholehearted surrender, we live our lives on earth as instruments of the Divine.

The aim of liberation is not to escape from the world of space and time but to be enlightened, wherever we may be. It is to live in this world knowing that it is divinely informed. To experience a timeless reality we need not run away from the world. For those who are no longer bound to the wheel of samsara, life on earth is centred in the bliss of eternity. Their life is joy and where joy is, there is creation. They have no other country hereafter except the world itself. They owe their loyalty and love to the whole of humanity. God is universal. He is not the God of this race or that nation. He is the God of all human beings. They are all equal in His sight and can approach Him directly. We must, therefore, have regard for other peoples and other religions.

Nānak strove to bring Hindus and Muslims together. His life and teaching were a symbol of the harmony between the two communities. A popular verse describes him as a Guru for the Hindus and a Pir for the Muslims.

*Guru Nanak shah Fakir  
Hindu ka Guru, Mussulman ke pir.*

The transformation of the peaceful followers of Nānak into a militant sect was the task of the sixth Guru, Har Gobind and of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last Guru. The tenth Guru converted the young community of disciples (Sikhs, *sisyas*) into a semi-military brotherhood with special symbols and sacraments for protecting them. When his father Guru Tegh Bahadur was summoned by Emperor Aurangzeb who faced him with the alternative of conversion to Islam or death, he preferred death and left the message: I gave my head but not my faith.

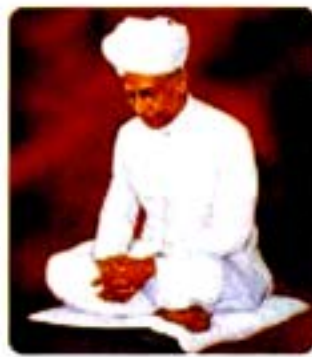
*sirr diya purr sirrar na diya*

His four grandsons also gave their lives in defence of their faith.

On that New Years Day in 1669, Guru Gobind Singh initiated five of his followers known as *Panj Pyaras* (five beloved ones), into a new fraternity called the Khalsa or the Pure. Of these five, one was a Brahmin, one a Ksatriya and others belonged to the lower castes. He thus stressed social equality. They all drank out of the same bowl and were given new names with the suffix Singh (Lion) attached to them. They resolved to observe the five K's, to wear their hair and beard unshorn (*Kesh*), to carry a comb in the hair (*Kangha*), to wear a steel bangle on the right wrist (*Kara*), to wear a pair of shorts (*Kaccha*), and to carry a sword (*Kirpan*). They were also enjoined to observe four rules to conduct (*rahat*), not to cut their hair, to abstain from smoking tobacco and avoid intoxicants, not to eat meat unless the animal has been slaughtered in the manner prescribed, and to refrain from adultery. **A new script, a new scripture, new centres of worship, new symbols and ceremonies made Sikhism into a new faith, if not a new religion.** What started as a movement of Hindu dissenters has now become a new creed.

It is, however, unfortunate that the barriers which the Sikh Gurus laboured to cast down are again being recreated. Many pernicious practices against which they revolted are creeping into Sikh society. Worldly considerations are corrupting the great ideals. Religion which lives in the outer threshold of consciousness without conviction in the mind or love in the heart is utterly inadequate. It must enter into the structure of our life, become a part of our being.

The Upanisad says: He alone knows the truth who knows all living creatures as himself. The barriers of seas and mountains will give way before the call of eternal truth which is set forth with freshness of feeling and fervour of devotion in the *Adi Granth*.



**Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan**

Scholar and statesman, he was President of India from 1962 to 1967. He had been professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at Oxford (1936-52) and his written works include *Indian Philosophy* and *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*.



# The Eternal Guru

The Sikh Centennial Foundation has given me the honour of standing before you here today. It was in the year 1631 that the 6th Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib directed my ancestor Bhai Roop Chand to disseminate the message of Guru Nanak in the Malwa Region of Eastern Punjab. Our family, in their humble way, has been doing this service in the name of the Guru and the community ever since. I feel overwhelmed with gratitude to the community in Canada for asking me to speak about our eternal Guru, Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

About forty two years ago, when I was a student at the University of Western Ontario in London, I came to Toronto for a visit with my friend S.Manjit Singh. We were amongst the four or five Sikhs with turbans then at the London University. The locals in this city had not seen turban wearing men before, and referred to us as guys with funny hats. How this place has changed! It is delightful to see the community here today in full bloom. Credit must be given to mainstream Canadian society for allowing this diversity to flourish. It is a reflection of the strength of the Canadian way of doing things. The multicultural values for which Canada is a role model in the entire world deserves a special mention here and it is because of this that the Sikh community in Canada is able to preserve its identity without duress. It is the force of the rule of law, ethics and morality, the hallmarks of Canadian society that has made it possible.

Today we celebrate 400 years of the compilation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, our moral and ethical law giver. Sikh teachings also stress that the law is above the king.

In the next few minutes, I will share with you my views on the origins and development of Guru Granth Sahib and its contents. Next, I will explain the concept of *Shabad* Guru. After this, I will talk about the significance of its teachings and finally share views on one of the key challenges that our community faces in preserving the purity of our teachings and practices.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is the Eternal Guide and Teacher, thus the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs. Amongst other things, its uniqueness lies in the fact that this is the only religious book which was compiled, edited, signed and sealed by the perceptors themselves. The integrity of this Holy Book is thus unassailable for the simple reason that the original book signed by the 5th Guru in 1604, is available in Kartarpur, Punjab.

The Book contains the pivotal thoughts, the philosophy, the purpose and intent of the Sikh faith embodied as the *Word*

or *Shabad* and manifestation of Divinity in Sikh ethos. It contains the writings of the Sikh Gurus as well as those of thirty other men of God, all of varied faiths from different parts of the Indian subcontinent. These writings span the period from the 12th to the 17th centuries and as such are a distillate of five centuries of Indian religious thought.

Religion, people think, is a negation of pleasure, negation of prosperity and denial of the material. This according to Sikh theology is incorrect. Economic prosperity, if achieved through honest effort, is a boon of the Lord, provided we are grateful to Him for receiving it and remember the Giver and also share it with fellow humans. Hence, the Guru's injunction to set aside ten percent of one's earnings for the good of the community – not only for Sikhs but for the community at large. Sikhs believe that religion lends meaning to life. It empowers the individual to think beyond him or herself providing motivation to a better and a higher level of existence. For a Sikh, the goal of life is not to seek personal salvation but to become a God oriented person or a *Gurmukh* living in harmony with the will of God.

When Guru Nanak appeared on the scene in the 15th century in India, he saw suffering in spiritual, economic and political life of the country. He protested to the Creator for this state of affairs. He denounced the failure of the system of local rulers to protect the population from ravaging aggression of the Moghul invaders. He explained in his own inimical manner the limitations of life and the grandeur of the Lord and went ahead laying the foundation and framework of a society totally committed to fight political, theological, social and economic oppression being inflicted in the name of religion. He zeroed in especially on the caste system for its apartheid-like framework which sanctions exploitation of man based on an accident of birth. He urged members of the two main religious beliefs, the Hindus and the Muslims, to be true to their own faiths and practice their essence by not exploiting others.

Such was the agony in Guru Nanak's soul that he invoked Divinity to give succor to everyone from whichever path they approached Him (ਜਿਸ ਦੁਆਰੇ ਹੁਇ). This is a defining characteristic of the Sikh approach. It considers *all* spiritual traditions as valid provided their essence is practiced (ਜਿਸਦੀ ਗੁਣੇ ਜਿਅਈ, ਜਿਸ ਧਰਮ ਧਰਮੁ ਧਰੀਐ). This should be of special interest in the bi-polar world we live in today. But for himself and his followers, the Guru went about systematically laying down a way of life, a *Panth*, a *Dharam Marg*. Guru Nanak emphasised that in order to establish a kingdom of heaven on earth, any social order



that is not based on moral and ethical principles cannot survive. (A path of total commitment *ਗੁਰੂ ਮਰਜਿ ਦੇਹੁ ਧਰੀਐ, ਜਿਸ ਦੀਐ ਕਹਿ ਨਹੀਐ* ).

The founder of Sikhism propagated a way of life based on *Naam*, the Ultimate Truth and Reality known only through attributes which permeates the whole creation irrespective of good or evil. This was a path of love and total submission to the will of God, of service and sacrifice, to speak up for the oppressed and stand up for fundamental human values with an irrevocable commitment. He composed and sang hymns in God's praise and glories as seen in various facets of creation. This was the Guru's divine message. The Sikh's call it *Bani*. He wrote these in a booklet, a *Pothi*, which he always carried with him. This he passed on to his successor who then added his own compositions. This practice continued till the 5th Guru who in order to preserve the message, consolidated the writings of the previous four Gurus along with his own compositions and those of the 30 other saintly persons of various faiths whose thoughts were synchronous with those of the Gurus. This anthology was completed and installed at the Harimandir on 30 August 1604. This book which came to be known as the *Granth* contains deep discourses and philosophic precepts. It also embodies a commentary on the contemporary cultural scene.

The thought content of this book is uniquely laid out. It begins with the *Mool Mantra* giving the fundamental definition and description or essence of the Ultimate Reality. When translated it reads:

*There is one God. His name is Truth.  
He is the Creator and is everywhere.  
He is Unborn and Self-existent.  
He can be realised through His grace.*

This is followed by the affirmation:

*Truth He was, Truth He is and Truth He will be.*  
*ਅਹਿ ਸਚੁ ਜੁਗਾਦ ਸਚੁ ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ, ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀਸਚੁ ।*

Guru Nanak's *Magnus Opus*, the *Japji*, follows immediately after. It embodies his complete philosophy, laying down the precepts, methods and their practice in the Sikh way of life for earning His grace. The rest of the *Guru Granth Sahib* is a reiteration and reassertion of these fundamentals, and how to practice them.

At the end of the *Granth*, two aspects are clear. The first concerns the last few hymns of the 9th Guru which some feel reflect a certain amount of fatalism (*ਜਸ ਛੁਟਿਹਿ ਨੈਨ ਯੋ*). However, to dispel this notion of helplessness there is a declaration emphasising that with spiritual and physical strength, it is possible for the individual to overcome any adversity provided the Lord showers His grace (*ਜਸ ਏਅ ਸੰਤ ਛੁਟੇ*). The other pertains to the summation of the *Granth* by the Guru. In it, the Guru has emphasised three basic fundamentals inscribed in this book. These are *Sat*, *Santokh* and *Vichar* that is Truth, acceptance of this Truth which is the will of God and by deliberating on these the Ultimate Reality may be realised.

If a deity is defined as an immortal god, while a divinity as that mortal entity which possesses divine qualities, then we may say that the *Granth* is a divinity, but not a deity, and thus it cannot be and is not an object of worship by the Sikhs, though seemingly extreme reverence is shown to it by them as "the visible Body of the Guru", and oriental formal homage is paid to this, as this is symbolic of the Sikh sovereignty.

*Sardar Kapur Singh*

The contents of the *Granth* were thus sealed by the 5th Guru in 1604 with the above hymn called *Mundavani*, literally meaning the seal or stamp of conclusion to avoid any apocryphal element being inserted. The hymns of the 9th Guru were subsequently added by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706 resulting in the final recension. My ancestor, Bhai Dharam Singh was one of the five Sikhs who was with the 10th Guru on this occasion.

When the 10th Guru concluded that the followers of Guru Nanak's way of life had attained the status of the archetype man of the Guru's vision namely the *Khalsa* and the required level of new social structure had fully evolved, he discontinued the tradition of Guruship in human form. Shortly before his demise in 1708, he anointed the divine message, as documented in this Holy Book, as the Guru for all Sikhs. The Word, the *Shabad*, became the presiding Deity in the form of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

The centre of Sikh thought, adoration and perhaps worship is the *Shabad*, the Word and Knowledge. This is the Guru and in traditional Sikh parlance, the *Shabad Guru*. Guru means dispeller of darkness. To Sikhs it means the teacher, the enlightener, the guide, the light within. All the Gurus emphasised that the mortal frame had no particular sanctity attached to it as the *Shabad* is the Guru, the Divine Light that manifests itself in the heart of the devotee when he comes into communion with the *Shabad Guru*. The pages of a book cannot be deemed as Guru. This is subtle but significant and essential and also critical to remember while revering this Holy Book. It is not the book but the message, the Word, which is the Guru and as such is revered. To revere and worship the book would be contrary to the Guru's directives.

To communicate their teachings the Gurus did not create any mythology or take recourse to miracles or displays of supernatural powers. The medium used is the *Shabad*, the Word, as the vehicle of thought. The Gurus presented the Word as a symbol because it is untainted thought and is a permanent carrier of knowledge. Realisation thus comes through knowledge. This Word, this Message, this Thought is the Guru of the Sikhs as inscribed in the *Granth*.

The last directive given to the Sikhs by the 10th Guru was

*Worship the Timeless*

*ਪੂਜਾ ਅਕਲ ਦੋ*

*Guidance is to be taken from the  
Shabad Guru in the Guru Granth*

*ਪਰਚਾ ਹਮੇਸ਼ਾ ਦਾ*



The contents of this grand anthology of wisdom are divided into chapters under the headings of the modes of Indian classical music called ragas instead of by author or subject matter. This is another novel approach. First the Guru uses the Word or *Shabad* for communication, then Raag chaste emotion as its medium. In the words of the late Dr. Raghav Menon, a learned Indian musicologist "Sikhism is the only religion that uses music as liturgy, prayer and insights. It believes in using music to subtly subvert the inner resistance of the human being, transform, regenerate him and trap him into an awareness of his inner essence. Indeed, the Sikh way of singing hymns is among its essential tools of transformation".

Hence, *Kirtan*, the singing of the Sikh hymns is a mode of worship and not as many make it seem an entertainment. Our approach to experimentation with fusion and other novel variants of *Kirtan* is contradictory to the intent of the Gurus.

The social relevance of the Holy Book is apparent in contemporary terms and addressed to all sections of society. Regarding gender equality, in the daily morning service of the Sikh liturgy, *Asi Di War*, a composition from the Granth, there is a categorical assertion not to denigrate womankind, the givers of life (ਜੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਮੇਲ ਅਧੀਕੇ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ ਰਚਨਾ). They are needed and loved in life and death and perpetuate the human race. The Gurus go to the extent of saying that no one on earth is born without a mother except the Lord Himself.

Thus we see many examples of Sikh women playing important roles in the evolution of Sikh society from its inception. Of the twenty two diocese set up by the third Guru in the late 16th century, two were headed by women. Mata Sundri, the wife of the 10th Guru, after his demise in 1708 provided direction and leadership during one of the most harrowing and difficult periods of Sikh history. In my family archives there exists a letter from her to one of my ancestors reiterating the message of the 10th Guru, that no human being is to be accepted as a guru as per the tenth Guru's final edict. The letter further states that to do so is unforgivable because the Guru had come to reside in the Word in the Granth.

To further underline the sense of gender equality, as recent as five years ago, Bibi Jagir Kaur was elected President of the central committee in-charge of managing the Sikh shrines and religious establishments in Punjab. Biases, if any, are cultural and have no religious sanction.

In conclusion, I would like to close this talk on a note of caution regarding certain practices in our conduct and approach towards the *Granth Sahib*. It is becoming increasingly evident that certain uncalled for practices verging on idol worship are manifesting themselves.

During the turbulent times of the early 18th century, while in battle Sikhs would often carry Guru Granth Sahib tied on the backs of their horses. Sometimes they would even wrap

it up for safekeeping and hide it in the trees. When possible, they would return and open the book with reverence, the Guru in the book would then become manifest. They would read it without subjecting themselves to constraints of ritualism. They were much better Sikhs than us. No disrespect was intended. Today it seems that the form is becoming more important than love and devotion to the Guru and acting on the message of Word. Ritualistic readings of the Granth are being organised against cash payment while the person asking for the reading is absent from the scene, feeling satisfied that dispensation has been bought. It reminds one of the contemporary era when Guru Nanak appeared on the scene. Religion then was all rituals without substance. Guru Gobind Singh called it hollow religion not worth a penny



Sarabjit Singh Marwah of the Foundation, Professor Manjit Singh and his wife Lorraine Singh with Bhayee Sikandar Singh.

(ਭੈਯੋ ਪਰਮ ਨ ਭੋਜੀ ਕਰੀ). Let us not fall back on the same morass. Indulging in excessive ritualism in the name of traditional practices and sanctity will result in creating a wall of intermediaries between the Sikh and the Guru creating a class of priests and self professed holy men exploiting the community in the name of God. (Sants & Babas) Guru Nanak always asserted that there was no requirement for a middleman/priest for the practice of Sikhism. Gurbani affirms that a Sikh should read, listen and sing the *Shabad* as inscribed in the Granth. (ਜਥੈ ਸੁਣੈ ਪੜ੍ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਲਈ)

We must never forget the words of the 10th Guru:

"If you fall prey to idle ritualism there will be no succor for you."

ਜੇ ਤੁਮ ਕੀ ਰਿਖਤ ਕੀ ਰੀਤ, ਮੈਂ ਨ ਕੀ ਉਤ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ।

I would like to end this talk with a salutation from a hymn of the third Guru,

ਹਰੁ ਹਰੁ ਸਦੀ ਤਿਹੈਕਹ ਹੈ, ਜਿਸ ਸੇਵਕ ਅਵਤੁ ਨ ਭੋਟੀ।

Hail, hail the word of the Guru  
It is the Formless God Himself.  
And there is nothing comparable to it.

Bhayee Sikander Singh of Bagrian



This year marks the 400th anniversary of the gathering of sacred texts (*pothis*) into the Adi Granth (Original Book). The compilation was a momentous creation, one that was to become the Guru Granth Sahib, a living Guru for the Sikhs.

What follows here is not a history of the Guru Granth Sahib, nor is it a commentary. It addresses instead an aspect more humble: how is one to approach the Word of the Guru?

## "No Power To Speak, No Power To Keep Silent"

How would one write about a loved one—a father or mother—who has brought one into being? How would one describe a person, let alone a Guru, in some definitive way? How would one name God, and be satisfied with that description? The Sikh Gurus, and many before and after them, saw this as a profound "problem", an important impasse:

ਜੇ ਹਰਿ ਜਾਣਾ ਅਖਾ ਨਹੀ ਕਹਣਾ ਕਥਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ

ਸਪੁ

*If I would know, would I not tell?  
The description cannot be told.*

SGGS p.2

And this, despite their meditations and their mystical experience of God, their very speech a vehicle for the utterance of God:

ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਆਈ ਤੈਸਰਾ ਕਰੀ ਕਿਆਨੁ ਦੇ ਲਾਇ ।

ਤਿਲੰਗ ਮ ੧

*As the Word of the Master comes to me,  
Such is the knowledge I express, O Lalo!*

SGGS p.722

ਜਿਸਾ ਹਮ ਕਾਹਰ ਕਿਹੁ ਕਹਿ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਣਾ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਭਾਵੈ ਕਿਥੈ ਬੁਝਨ ।

ਸਤਨਾਮ ਮ: ੫

*What can I say? I don't know what to say  
- (as) God wills, so do I speak.*

SGGS p.1203

More a process of continuing revelation than a static being, God cannot be expressed in words alone. God is not revealed in any particular form, nor fully described by any specific theology, ideology, philosophy or law. For Sikhs the Adi Granth is the Guru Granth Sahib, and like the counsel of a mother to an infant, it is a voice of wisdom and compassion that surpasses the child's comprehension. We are all children in face of the Guru Granth, our understanding is that of an infant's, and like an infant we have:





# The Guru Granth Sahib





*No power to speak, no power to remain silent.*

SGGS p.7

How is a child to explain to another who its parent is, why its parent counsels so, or why the word “mother” is so heavy with meaning? As with a child that seeks to describe its parent, so with the attempt to comprehend the Guru Granth Sahib:

ਜੇ ਕੋ ਅਖੈ ਜੋਰੁ ਦਿਖਾਤੁ, ਤਿ ਦਿਖਾਏ ਸਿਰ ਕਾਦਰ ਕਾਦਰੁ

ਜਪੁ

*If anyone says (he knows)*

*Then he is to be branded the greatest fool amongst fools.*

SGGS p.6

Guru Nanak himself, though a guru, and many believe the True Guru (*satguru*) nevertheless faces the same profound predicament: of trying to relate to others the

The Sikh Gurus’ vision was universal and embraced the voices of other religious traditions that celebrated the same vision. They had, therefore, no problem with including all names for the Absolute that were current in their time — *Allah, Khuda, Hari, Ram, Nirbana, Sahaj*. There is however, a very clear emphasis on the One (*Ek, Ikku*). Yet this One is not easily comprehensible, nor is it a Western monotheistic ‘one’. It not only accepts diversity, but lives off and through plurality, as the very structure of the Guru Granth itself reflects — being made up of a plurality of voices, traditions, peoples, places, times, castes, and religions. The overall message is clear: there can be innumerable namings of God because none can name God completely.

Though God causes Guru Nanak to speak, that does not mean that Guru Nanak understood his speech as fully capturing God’s Word — Nanak knows that the Word

*Pothi of the early 1700s.*



nature of True Being (*saciaru*), sometimes in terms of a Supreme Being (*akal purakh, hari, ram, khuda*), as the One (*ek*), sometimes as a Way (*sahaj, jugati, bidhi*), sometimes as the Unbroken Absorption (*liva-lai*), or state of Emptiness (*sunnu-samadhi, nirbana*), sometimes as a Unitive Meeting, (*mili*), and so on. In the manner of other mystics Guru Nanak is humbled by what can be said and what can not:

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਰਣ ਕਹਾ ਵੀਚਰੁ

ਜਪੁ

*What power have I to speak Your deep thought?*

SGGS p.3

At the very foundation of the Guru Granth Sahib then is this humility—in all respects—that recognises the inherent “unspeakability” of the Guru’s Word, and its unending quest. This humbling limitation, of expressing the Word into words, demands recognition and reflection; just as living by the Word demands interpretation and application. As Guru Nanak was humble, so too is the Guru Granth Sahib—yet this humility is lost if we presume to speak for the Guru Granth Sahib in some final way, and overlook that most important limitation of its inherent “unspeakability”.

cannot be owned. That is why the Word of God is not the exclusive right of anyone single person, group or language, for the Word always transcends the many vessels it speaks through. The Word is a living reality, not a definable concept. How to hear the Word in the world (not just in words) is the nature of Sikhi, since where the Word is, there is the Guru — and like God, the Guru is everywhere, within and without:

ਘਰਿ ਘਰਿ ਏਕੈ ਕਹਿ ਜਾਤੁ

ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤੀ ਮ:੧

*Within one's home [the body] and outside  
it know [that Word] as but One.*

SGGS p.1343

## The Sikh Scripture: Structure

Compiled in 1604, by Guru Arjan, the Sikh scripture has a sophisticated structure that has three main sections: A short **Opening Section** (pp.1-14) that has the *Mool Mantar*, often taken as a “creedal” statement of the Sikhs, the Japuji, Guru Nanak’s mature philosophical reflections



on the religious life, its path and the nature of reality, truth, will, and God), and a number of composite hymns that form part of the Sikh liturgical "prayers" (*Sodar, So Purakh and Sohila*). The second massive **musical section**, organised into the Thirty One Ragas, forms the major part of the Guru Granth (pp.12-1353). The third and final Miscellaneous and Concluding (pp.1353-1430) section has slokas and praises by a number of Saints and Gurus as well as Guru Arjan's Mundavani (seal) and the Raga Mala - a traditional list of the musical melodies.\*

### Arrangement by Raag and Reformative Exegesis

These hymns are classified under **musical melody (raag)** first, next by the nature of the metre of the hymn, thirdly by **authorship** and finally by the **clef**. It is significant that music, the raag, the song, precedes the singer, sound precedes words, as the *mool mantra* precedes the reflections on word-meaning. This is because the musical dimension cannot be ignored since it takes from the classical tradition the notion that each raag produces its own mood or emotion (*ras*: delight, flavor, ecstasy), and this mood is crucial in understanding the text as a performance, songs are for singing, and all the more powerful in public expression, working to create a shared community experience through repetition. This lived-experience sets the tone and rhythm of a shared attitude that is then carried into daily life. This evocation of reverential emotion that is calm yet certain, is key before interpretation and understanding of the Word can be attempted; the Granth's subtle truths cannot be accessed unless one first humbles oneself into a receptive stillness, as one does before hearing something profound. Singing and exegesis are interwoven into one performance where, through the evocation of illuminating emotion via public singing (*kirtan*), and the contemplation of the sung passages by to exegesis and commentary (*katha*), accompanied by daily prayers and meditations in private, the Guru's Word is engaged with in a variety of ways.

### Authors, Language and Key Genres

The Guru Granth Sahib is a book of poetic hymns, about 5900 in total. It is composed of many authors who can be classified into three major groups in order of importance: the Six **Sikh Gurus** (about 5000 hymns), 15 **Bhagats** or Saints (about 800), and the 17 **Bhatts** (about 150). The Guru Granth Sahib then is a diverse but most definitely a Sikh work. The language of the Granth is a "Punjabi/Western Hindi version of Sant Bhasha (language of the Saints)", but this cloaks quite a linguistic diversity ranging from Nanak's old Punjabi, through Arjan's Western Hindi to Tegh Bahadur's Braj.

There are three major poetic forms: The **salok** (*sakhi, doha*) is a **couplet** which is often an insightful and forceful statement born of seasoned experience. It pays testimony to the 'truth' in a succinct, critical and terse manner that is ideal for rhythmic recitation rather than melodious singing. Its epigrammatic form is used to summarise the key thoughts of the singer and/or the hymn, of which it may be the refrain.

The **shabad** (*pada*) is a short or long **lyrical song** aimed at evoking and sustaining a range of specific bhakti/bhagati emotions and attitudes. The melody of the raag is therefore instrumental in this evocation, as is group singing, rather than the private reflection that saloks inspire.

And finally the **vaar** (*ode*), a more lengthy, philosophical, and discursive 'ballad' composed of a series of stanzas or 'steps' (*pauris*) each of which is preceded by a salok, usually integrating the Sikh Gurus' hymns into one composite structure.

### The Guru's Word is Greater Than The Word of The Adi Granth

It seems that the guru-shabad is only "there" when someone **heeds, interprets and applies** it in daily interaction. The Guru Granth is only the beginning of the story, the active person who lives the Granth in his daily life is its end. The Guru Granth makes no sense as a Scripture worshipped in its own right, it only gains sense in those transformed by its teaching, after all what is an instruction if no one enacts it? Guru-shabad should extend beyond scripture and permeate life:



Guru Nanak and Guru Angad — as depicted in the 1800s illustration from *Janam Sakhi* manuscript.

\* Not a composition of any of the Gurus. - Ed.



ਭੀਰੋਂ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਮੈਧੀ ਜਨੁ ਖਯੈ ਜਿਸੁ ਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਸਬਦੁ ਰਹਨੁ ਅਚਰ।

ਮਲਰ ਮ:੧

*That person alone obtains the inner Nectar  
whose right living [applies] the jewel of the Guru's Word.  
SGGS p.1256*

The Guru Granth is not meant to be worshipped as the revealed Word of God, but listened to and acted upon as the wise counsel of the Guru. Therefore the Truth of the Guru's Word does not reside in the text, but in its enactment in the lives of those courageous enough to act selflessly. There is no greater way to disrespect the Guru Granth Sahib than to ignore it as a speaking Guru. In the seal of the Guru Granth Sahib (*Mundavani*), Guru Arjan notes that the holy food of the scripture (of truth, contentment and deep thought) is too precious to be forsaken the Word is in its eating. Truth, contentment and deep thought — these are not meant to be praised in empty repetition, but eaten and lived through their application, time and again. They are difficult things to eat/live for sure, and how one does it must differ in each case. But this much can be said, there is no relish of the Word without applying it in the world.

*It is for this reason also that the Word as law is not a feature of Sikhism, but rather the word as song, since what are emphasised are not rules, but loving devotion, an insightful engagement. And like a song, the Word has no limit. It is meant to be sung over and again, gaining fresh meaning as one grows and (un)learns more, not by providing new information but by transforming one's attitude. Indeed part of the lure of the poetic form is that it eludes total comprehension, and is enriched by ever new interpretations. The poem does not provide an answer to life's mysteries, but reveals its wonder. The poem by its very form is not limited to a singular meaning, so it does not offer an answer with the confidence of an ego's bark. Instead it entices the ego to unravel its mystery, and in the process unravel itself. The poetic structure is inherently contemplative and unsettling - it refuses to be tamed into singular, plain speech of prose philosophy.\**

The Guru Granth does not therefore concern itself with the accumulation of knowledge, but works rather to use knowledge to destroy the false self. In other words it is interested not in providing one with a doctrine, ideology, system of beliefs, a view, but rather a process of transformation — to transform one's vision of the world such that the Word, God, Truth become the only seen, the only reality. And for that to happen, that which causes one to grasp things, people, objects, views, has to be destroyed and that is of course the ego, or false self (ਹਉਮੈ). The duality of self-and-other, overblown in many cases into "us-and-them" (be it Protestant-Catholic, Hindu-Muslim, Keshdhari-Sahajdhari) actually masks the true nature of things, often styled as an indescribable wonder (ਜਿਸਦਾ). And like all dualities, which

hide the many layers of attachments, have all to be dismantled if the Word is to be heard:

ਦੁਜਾ ਮਲਿ ਸਾਇ ਪਛਾਣ

ਭਉਰੀ ਗੁਰਦੇਵੀ ਮ:੧

*Destroying [attachment to] the other, the Word is realised.  
SGGS p.226*

ਹਉਮੈ ਚੁਕੈ ਤਾਂ ਸਬਦੁ ਪਛਾਣ

ਅਰਿ ਭਾਰਿ ਦੇਖੇ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਨੁ

ਏਹ ਮਲਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਹੈ ਸਰੂ।

ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤੀ ਮ:੧

*When duality (dubidha) is removed then  
Recognise the Word (sabadu).  
Within one's home [the body] and outside it  
Know [that Word] as but One.  
This alone is the sublime understanding [of the] Word  
SGGS p.1343*

And of course the deepest and hardest attachment to undo is that of the self. This false self with its complex of desires and delusions is the main obstacle to the Word.

ਹਉਮੈ ਮਚੇ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦੇ ਯਏ।

ਭਉਰੀ ਮ:੧

*One who destroys the false I, finds the Guru's Word.  
SGGS p.226*

As a song is not a law, so a poem is not a treatise. The Gurus saw prose and philosophy as ill-suited vehicles for expressing the divine truth. True being is beyond the simplicities of a law, as it is beyond argument and ideology. The Gurus were aiming to create, not philosophers or theologians armed with their ideologies and doctrines, but creative beings of intelligent action that rely on developing their own relation to the living Word, and not on the systematisation of the Word into some theology. To read, sing, contemplate and apply the Guru Granth Sahib is to cultivate the art of listening to the Word within oneself and without; to hear the Word in the Guru Granth, but also beyond it, in others—for there is no place where the Name is not, and there is no person, place or text that does not provide the teaching of the Guru-Word: one only needs, to learn how to hear and respond to it.

And that demands an ever new understanding, as love demands perpetual renewal:

ਸਚੁ ਕੀ ਮਲਿ ਸਦਾ ਨਹਿਤਨ ਸਭਇ ਹੋਹੁ ਨਵੇਰਥਿ

ਭਉਰੀ ਪੁਰੀ ਭੀ ਮ:੧

*The understanding of the True One is  
Ever new; ever fresh is the love of the Word.  
SGGS p.242*

**Dr. Balbinder Singh Bhogal, Ph.D.**

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# Guru Granth Paath

## THE SACRED READING

The objective of this paper is to describe the real meaning of the *paath* (ੴ) in Sikh tradition. For this paper the Aad Guru Granth (AGGS) is considered consisting of *Sabd-Parmaan* which means a written testimony from the Guru as a means of valid knowledge cognate which is complementary with reason and perception but have a scope that exceeds beyond them on account of its subject matter. *Paath* of the Guru Granth is described not as a ritual but, rather, a process of recitation to seek wisdom. Intellectual deliberation to seek wisdom while keeping faith in the process is required to pursue the reading process. Whereas considering the knowledge contained in the *Sabd-Parmaan* as dogmas will be dupe, extreme scepticism will be a mental affliction. The seeker of the *Sabd-Parmaan* would do well in pursuing a middle way: to place one's faith and trust in the enlightenment of the Guru, and yet to continue to question one's own understanding of the Guru's teachings.

The reading of the Guru Granth is not like a reading of any book or even any scripture. Traditionally the term *paath* is used to distinguish this reading, which is somewhat akin to another term, recitation. The latter term still does not describe the real process of *paath*, but for lack of a more suitable alternate in English language we will continue to use the term Guru Granth reading to describe the spiritual Sikh practice of Guru Granth recitation. Actually, this reading is more of a personal experience with the Guru in the form of Gurubani verses.

Guru Granth reading requires an appropriate motivation and a proper skill to be the Guru-oriented. Both of these are beyond a mechanical reading or doing ritualistic *paath*. To receive any benefit one has to know why to read and how to read. The Guru censures those as the self oriented who read without knowing the skill of reading.

*The self-oriented people recite the scriptures, but they do not have the proper skill to do so.*

SGGS p.1052

The objective of this article is to describe the real meaning of the *paath* in Sikh tradition. A seeker reads Guru Granth for more than one reason. Some of those are discussed below.

Traditionally, every Sikh or seeker is urged to engage in formal reading of Guru Granth at least once a day as a pre-breakfast routine. It is so documented by the Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas, and so formalised in the Sikh Code of Conduct that was accepted by the Sikhs' premier organisation, the *Shromani Gurdwara Parbhandhak Committee*. Bhai Gurdas said *"The Sikhs of the Guru woke up early in the morning, took bath and read the verses of the Guru before proceeding towards the house of congregation."*

Vaar 40 Pauri 11



Similarly, it is suggested in the Sikh Code of Conduct that *"Every Sikh should read a passage from Sri Guru Granth Sahib daily before breakfast. Should this be missed on any day, the sacred reading or listening to a passage from the Granth may be done"*



any other time of the day. "

There should be hardly any one who is serious about *Gurmat* or the Guru's path and still finds this routine too difficult to follow. Everybody goes to bed and everybody gets up in the morning. So, everybody can spare a few minutes for Guru Granth reading in the morning and, then, possibly at night, from the twenty-four hours we are given every day. For more serious seekers, there will always be another interval sometime during the day to seek the Guru's vision through reciting from Guru Granth. Once we begin on this path, gradually, the reading periods begin to become a regular feature of our existence, and, if we are fortunate, we are silently contemplating on the Guru's verses at any or every hour of the day. This way we learn to open consciousness, if it is but for a moment and find ourselves in a state of receptivity to the Guru's vision. This state is considered worthy of praise, as Bhai Gurdas says *"I am sacrifice to those seekers who engage in singing and listening to the Guru's verses at all the time."*

Vaar 12, Pauri 2

According to Bhai Gurdas, besides the Sikhs, the recitation of Guru Granth was also employed to propagate the Guru's views to all others in the world:

*"The whole world may undertake the sacred reading of Guru Granth to sail through the sea of temptations in the human existence."*

Vaar 41, Pauri 21

Formally, Gurbani reading is done privately as well as in an environment of a congregation or any other public or private place especially prepared for this purpose. We will limit ourselves to discussion of a situation in which an individual seeker wishes to engage in personal conversation with Guru Granth Sahib.

### Paath is Not a Ritual

Both a mere ritual of reading and, in contrast, mental gymnastics of scholars are considered worthless in the Sikh tradition. Rather, the Guru Granth reading is a discourse with consciousness where concentration of mind and intellect are spent to the spiritual understanding. Through this reading, the theology and its life applications are understood in the light of the Guru's teaching. This is illustrated in the following description of ritualistic and scholastic reading by Bhai Gurdas.

*"By mere reading of the scriptures, scholars have not been able to comprehend God."*

Vaar 21 Pauri 2

Further, Bhai Gurdas says *"By repeated reading of the scriptures scholars win others, but they neither can bring their mind to any control nor can they satisfy their greed. Only through serving the Guru (following the Guru's teachings) in the company of holy men, one may dwell the Word of the Guru in the consciousness and contemplate on the Timeless."*

Kabit 457 (2)

One may mention here that to "experience" the verses is different from a comprehension of the philosophy imbibed in the verses. This difference forms the real backbone of the seeker's religious life. In the seeker's case, as opposed to a scholar or a philosopher, the experiences influence philosophical and religious theories. It is also true that "philosophical beliefs" shape our religious modus operandi, provide specific expectations, and thus have a formative influence on the kinds of experience that are actually produced.

### Reading as Spiritual Witnessing

As has been discussed in the section on Gurbani reading as a faith practice, through this practice, a stage of mental concentration is reached when one is able to witness the Guru in the consciousness. This stage is beyond the realm of intellectual understanding. As Guru says

*"One does not obtain the essence through intellectual recitations or immense shrewdness: the essence is obtained through faith and adoration."*

SGGS p.436

Before this stage, one has earlier been convinced intellectually of the theoretical character of the experience as a step in the direction of evoking the Guru within oneself. Intellectual acceptance is necessary and inescapable prerequisite for this experience as is the faith in the person of the Guru. Then the testimony of the scripture leads to an affirmation of an otherwise unaffirmable identity between one's consciousness and the Word of the Guru. This state may be termed as the witness consciousness. At this stage, one witnesses the Guru reflected in the consciousness in stages like the reflection of the moon on lake water; first on a wave, then on ripples, and finally on a clam and unruffled expanse of water. For example, Guru Ram Das says, *"The life-giving word of the Guru is very sweet. Rarely some Guru-oriented seekers may witness and taste it. If they do, they the Divine Nectar shines within their heart and they drink the supreme essence. They are at the gate of the Truth, which vibrates to them like a musical instrument."*

SGGS p.113

*"I continuously sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord, day and night, singing the Lord's Praises, I cannot find the limits."*



*The mind of the Guru-oriented returns to its own home; it meets the Lord of the Universe, to the beat of the celestial drum. I see the Divine with my eyes, then my mind is satisfied, with my ears, I listen to the Guru's Bani, and the Word of His Sabd. By listening, my soul is softened, delighted by the realisation of subtle essence, chanting the Name of the Lord of the Universe. In the grip of the three qualities, they are engrossed in love and attachment to Alaya; only as Guru oriented do they find the absolute quality, absorption in bliss. With a single, impartial eye, look upon all alike, and witness God pervading all."*

SGGS p.833

This stage is essential to derive full benefit of the reading practice. It is to actually witness the truths of the Guru's teachings within the consciousness. To repeat, what it means is that during the practice of the Gurbani reading when one achieves the mindfulness with the truths of spirituality, one is able to readily employ deep introspection to experience the divinity. The darkness of ignorance disappears.

*"When the lamp is lit, the darkness is dispelled; reading the Vedas, sinful intellect is destroyed. When the sun rises, the moon is not visible. Wherever spiritual wisdom appears, ignorance is dispelled."*

SGGS p.791

Within the context of witnessing the verses of the sacred writings, one must bring forth a clear image of the verses. Until one knows how is it achieved many methods must be employed to learn the skill of promoting the achievement. Although it is difficult to describe something, which is a prerogative of the practitioners only, it is sufficient to say that the skill comes from the company of enlightened co-seekers or enlightened clergy. The main difficulty in the way of achieving this state is mental obscurations, lack of faith, and actual motivation.

Through the practice one learns that one's own mind is in reality none other than the embodiments of the whole game. To cut through ordinary, deceptive appearances stemming from ignorance, one practices a merger in the verse, in which one assumes the "divine role" of being a doer and the witness, and regards all visions as pure expressions of the Guru's teachings. This includes imagining one's own body in an idealised, enlightened form, the embodiment of enlightened wisdom, or the embodiment of enlightened compassion. Before employing such extensive meditative imagination, it is essential that one recognise the conceptually contrived nature of one's ordinary experience of reality, including one's own identity, one's body, mind and the environment. For without an

understanding of the emptiness of inherent nature of all phenomena-including those imagined in the practice of the witness exercises the practice of the Gurbani reading meditation may be reduced to an absurd fantasy. Bhagat Kabir expresses the witness experience as *"I am the maid-servant of my Lord God. When my mind was convinced and submitted to the Lord, it brought everything in my control. Be wise and consider this well, O Saints, O Siblings of Destiny - search your own hearts, seek and find. The Beauty and the Light of the Lord, Har, Har, is present in all. In all places, the Lord dwells near by, close at hand."*

SGGS p.168

## Discursive Reading

Many seekers of spirituality when begun to read Guru Granth often find themselves in a situation where they are incapable of resuming (or ever adopting) a critical outlook on some verses. Therefore, they feel incapable of obtaining understanding and making it available to others. This is often not a question of ignorance of Gurbani grammar or otherwise its transliterate meaning. But, rather it is confronting an aspect of theology, which, if accepted, would unsettle the inherited thoughts of the reader. The scholarship is irrelevant here. One would learn later on the path of the Guru that the doubts that we entertain with respect to very unfamiliar theology are largely the outcome of prejudices shaped by our experiences with more familiar theology. Although one will be forced not to be objective here, one must realise that it is always due to our dogmatic biases on the relevance of religion, philosophy, and ethics to the mystical experiences. The Guru says,

*"The Pandits, the religious scholars, read but they cannot taste the essence. They are attracted by the theology of duality and Maya, their minds wander in doubts and unfocused. The attachment to Maya has displaced all their understanding; making mistakes, they live in regret."*

SGGS p.116

In such a case, these seekers may often continue to proceed on their path of seeking spirituality from the Guru by initially accepting the verses uncritically. There is a strong tendency not to wait and make a big issue of what transiently does not conform to human reasoning. So we act on the most probable hypothesis to explain situations that we do not comprehend, trusting that our animal intellect would prove us wise. The fact is that only faith in our Guru will gladden the heart in our quest for salvation or enlightenment. We should keep the faith because only faith is considered a wellspring of insight into the Divine mysteries. Guru Arjan states,



*"One who obeys the Guru's Teachings one hundred per cent that selfless attendant comes to comprehend the nature of the Transcendent Lord."*

SGGS p.287

Too much doubt at the outset will hold us back and prevent us from entering the spiritual domain. It is the task of the Guru-oriented seeker to distinguish between valid instructions into a practice, such as contemplative meditation, which can hardly be learned in any other way. The religious or philosophical superstructure, which is added, is often not equally meaningful to a seeker. They are just religious and moral paraphernalia, which are more important only to a scholar or a fundamentalist, rather than to a seeker. On account of these and other consideration, it is best to suspend doubt for the time being if we wish to continue learning from the Guru. At this stage one must be conscious of the fact that such an early stage will not last forever if we persevere in our search. At a later and more advanced stage, we will be able to resort to analysis and critical evaluation, and not stray into the domain of continuing to sleepwalk without gaining any significant knowledge or understanding.

Another phase of this training in discursive reading is designed to cast light on the unsatisfactory nature of any state of existence. Regardless of the nature of one's existence, as long as it is conditioned by one's mental afflictions, one remains vulnerable to all manner of pain and grief. By focusing on the pervasiveness of suffering, one's disillusionment becomes complete, leaving only one priority: to attain nirvana, in which there is a total and irreversible freedom from all suffering.

*"Recite and listen, with keeping faith in your mind Your afflictions shall be sent far away, and peace shall come home."*

SGGS p.2

*"When the humble servant accepts and acts according to the Words of the Guru, then the Guru emancipates this seeker in person."*

SGGS p.482

This shift in understanding occurs directly as a result of one's sustained experience with apparent unsatisfactory nature of the verse and the benefits of attaining enlightenment. Each of us by diverse ways of attending to things, has the sort of a universe one believes to inhabit. With their emphasis on the vanity of mundane things, a sense of sin, and fear of being stupid, a beginner in seeking seems to be aiming at inducing the state of the "sick soul"

eloquently discussed in James's (1902/1982) *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. Far from condemning the sick soul, James claims that this mind-state images over a wider scale of experience than that of those who avert their attention from evil and live simply in the light of good. The "healthy-minded" attitude of the latter, he says, is splendid as long as it will work; but it breaks down impotently as soon as melancholy arises. Moreover, the evil facts that the "healthy-minded" individual refuses to acknowledge are a genuine part of reality, which, he suggests, may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth.

### Paath is Conceptual Analysis

There is a difference between a reading of the verses as a traditional meditation and a study of the verses to learn spiritual concepts. Today's seeker would know the degree of difference that separates meditation from concept analysis just as the religion differs from the scientific mentality. Sikh theologian Bhai Gurdas describes the encounter between a Sikh and the Guru as *"To focus on the Guru's portrayal is to dwell on the comprehension of Guru's sabd. This comprehension of 'the knowledge becomes a weapon to conquer the five evils."*

Kabit 135(2)

Further, Bhai Gurdas accepts only that person as worth of the Guru's religion that is Guru oriented and who obeys the Guru's will according to the deep consideration of the Guru's verses.

*"The Way of Guru-oriented is defined as adoption of the wisdom of the Guru; also to live in the way of the Lord and to contemplate upon the Word of the Guru."*

Vaar 9 Pauri 2

Formation of conceptual constructs must be an aim of reading of the verses from Guru Granth. It corresponds roughly to the modern philosophical notion of conceptual construct. Such conceptual identification often, but not invariably, entails a reification of the entity, such that it is apprehended as existing independently of the conceptual designation of it to form a belief.

Although a conceptual analysis of belief is far too vast a topic to treat adequately in the present context, it may be worthwhile to note James's perspective on this matter. In his essay entitled "Faith, and the Right to Believe". James identifies two kinds of intellectuals. Rational intellectuals "lay stress on deductive and 'dialectic' arguments, making large use of abstract concepts and pure logic. Empiricist



intellectuals "are more 'scientific,' and think that the order must be sought in our sensible experiences which are found in hypotheses based exclusively thereon." In this light, a seeker more inclined to mysticism would seem to bear the earmarks of an empiricist intellectual, while more traditional seeker would appear to be a rational intellectual. Both are accepted in Sikh tradition. Intellectualism alone is inadequate when it thinks that one can gain knowledge best by a mind merely passively receptive. The faithful admirer seeks qualities of the objective of the faith with a sense of appreciation or even adoration. For a seeker, such a faith is especially focused on the qualities of enlightenment, and adoration is felt towards those who embody the enlightenment. Further, the faith of yearning entails the conviction that it is possible to realise in oneself the excellent qualities that one admires, and with such faith one aspires to do so. Uncritical grasping of dogmas is dupe, while extreme scepticism is simply a mental affliction. There is a middle way that is advocated for a reader of the Guru Granth. It is to place one's faith and trust in the enlightenment of the Guru, and yet to continue to question one's own understanding of the Guru's teachings. Without faith, there would be no inspiration to enter the path to enlightenment; but without using one's critical faculties, it would be impossible to progress along that path. One must keep in mind that, while the enlightenment from the historical Guru took place in the past, one's own enlightenment lies in the future.

The above sketch of the *paath* of our tradition certainly bears some traits in common with religion as it is conceived in the modern West, and yet in some important respects it profoundly diverges from a classical model of religion. Certain elements of this approach appear to be scientific; and yet it differs from modern natural science. While the empirical element is largely contemplative and introspective, scientific approach is dominantly scholastic and extrospective. The Guru leads the following way:

*One, who speaks, merely describes speech. But one, who understands, intuitively realises. Both, by first inspecting and then reflecting upon it, convince my mind.*

SGGS p.229

## Belief Acquisition and Stabilisation

There is a great deal of emphasis in Sikh religion on forming a belief system and its inculcation into the consciousness. For example, Guru says that none of the rituals are of any avail until one come to believe the teachings that promote cleansing of mind and insight into the self.

*Pilgrimages, austere discipline, compassion and charity these, by themselves, bring only an iota of merit. First listening and then forming a belief system in the mind that gives insight into the Self while bathing at the sacred shrine deep within.*

SGGS p.4

A belief is acquired from knowledge that is gained from reading of the scripture. It corresponds roughly to the modern philosophical notion of conceptual construct. Such conceptual identification often, but not invariably, entails a reification of the entity, such that it is apprehended as existing independently of the conceptual designation of it.

*Great men speak the teachings by relating them to individual situations, but the whole world shares in them. One who becomes Gurmukh knows the Fear of God, and realises his own self. If, by Guru's Grace, one remains dead while yet alive, the mind becomes content in itself. Those who have no faith in their own minds, O Nanak - how can they speak of spiritual wisdom?*

SGGS p.647

*Some speak and expound, and while speaking and lecturing, they pass away. The scriptures speak and expound on the Lord, but they do not know His limits. Not by reading for studying, but through understanding, is the Lord's Mystery revealed. There are six pathways described in the Shaastras, but how rare are those who merge in the True Lord through them. The True Lord is Unknowable; through the Word of His Shabad, we are embellished.*

SGGS p.148

They look at the reading as only the scholarly activity of the self-oriented people.

*The Pandits, the religious scholars, read their books; but they do not understand the real meaning. They give instructions to others, and then walk away, but they deal in Maya themselves. Speaking falsehood, they wander around the world, while those who remain true to the Sabd are excellent and exalted.*

SGGS p.56

The objective of a seeker of the Word of the Guru is to persevere and continue the practice of reading Guru Granth. Their aim would be to merge their knowledge of *sabd parmaan* into their belief system. When this is achieved the belief system of the seeker will be stabilised. Further pursuit of the continuous acquisition of additional knowledge would further strengthen the belief system and its stabilisation. Those who aspire for stabilisation continue to investigate the limitless types of specific beliefs; a few reach the level of realisation.



*"The Gurmukh knows the unstruck sound current of the Bani; how rare are those who understand"*

SGGS p.945

By continuous practice of concepts in the Guru's verses, one's belief system is stabilised and doubts are reduced. One's state of mind is engaged with quiescence and leads to insights. The interested seekers should then explore the means of cultivation of insight. Although thousands of different kinds of insights are taught in the Granth, they are contained within the twofold classification of quiescence of mind and consciousness followed by insight into the Divine. So, an aspiring reader of Guru Granth is advised to explore these two disciplines, for they provide the key to the vast array of contemplative practices taught in Sikhism. During reading, a seeker entails conceptual analysis or reflection in order to bring forth a specific insight or other virtue such as love or kinship of humankind, etc. After convincing oneself of the validity of a certain aspect of the teaching by means of reading, discursive meditation, concept formation and belief stabilisation one brings the reality in question repeatedly to consciousness so that one may merge that belief with the consciousness.

Stabilising of belief during reading of Guru Granth involves the simple placement of the attention on a chosen subject and concept derived from the reading. In order for the mind to be radically transformed by insight into some aspect of reality, the attention must be repeatedly stabilised in that concept. Let us take an example of one such object of attention. The concept is that I can of mine own self do nothing; the creative soul (*Karta Purakh*) of my creator within me is the doer. The meaning of the first part is immediately apparent; but what does the statement mean that the Creator within me does the work? What is the Creator within me? We know that when Gurbani makes that statement it refers to *Karta Purakh*, Divine God or *Waheguru* all referring to God. It must mean, then, that God within me does the work. There is a God power-something within us that is revealed. The life, intelligence, and wisdom that are within us are only God's reflection.

*"The Guru's body is drenched with Ambrosial Nectar; He sprinkles it upon me, O Lord King. Those whose minds are pleased with the Word of the Guru's Bani, drink in the Ambrosial Nectar again and again."*

SGGS p.449

*"I am a sacrifice; my soul is a sacrifice, to those who are adorned with the Word of the Sabd"*

SGGS p.109

When you begin to read you may either set a number of pages to read or go on reading for as long as you wish to. If I have opportunity, I like to read until I feel that I obtained some thing that I would like to dwell on within my heart for a period of time. There is no fixed ritual as to how much should one read. You may read only one paragraph, or you may read several pages before some particular thought attracts your attention. When this occurs, you may close your eyes and take that thought into your contemplation. Think about it; hold it right in front of you; repeat it to yourself. Ask yourself. Why did this particular verse come to me? Does it have an inner meaning for me? What is its significance to me at this time and how will it touch my life in the near future?

As you continue contemplating and brooding on a verse another thought may come to your attention. Consider both of these thoughts: Is there any relationship between them? Is there any coherence? Why did this quotation follow the first one? By this time probably a third idea and then a fourth will have come, and all these thoughts will have come out of your awareness, out of your consciousness. In this short period of reading meditation that may have been of only a few minutes' duration, you have experienced spirituality revealing itself; you have opened yourself to divine Intelligence and Love. This is the Word of God, which is quick and sharp and powerful. You now realise that, for a seeker, the Guru Granth reading is just not an ordinary reading but something much more; something that only ritualistic reading cannot accomplish. Bhai Gurdas describes this process of reading Guru Granth as:

*"Trees serve as pillars and roofs for the houses. They are sawed and nailed to make boats for people to cross the rivers and myriads of other waves. Likewise, the Sikhs of the Guru, in love and discipline of the Lord, practice the Words of the Guru. They urge numerous others to do the same and help them liberated from bondage."*

Vaer 14 Pauri 9

Another point is that *paath* will continue to affect one's behaviour during the rest of time. Only a visionless person would read without meaning it to incorporate its knowledge in other aspects of life.

*"One reads the scriptures, but still tells lies; such is the intellect of one who has no guru or vision."*

SGGS p.1013

This is the real test of sacred reading.

**Dr. (Bhai) Harbans Lal**  
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# Ithias Sri Guru Granth Sahib\*

## ਮੁੰਦਾਵਨੀ

Whether the Guru Granth ends with *Mundavni*, a composition of Guru Arjan, or with *Raagmaala*, which has a disputed authorship, is a matter that has sporadically engaged the attention of Sikh scholars for over a century. *Mundavni*, literally meaning a legally binding seal should appear at the end because it indicates the closure or completion of a seminally important document. (This is the accepted translation of *Mundavni*, though in some dialects of Punjabi the word also means a conundrum or a brainteaser.) Then where did the little over one page of *Raagmaala* come from?

Most educated Sikhs would agree that *Raagmaala* is an index or listing of the ragas in the Guru Granth, and it is incomplete at that, and varies substantially. We read it though that it fits neither the style nor the substance of the Guru Granth. Yet it has become integral to the Guru Granth and I believe it appears in every printed copy that is available in the marketplace. Scholars have debated it and rejected it, yet its persistent appearance continues to give it life. So much so that the Sikh Code of Conduct (*Rehat Maryada*) takes no position on this issue. Its recommendation is that Sikhs may choose to read this composition or not, as they wish. How did this happen is evidence of the power of politics or of benign neglect.

Giani Gurdit Singh is a dedicated scholar and respected interpreter of the Sikh scripture and related literature. It is appropriate, therefore, that he has cast an analytical eye on the controversy that surrounds the *Raagmaala* - how it arose and how it continues to be fed so that it still survives.

In the early 17th century, when Guru Arjan compiled the main corpus of the Guru Granth, a spurious rescension (*Bhai Banno's Birth*) appeared and this contained many additional compositions, including the *Raagmaala* and even a recipe for making ink. In these early days before printing when handwritten copies of sacred liturgy were made by scribes, errors and additions were not uncommon, either through ignorance, carelessness or because the spirit so moved the scribe. Also Indian culture, rich as it is, is really one of oral tradition. It has never valued consistency, precision or accuracy in evidence, whether in history or

literature. The first printed copy of the Guru Granth Sahib debuted in 1864, almost 400 years after the Gutenberg Bible was printed.

Giani Gurdit Singh ably explores almost all available historical rescensions of the Guru Granth and finds that most did not contain this spurious composition. Early history is fascinating and provides some interesting vignettes. In 1907, controversy broke out at the Police gurdwara at Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia) on whether to read the *Raagmaala* or not. The matter was referred to the Chief Khalsa Diwan (founded 1901), which ruled that *Raagmaala* was not *gurbani*. A similar decision followed controversy in a Nairobi gurdwara in 1917. Some gurdwaras resorted to placing two slips of paper with the choices written on them in front of the Guru Granth and picking one at random after prayer. *Raagmaala* stood consistently rejected.

Most Sikh reformers of that time, including the Bhassaur group, Chief Khalsa Diwan and Bhai Vir Singh took a principled stand against the *Raagmaala*. Maculiffe too concluded that the Guru Granth concluded with *Mundavni*, which was inexplicably followed by *Raagmaala* - a composition of a Muslim poet, Alam. Yet, Bhai Vir Singh, a luminary of the period, changed his mind in 1917 and started advocating the inclusion of *Raagmaala*. In 1918 Bhai Jodh Singh, another celebrated Sikh scholar concluded the reading of the Guru Granth with *Mundavni*.

In 1920 when Sikhs regained control over the Akal Takht, once again they started concluding the reading of Guru Granth at *Mundavni*. This remained true for all the *Akhand paoths* that were concluded during the Gurdwara Reform Movement in the 1920's. In the first draft of the *Rehat Maryada* in 1936, *Raagmaala* was rejected. Yet in 1945, the question was revisited and finally tabled without its resolution. At this meeting, Bhai Jodh Singh had done an about turn and now supported *Raagmaala*. By then Bhai Kahn Singh (Nabha) was no longer alive, and the debate was dominated by the *sants* and *mahants* of the time. To be fair, Bhai Jodh Singh was seriously challenged on his changed stance on this issue. He answered some and then preferred to walk out of the meeting. The author of this



## The encyclopaedia of Sikhism published by the Punjabi University states :

*Mundavani* (lit. a seal or riddle), the concluding hymn of the Guru Granth Sahib composed by Guru Arjan as an epilogue to the Scripture which he had himself compiled and the first copy of which was transcribed under his guidance. The hymn comprises two parts; in the first part, the Scripture is metaphorically referred to as a salver containing three articles, truth, contentment and contemplation. Then the fourth also is mentioned – the nectar Name which sustains all. He who, says the Guru partakes of this fare is saved. This is something not to be renounced; one must forever bear this in mind. Thus will one swim across the worldly-ocean. One then beholds the entire universe as the manifestation of the Supreme Being. The second part, comprising two couplets, is by way of thanksgivings. The Guru, rendering gratitude, recites the paen: "Thou made me worthy of this task, Lord. I know not the limit of Thy favour. Meritless am I – without merit. It was with thy own mercy that I met the lord....." *Mundavani* is an integral part of the scriptural text and is always recited at the end of any full-reading of the Holy Book. It is also recited as part of the *Rahras*, the daily evening prayer of the Sikhs.

Exegetes have interpreted the word *Mundavani* variously. Some take it to mean a riddle in which sense it is still used in the Pothohari dialect of Punjabi. They quote in support of their view this line from Guru Amar Das, Nanak III: *ek mundavani satiguru pai gursikha ladhi bhali*, the Guru has posed this *mundavani*, i.e. riddle, and the Sikhs have unravelled it (GC 645). By mentioning in the opening line of the hymn *Mundavani* the articles which comprise the divine fare, Guru Arjan, they argue, was inviting the Sikhs to explore through the sacred text their true meaning. More commonly, the term *mundavani* as used by Guru Arjan is understood to be the equivalent of a seal or stamp. The Guru wrote *Mundavani* as a conclusion to the Guru Granth Sahib, thus affixing his seal to the holy writ. The seal was in token

of the authentication of the text; it was also perhaps meant to preclude any apocryphal additions.

Bhai Kahn Singh in his "Gur Shabad Ratnakar Mahankosh" also defines *Mundavani* as the, seal of finality of the completion of the *Bani* for the Guru Granth.

Collectively as a Panth, the Sikhs in the early twentieth century agreed the *Bani* ends with the *Slok* mentioned above. But for some mysterious reasons the Panth continues to recite the *Raagmala* which occurs after the *Mundavani* and the *Slok* mentioned above. It becomes even more unexplainable when one notes that though the *Raagmala* reads like an enumeration of Raags not all the raags used in Guru Granth Sahib are included. It goes beyond the raags, used by the Gurus in compilation of the main Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Further more, the question arises why an index like composition be recited giving it the same status as the *Gurbani*!

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is work of Divine inspiration. Guru Arjan Dev's vision and layout of the text (compositions) are done with purpose. Just think of the thought content of the opening lines of Japuji, the Mool Mantar and juxtapose it with the *Mundavani*. "The ultimate is one and pervades all, it is self created eternal truth realised through His Grace – and *Mundavani* opens with the statement that the Universe is permeated with Truth, *Santokh* and *Naam* etc."

The fifth Master then adds that this has to be understood (*Vichar*) and practised if redemption is to be sought. This is followed by a *slok* as is the *Mool Mantar* followed by a *slok* too. The scheme and logic of the Gurus is complete.

The last *slok* too sums up the Sikh ethos that only through His Grace, His Pity/Mercy (ਮੇਰ) and Rehmat (رحمة) can one become one with Him.

Thereafter comes the *Mundavani*, the seal of finality.

One therefore wonders as from where, how and why did the reading of *Raagmala* get into the picture!

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book - Giani Gurdit Singh - was also present at the meeting, so we have an eyewitness account of history in the making.

Giani Gurdit Singh also takes a pleasantly educational detour and lists several *Raagmanas* composed by poets and musicians of that era; apparently it was a much-favored style of versification.

A whole chapter is devoted to the Muslim poet Alam who is reputed to have been a contemporary of Guru Arjan and of Emperor Akbar. With a plethora of citations from Sikh and non-Sikh scholars, Giani Gurdit Singh leaves little doubt that this *Raagmaala*, which has become a part of the Guru Granth, is in fact derived from an epic poem of Alam celebrating a love story - a la Romeo and Juliet - that would be found in every culture. How it jumped to the pages of

Guru Granth still remains a mystery. Why do Sikhs keep it there is a bigger riddle! It appears at times somewhat like the Indian equivalent of the Gordian knot with its frustrating persistence, which will only respond to similar treatment.

It is a sad commentary on the popularity of Sikh literature that this book, which analyses such an important matter, is privately published and not by an important house with worldwide distribution facilities.

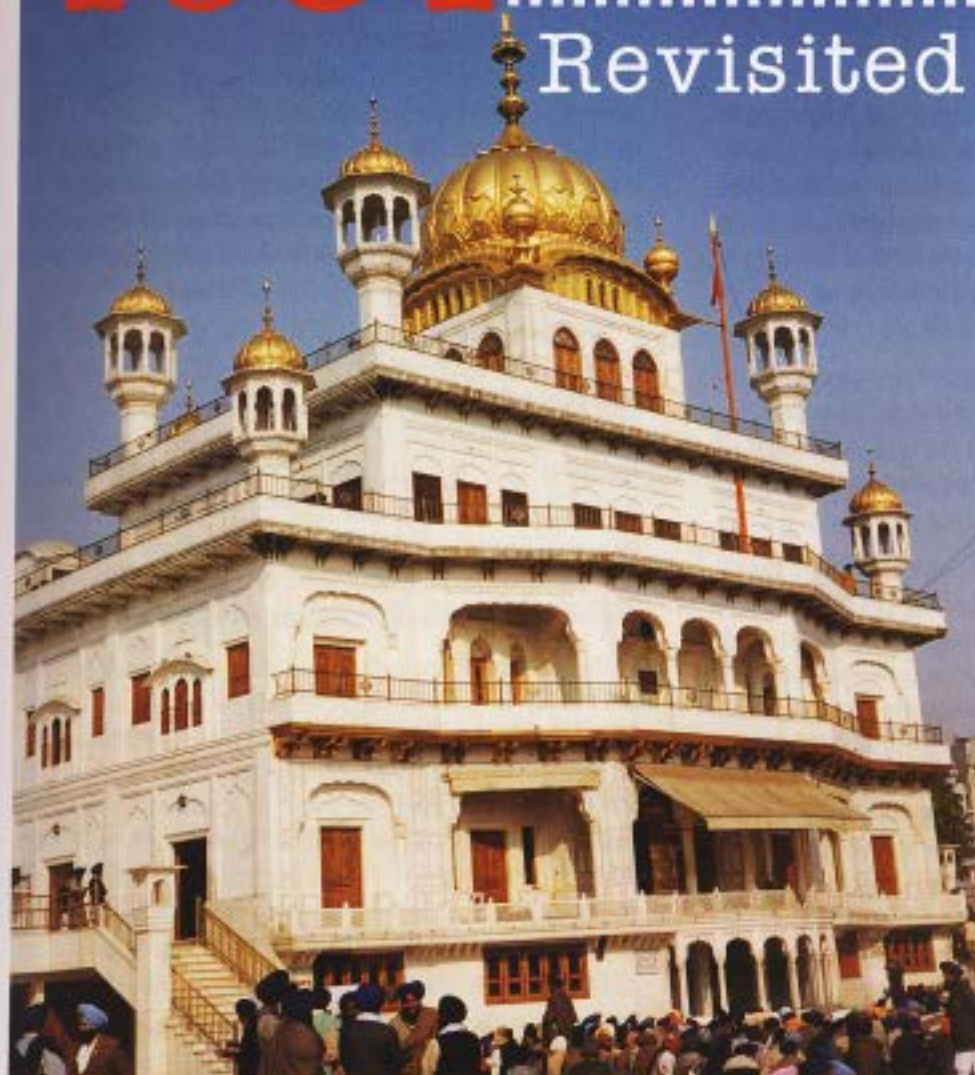
Dr. I.J. Singh

\* by Giani Gurdit Singh, 2003  
302 Pages, Rs 300 (US \$ 15; UK £ 10)  
Sahitya Prakashan  
56 Sector 4, Chandigarh, India



# 1984

## Revisited



indefinitely. (Now, 20 years later, some still languish in jails without trials). All constitutional provisions and civil liberties were suspended. The state of Punjab became a virtual prison for its inhabitants. Villages were emptied of Sikh men. Punjab now appears to be at peace, but the quiet is really only the silence of mausoleums and cemeteries. The "cease-fire" is an uncomfortable one. Peace remains both illusive and elusive.

Sikhs worldwide remember the killed and the maimed in protests and futile demands for investigation and justice. These have become yearly rituals. The Indian Government has ignored them for 20 years and will surely do so again. One Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was assassinated for her role. Her son, Rajiv Gandhi, who succeeded her to the office, repeatedly denied that any human rights violations had taken place in India, while human rights groups, including Amnesty International, just as repeatedly documented Governmental abuses. Yet

another Government inquiry commission is currently in place, but it has a very narrow mandate. Much of the evidence has disappeared or been tainted. Now cynical, people expect little justice.

The events of 1984 and the following years remain important to thinking people everywhere and cannot be but wrenching realities to Sikhs throughout the world. How we perceive these events and how we deal with them through the rearview mirror of history will define our humanity. When we dismiss them as matters of little concern, we diminish ourselves.

I wonder, then, why is it that these events have rarely been discussed from a rational, scholarly and historical

June comes around every year with uncomfortable regularity. In 1984, on Guru Arjan's martyrdom day – 5 June – the Indian Army launched a full-scale invasion of the Golden Temple in Amritsar and of 40 other gurdwaras across the Punjab. Thousands were massacred; there was no accounting of the number of Sikh men, women and children killed or injured or of those incarcerated for years without trial. We estimate and remember how many disappeared or will be killed by the thousands of unclaimed shoes that they left behind.

June 1984 set into motion events that remain too horrendous to contemplate and recount. Young Sikh men were indiscriminately arrested and held without trial



perspective. Over the years, Sikhs have established at North American Universities six chairs dedicated to Sikh studies. The sole activity of these programmes is to teach and to conduct research in all areas pertinent to the life, beliefs and history of Sikhs. In other words, Sikh existence in all its facets – historical and contemporary – is the reason these programmes exist.

Why is it, then, that no North American Sikh studies programme has even once in all these years explored, away from the slogans, protests and polemics, the events of 1984 that continue to affect the thinking of most, if not all, Sikhs even today? I recognise that such a conference has not yet been held in India either, but political realities may be entirely different in that country.

In arguing for such a conference or symposium, I do not write as an apologist for Sikh militants, extremists or any so-called separatists, nor do I write as an enemy of India or its Government. I write this because the issue will not go away, nor should it.

Four reasons for this academic neglect come to mind. The first reason is that the events are too recent and the emotions too raw for an objective look. The second reason, the paucity of honest and objective Sikh or non-Sikh scholars in the area, may be cited to explain why the existing Sikh studies programmes have held no academic conference. The third reason sometimes suggested is that these events occurred in India; they are far removed from the existence and concerns of Sikhs in the diaspora and, therefore, perhaps are not an important priority for them. A fourth argument sometimes put forth posits that non-Sikhs around the world would not be interested in what might have happened to this small minority of Sikhs, 10,000 miles away in India. I think all four arguments are largely specious, but they deserve some exploration.

In the 1960s, I watched with horror as the United States participation in the Vietnam War unfolded and with fascination as the movement that powerfully protested it grew in this country. I also saw the impact of the struggle against racial discrimination and the times of charismatic leaders like Martin Luther King, as well as the shameful role of the FBI director J. Edgar Hoover. Then there was the growing national awareness of and the continuing moral crises – hardly over yet – concerning women's rights and gender issues. Certainly on all these matters emotions ran high and continue to do so even today. These matters divided the United States as no other issue had in memory or history, except perhaps the (American) Civil War. A spate of academic literature is written and university conferences occur on each issue, and such activity continues unabated.

No one could have been more involved in the policies that shaped the Vietnam War than Robert McNamara. His 1995 book *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam*, may be flawed, even biased, but it continues to be discussed in college courses and at academic conferences.

As an informed citizen I am expected to be able to discuss the story of apartheid in South Africa. As an American I remain interested and deeply concerned about the genocide in Rwanda and the plight of women in Afghanistan. Why, then, should I hold my tongue or suspend my judgement when it comes to the apparently genocidal policies of an Indian Government against its own people?

The Israeli-Arab struggle never fails to make news. For more than 50-years it has baffled policy makers and peace brokers of the world and will likely continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Commentators on it never had the luxury of calm, distance and time, but academic discussions do not cease; they are not held in deep freeze. One can probably find a new book or a new academic conference on the Middle East any day of the week. Are they guaranteed to be unbiased, scholarly and objective? Hardly.

In matters of strongly conflicting viewpoints such as the Punjab tragedy or the Arab-Israeli imbroglio, there is no guarantee that participants can ever be largely objective. Of course, there is no such thing as total objectivity; at best it remains a direction, like a star to a sailor. But time can and will play tricks. There is also no assurance that evidence will last or that it will not be tarnished in time. If some objectivity can come with time, so can memories be lost and prejudice harden. This is the strongest argument against neglect.

There are respectable scholars with impeccable academic credentials and sufficiently provocative but unimpeachable data that merit academic discussion and debate, even scholarly disagreement. I point to the works of Cynthia Keppley Mahmood, Brian Keith Axel, Inderjeet Singh Jaijee, Justice Tarkunde and Ram Narayan Kumar; not all of them are Sikhs or even Indians. Numerous reports by Amnesty International also exist, along with records of other judicial and non-judicial commissions and investigative reporters. There are insightful, even controversial, reports by journalists – Eastern and Western, Indian and non-Indian, biased and unbiased. There are documents from the Government of India, and from other countries – both India's allies and those unfriendly to it.

The argument that posits that events in India are of no import to Sikhs in the diaspora or to other people in the world is also false. I think that of all the reasons for



neglecting the events of 1984, this is the least tenable. Immediately in the aftermath of the attack on the *Golden Temple* by the Indian Army in June 1984, massive protests were mounted by Sikhs in the diaspora all over the world – in London, Toronto, Los Angeles, Vancouver and New York, for example. Even today, many of my non-Sikh friends continue to display the greatest curiosity and anguish about those dark and ugly days and their repercussions on the present.

Respectable authors such as Khushwant Singh and Patwant Singh, who have no truck with Sikh separatists, have labeled the killings of Sikhs in India as Government inspired and organised, akin to the Nazi pogroms against the Jews. Tell the Jews worldwide that what happened to them in Nazi Germany is of no concern outside the borders of Germany. Tell the world that what happens in the Middle East today is irrelevant to the Jew or Arab living in America. In the global village that we now occupy, Bosnia is important to us, as is Guatemala; terrorism in Munich is not less significant than terrorism in Omaha or at the World Trade Centre; genocide in Rwanda, Chechnya, Punjab or Gujarat affect our lives even though we are remote from those places.

I should add parenthetically that at one recent conference at Hofstra University, a young Sikh scholar from the United Kingdom did make a presentation on the sorry state of human rights in India. Three years ago, and again last year, a day-long conference at Columbia University in New York explored human rights violations in India, but the conference was unconnected to any of the existing programmes on Sikh studies at that university or elsewhere.

A few years ago Sikhs in Canada were in the midst of a struggle to be allowed to join the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and serve while wearing a turban and long hair. Professor Spellman, an academician, argued that the turban and long hair were perhaps not articles of faith in Sikhism and may not be necessary to Sikh belief. This undermined three centuries of unbroken Sikh tradition, but none of the Sikh scholars holding community-funded university chairs in Sikh studies touched the issue publicly; their silence was indeed deafening and spoke volumes. I would think that a matter of such grave consequence to the survival of Sikhs in the diaspora deserved the support and commitment of these scholars, or at least their engagement and analysis. I add here that the one academician who supported the Sikh position as an extremely effective expert witness turned out to be the much-maligned Hew McLeod.

In all that I have said, one question still remains: why have Sikh academic programmes shied away from

contemporary issues that affect Sikhs and Sikhism, particularly in the diaspora?

A possible explanation of why current aspects of Sikh existence appear to claim so little attention by our formally trained scholars may lie in the fact that most Sikh studies programmes are housed in the discipline and methodology of history, South Asian studies or social sciences. Historically, “social studies” have served to fence off non-Western modes of existence as if they were museum specimens of irrelevant civilisations, now fit only for intellectual exercise and analysis and perhaps a doctoral thesis or two. In fact, these communities and their religions need to be explored as living societies. For this piece of insight I am indebted to Arvind-Pal Singh Mandair.

I believe that Sikhs who occupy Sikh chairs at universities do not want to abandon their own people, nor or they unfeeling at a personal level. But abandon their own people is what they have effectively done; consequently, they have undercut their own support in the Sikh community.

I believe that these scholars who occupy such positions just need to feel secure enough so that they can turn their attention to such controversial matters as the events of 1984; no matter what stance they take, they will attract unwelcome, even undeserved, criticism. I know that most of the holders of such positions have endured an uneasy relationship with the Sikh community. In this they have my sympathy, but their experience does not absolve them from their academic responsibility to address issues that are important to us all. One cannot always run away from controversy or censure. Yes, early Sikh history and Sikh scripture, which these scholars often study and write about, are important but so are events that affect and influence us here and now.

Early Sikh tradition speaks of monumental courage against overwhelming odds. I would ask our Sikh scholars to take courage from that early history and from Sikh tradition.

Years from now historians will reconstruct history from what we said and did today. If the title of this essay seems Orwellian, there is a reason.

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# Lessons from HISTORY

I first visited the *Golden Temple* as an adolescent and don't remember much about it, except that it was winter and the air, chilly, tart, and crisp, smelt like an unripe apple. Vague memories of the great temple tank, "the pool of nectar", its blue water rippled and creased by the breeze, rise to me across the years: memories of tall men in turbans, and shawled women. Whether these come from this or some later trip, I do not know. I have made several visits to Amritsar. I recall the fretted woodwork and carved doors of the *havelis*, the roughly executed but colourful murals still extant on plaster walls. Pilgrims were fed at the *Golden Temple* and in the *dharamsalas*. Squatting on the floor, bundles of possessions beside them, they chewed fierce nutriment from thick unleavened bread, vegetables and pickles. From the bundles they took butter with which to anoint the *parathas*, and *gur* in flat cakes to sweeten their mouths. They had come from all over the Punjab, from all over India, to this rich and peaceful place.

The *Golden Temple* was the heart of Amritsar. The city had grown up around it. Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, never saw this Vatican of his people. He died in 1539. The third of his successors, Guru Ramdas settled by the lake which later became the tank. This was in 1574. The lake was a legend to Hindus: Sita is said to have spent her years of exile on its shores and Valmiki, the alleged author of the *Ramayana*, supposedly once lived in an *ashram* nearby. Slowly the temple expanded, worked on by devoted Sikhs under the direction of successive gurus. Its architecture evolved into a symbol of its beliefs. Guru Nanak had preached that all religions should be equally respected and originally the Sikh faith was a mixture of Hindu mysticism and Muslim pragmatism. The bulk of the temple reminded many observers of Hindu architecture but towards the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, spired domes like those seen on mosques were built, so that the final architecture of the edifice was a blend of Islamic and Hindu styles.

## Five Rivers

Through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, Sikhism spread widely over the land of the five rivers. The Sikhs, "hardy believers" as a British writer called them, came of martial stock, and fought the Muslim rulers of their territory dourly and ardently. Some of the gurus were martyred by the Muslims. A religion, to become an eternity, requires its martyrs, as was discovered by Christianity. Sikh ardour increased with each martyrdom. When Guru Teg Bahadur

was captured, tortured and beheaded by the enemy, who wanted him to convert to Islam, a saying ran like wildfire through the Punjab: *sir diya, sar nahin diya*, that is, "he gave up his head but not his faith". But the Sikhs were scattered into clans, till the coming of a great ruler, Ranjit Singh. Born in 1780, he unified the Sikh nations and welded them into a military power to be reckoned with. He spread the Sikh territory out like a fan on either bank of the Sutlej. But he made a peace treaty with the British in 1809, one that held fast for 30 years till he died in 1839.

"Old Ranjeet", wrote Emily Eden, the wife of a British officer, the year before the Sikh ruler died, "looks more personable on horse-back than in durbar". After this not very reverent remark, she appends her impressions of a march past of the Sikh forces. "Behind us there was a large amphitheatre of elephants ... and thousands of Ranjeet's followers all dressed in yellow or red satin, with quantities of their red horses trapped in gold and silver tissues, and all of them sparkling with jewels. I really never saw so dazzling a sight. Three or four Sikhs would look like Astley's broke loose, but this immense body of them saves their splendour from being melodramatic. The old man himself wears a sort of red stuff dress with a little edging of the commonest grey squirrel's fur, and a common red muslin turban". Ranjit Singh was in fact known for the simplicity of his clothing, but he obviously had a force behind him which was not only sartorially impressive but military invincible. Many Sikhs later fought for the British.

## The 1809 Treaty

Subsequent historians have written that while Ranjit Singh ruled his own people wisely and led them brilliantly against the Muslims, his dealings with the British were vacillating and pusillanimous. Had he not entered the treaty of 1809, the Sikhs would have held their conquests across the Sutlej, and expanded their empire. Ranjit Singh, however, always seems to have felt that he acted for the best. He said that he had signed the treaty because otherwise, *sab lal ho jayega*, in other words, "everything will become red". It has been said that he meant that there would be tremendous bloodshed, but he had never shown himself to be frightened of blood. The British cartographers, in the days of the Empire, used to colour the conquests of their armed forces red on their maps. What Ranjit Singh probably meant, for he was a highly intelligent mind and had studied British maps, was that Sikh resistance to the



British could have led to a complete takeover by foreign armies of the land of the five rivers.

The martyrdoms, the massacres, the blood and splendour of this history bound the Sikhs closely together. The five Ks which their religion urged them to keep about their persons were adhered to with almost Islamic fervour. These were *kesh*, (long hair), *kangha*, (a comb), *kirpan*, (a dagger or sword), *kaccha*, (long drawers), and *kara*, (a steel bracelet). Sikhs who have assimilated into Western societies, (to which some migrated), sufficiently to be accepted not only as citizens but members of the police and armed forces have fought for the right to wear their turbans, thus concealing their long hair rather than the stipulated caps or helmets. Bus conductors in Britain have refused to shed their turbans. A fair number of Sikhs not only overseas but in India have shaved off and abandoned their traditional headgear, but most of those I know seem a little guilty about this and none of them smile, though many drink. Liquor is after all a tradition in their homeland.

Most of the terrorists upholding the Sikh faith have, ironically, discarded their turbans and shaved. It takes a considerable amount of faith in their cause to make them do this. It also indicates something else. The terrorists have doffed the insignia mandatory to their religion in order not to be immediately identifiable as Sikhs. This in itself shows a kind of fanaticism, but points to an attitude in the rest of Indians which should surely be condemned: to look like a Sikh, in areas outside those where the community is concentrated, is to be automatically suspect. Already friends from Delhi tell me that they are wary of taxis with Sikh drivers. Most taxi-drivers in Delhi are Sikhs. They live a very dangerous life on the roads, propelling their decrepit vehicles as though leading a cavalry charge. But this is not the reason for the wariness of Hindu and Muslim passengers. It can similarly be said that Sikh taxi-drivers are preferred by Sikh passengers over Hindu or Muslim drivers.

### **Jewish Terrorists**

This is a miserable state of affairs. In Palestine before the foundation of Israel, there were several Jewish terrorist organisations mainly aimed at the British. A journalist friend of mine, the late Patric O'Donovan of the liberal *Observer*, was at that time serving in a Guards Regiment, and the Guards were far from liberal. If Patrick's bosses and attitudes were different at various periods of his life, his habits never seem to have varied. Serving in Palestine, he was acquainted with a number of bars out of bounds to British servicemen. In one of them he was accosted by a friendly Jew who engaged him in an intellectual discussion. Engrossed in this discussion and his drink, Patrick failed

to notice another Jew picking up his stengun from the floor where had left it, and departing into distance. He was very nearly court martialled for losing military equipment, and thereafter, he used to say, he was very suspicious of any Jew he met. In later life he became a staunch supporter of Israel.

But as Patrick himself said, he had no right to be suspicious of Jews, any more than Hitler had, and he dislike his own reaction. Another friend of mine, later also a friend of Patrick's was at the time of the lost weapon episode serving on the other side. He was a Jewish terrorist, and part of his work was to manufacture bombs and plant them in areas where British soldiers were wont to wander. This friend is now a well-known poet in Hebrew. He is the gentlest of men. He once told me that he hated himself for what he had done as a terrorist. "But I believed it it", he said, "and after all it was the belief of many people that brought about Israel". Nobody outside the Jewish world community, more particularly the Palestinian Jews, believed that a Jewish state in Palestine was feasible, or, if it did come to be, that it would be viable for more than a few weeks once the Arab nations around it attacked. Quite apart from this, it seemed economically impossible that such a state could exist on its own, blockaded by its enemies.

### **Punjab Situation**

All these attitudes seem to be inherent to the present Punjab situation. There are other Indians, who suspect all Sikhs. Some, like Patrick in Palestine, may despise themselves for this, but there are many who are far less sensitive. This second category of people were responsible for the Delhi riots in November 1984, following the murder of Mrs. Gandhi. They were responsible for the disturbances in Delhi following the bus atrocity in the Punjab. Admittedly in both cases the provocation was extreme, but in a way all this seems to lead towards Khalistan; the dead on both sides cry out for vengeance, at least they cry out to the living fanatics on both sides. The actions in the Golden Temple inflamed Sikh opinion as nothing else could have done. It is not that the Golden Temple has not seen bloodshed and sacrilege in the past. In 1831, a traveller named Jacquemont wrote: "Many times (in the past century) the Mussulmans filled it with the runs of surrounding houses and soiled it with the victims of their cruel intolerance".

But the Sikh reprisals were always severe: "... when victory opened to the Sikhs the gates of Amritsar, they carried out bloody reprisals and washed the steps of the sacred pool in the blood of Mussulmans". A British observer remarked in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that "the Sikhs are hereditary foes of the Muslims ... and will always remain



so, having been so persecuted by Islam". The carnage in the Punjab after partition damaged the relationship between the two communities still further. But the Sikhs had their martyrs, whose deaths only served to solidify their defiance. Now they have what the extremists consider to be a martyr in Bhindranwale; perhaps also, though this is stretching things very far, in Beant Singh.

## Invisible Connections

Indivisible if invisible connections bind the Sikhs together. These are being strengthened by the reprisals of other communities. It is true that the acts of terrorism are performed by a small percentage of Sikhs, but it is mainly on the others, those who are innocent, that retaliation falls. Many Sikhs, understandably, must feel that they are treated in a discriminatory fashion, and that they are being forced into an alternative situation, which is Khalistan. The Jews in Palestine in the 1940s performed terrorist acts, though never on as large and mindlessly brutish a scale as those attributed to the Khalistan extremists. The blowing up, shooting and knifing of innocent people were activities unthought of even by the dreaded Stern Gang. The Jews were often trained outside their homeland, and some had fought in the Allied armies. They were financed in their struggle by American Jewry. The Khalistan terrorists seem often to be armed and trained from places far from the Punjab, and they obviously have outside financiers, though who these are remains unclear.

Up to this point, there are parallels to be drawn between the Punjab now and Palestine 40 years ago. The Jews were able to form their own nation within a demented framework of hostile and numerically much superior Arab states on three sides and the Mediterranean on the fourth, and to make it economically viable. It is at least conceivable that the Khalistan supporters could contrive to do the same. The Jews fought the Arabs of Palestine, with whom they had lived amicably for centuries, because the surrounding Arab nations sent in terrorists to attack Jews settlements and applied such pressure upon them as to make them fear for their physical survival. Outside influences have played upon the Sikhs. As a community, they do not yet

fear for their survival, but given that the pressures upon them increase, as they show every sign of doing, there is no reason why this fear should not concomitantly increase.

There is, however, one important impediment to the creation of Khalistan. This, in fact, is the one thing that may eventually cripple the whole movement. The Palestinian Jews had outstanding leaders. Chaim Weizmann was not only a man of charisma but of high intellect. David Ben Gurion was charismatic too, a man of action who was also an intellectual. Under them they had other men and women of action and intellect, and a whole, utterly motivated nation. The Khalistan extremists seem to have no proper leaders, and they have certainly not motivated the Sikh community as a whole. Sikh businessmen abroad may support them, but these businessmen are not economic

experts, and could not possibly inaugurate trade with other countries against a stringent blockade, as the Israelis managed to do. All this provides some hope that the Sikhs will not break away from India and that Khalistan will never be formed. If it is, there will be further Balkanisation in India, and the beginning of the end.

The trouble about containing the terrorists, as some have suggested, by imposing martial law on the Punjab is that they do not operate solely out of that area. Even if their depredations in their own state are reduced, the likelihood is that they will



spread like a cancer into other parts of the country, or operate, as indeed they have already done, in and from other continents. The efforts of the Government should be directed in a constructive direction: they should be directed at reassuring and protecting the mass of Sikhs who still, despite what other Indians have done to them, feel that India is their motherland. With the propaganda of terrorists on one side, and the behaviour of fanatics from other communities on the other, the goodwill of the Sikhs is slowly being lost in India. The time is already nearly upon us when the Sikhs may remember the words of their last leader, Ranjit Singh, to his commanders, *sab lal ho jayega* only they will not think of the colour on British maps but the colour of blood.



# The Dark Depths of Bluestar



In 1949 George Orwell looked into the dark depths of Man's nature to choreograph an imaginary world half a century down the road. His visualisation of the ills of totalitarianism which were to plague his world in 1984 was a dire warning. However, the political abuses penned by George Orwell in his book "1984" were to become articles of faith for Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her Government of India. No wonder that the ominous nightmare scenario that Orwell feared so much were to woefully translate itself onto the Indian landscape, and 1984 turned the real world of each and every Sikh askance. Like Orwell's hero Winston Smith, the Singhs, too, were to pay a heavy toll. Like Smith the Singhs were to rebel against an unjust and unfeeling Government. In so doing the Singhs were to suffer the fate, same as Smith, at the hands of a Government intent upon not only to break them physically and to bring them to fall on their knees but to "root out (their) independent mental existence and (their) spiritual dignity".

Now who would have thought that a year beginning with a promising hope of accepting the Akali Dal's Anandpur Sahib Resolution would have in a flash melted into cataclysmic outrage, in early June 1984 at Amritsar, Sikhdom's holiest city. As if driving a stake through the heart of Sikhism was not enough, some members of the

majority citizenry were whipped into a catatonic stupor by Congress(I) leadership in November 1984, and let loose to hunt down Sikhs in the streets and by-lanes of Delhi, Bombay, Kanpur and other towns and cities of India.

## Tempting the Fates

With the Sikhs, the *Bluestar* assault on the Golden Temple remains an unforgivable sacrilege. Even outsiders, given the benefit of hindsight, see it as a crazed act. The wickedness of the planners lies bared by the date selected for launching of the attack. That date in June is of great religious significance in the Sikh calendar, commemorating the sacrifice of the beloved Guru Arjan Dev. A day sure to draw thousands upon thousands of Sikh pilgrims from everywhere. By penciling in that particular date, in June 1984, the planners betrayed their intent of wanting to inflict so large a number of casualties that would sufficiently demoralise the Sikh community. The military action, so said Mrs. Gandhi and her mandarins, were solely aimed at reasserting political authority over the Golden Temple complex, nothing more.

It is considered that the non-Sikhs of the north wished to exact vengeance from the Sikh militants whom they accused for killing several of their brethren and their



frenzied calls were reaching Mrs. Gandhi and her cabal loud and clear. The tight military cordon around the temple surroundings were manned by tens of thousands of regular soldiers supported by heavy armour, artillery and state-of-the-art weaponry, all in battle array, such an overwhelmingly disproportional force that would destroy anything they opposed. But Mrs. Gandhi herself repeatedly downplayed the military adventure by insisting that the operation was directed solely at seeking the ouster or surrender of the Sikh militants from precincts of the Golden Temple. This was nonsense given that there were no signs of a quarantine net being thrown around the Golden Temple complex for any interdiction of food, provisions and arms, which is what one must do if ouster or surrender were on the cards. But Indira Gandhi was very adept at saying one thing for public consumption while privately hatching sinister plots.

The Sikhs had realised that if something were not done soon, the political machinations would go on and on. It was obvious that someone had to stand up to the Indian *sarkar* for its duplicity and repeated breaches of promise. Most people believed in some sort of action but they were not clear about the nature of that stand and who should throw down the gauntlet. In the spring of 1984, it was abundantly clear that Mrs. Gandhi had made a mockery of the negotiations over the Anandpur Sahib Resolutions, river water allocation, awarding of Chandigarh to the Punjab and many other issues vital for the Punjab. She appeared to relish brinkmanship. In 1980, on retaking the nation's helm Mrs. Gandhi, Machiavelist *par excellence*, was to eke her revenge on the Sikhs for causing her defeat in 1977.

In seeking to destroy the Akalis, Mrs. Gandhi's key strategy was to draft "a Sikh with a magnetic and mesmerising personality whose extravagant utterances (of an exaggerated Hindu threat to the Sikh faith would) wean the Sikhs away from the moderate Akalis". Thus entering her equation was Zail Singh, a person as crafty as herself. Thus were born an ugly conspiracy against the Sikhs. Their protégé Bhindranwale was to take stage and "become a turbulent presence in Punjab". The Punjab was never to be the same again. When and why Bhindranwale turned his back on his sponsors in a story in itself but doubt there is none that he escalated the nature, shape and intensity of Sikh militancy. What was disturbing was not so much that he was the one to throw the gauntlet but that he could conduct himself as Caesar and Plato combined holding *durbars* in the Golden Temple precincts, issuing edicts and dispensing his own brand of justice. By Baisakhi 1984 the political situation had worsened and with the near collapse of civilian authority Mrs. Gandhi chose her June 1984 date to launch Operation Bluestar.

In fact, the Bluestar plot was the climax of communal politics conceived by an imperious leader smitten by what the ancient Greeks called *hubris*, wanton insolence or arrogance. Mrs. Gandhi's cant-do-anything-wrong attitude came to be reflected in her Government's excessive ethnocentric overbearance. The playing of the 'communal card' for political gains became a hallmark of her governance. In the words of Ken Ringle, a Washington writer, it is "the classical temptation of mortals who, finding themselves garbed in the unaccustomed robes of leadership, start imagining themselves invulnerable and so tempt the fates". Think of Hitler, Stalin, Idi Amin, "Papa Doc" Duvalier, Efraim Rios Montt Pinochet, Jorge Videla, and in recent times Slobodan Milosevic and one finds that the Gandhis were not far behind in succumbing to Hubris by believing that they were uniquely blessed by God and destiny.

### Pathological Narcissism

In her psychological study of tyrants, Betty Glad, Professor of Government and International studies at the University of South Carolina, says that self-destructive leaders "gain power in part because they are smart or clever, and then start believing they are smarter and cleverer than anyone. Finally, they start to underestimate others. In addition, she says, the more power they gain the "more they lose the sense of limits of that power. And nobody reminds them of those limits". Finally, she says, their record of successes and accumulation of power results in a "pathological narcissism" – an indulgence in fantasies of omnipotence and vulnerability that leads them to "lose all touch with reality".

Prof. Betty Glad goes on to say that leaders "drunk on their illusions wander into situational cul-de-sacs", courting disaster. Whether it was Indira Gandhi scheming her way into the Golden Temple or invading Sri Lanka or creating the world's longest battlefield in Siachin, the self-destructive leader become a captive of events and lashed out in all directions. According to psychoanalyst Larry Staples, there are three ingredients in the classic cases of hubric self-destruction: "a weak or failed father, a strong and ambitious mother and a gifted son".

### Whom on Whose Watch

While my Sikh brethren were to lament the ungodly desecration of the Golden temple in June 1984, I remember my outrage to be somewhat subdued. I kept showing up to play cards with my non-Sikh friends. In the past the game were punctuated with jokes and gossip but now oblique comments about the *Bluestar*, the Sikh militants and Bhindranwale in particular were increasingly coming to



the fore. At first I simply brushed aside their accounts by saying "do we play cards or talk politics"? It was not that I was indifferent to the enormity of the tragedy at Amritsar. Rather, I had little interest in Indian politics and, therefore, knew little about the goings on half a world away. For another, though I had visited India several times it was not my birthplace. I had spent almost all of my adult life in western countries which were to shape my thinking. But as my card-playing buddies began to editorialise the march of events in Punjab I could not help but detect their bias. And, it was then and there that my eyes were to discern the bigot that lay hidden deep in the heart of people I would call buddies. At the mental level I saw them as my clones. But that was not to be the case. What distressed me the most were their total insensitivity to how, I, a Sikh, may have felt over their crass anti-Sikh sentiments. Their behaviour was to prompt me to take my first small steps towards discovery of my ancestral land and its peoples.

As part of my journey of discovery I turned to the media and knowledgeable friends. For starters I placed myself on the distribution list of the office of India's High Commission in Ottawa, to receive the *Indian Express* and the *Hindustan Times*. As I waded into the political morass of India and Punjab I was besieged by contradictory emotions. A part of me questioned the propriety of Sikh militants to appoint themselves as sentinels of the Sikh *quom*. Call me naive, but I cannot recall these militants to have been affirmed, formally or otherwise, to go on a crusade in the name of the community. Only the diehards among the Sikhs, and that too, a minority, were openly in favour of the militants staying put in the Golden Temple complex even if, as a last resort, they were to turn Sikhdom's most hallowed ground into a sanctuary and a launching pad for their campaigns. Since the militants were determined not to give in at any cost and the authorities were equally resolute to flush the militants out at all costs, it would have been obvious even to the most simple minded that death, destruction and large scale mayhem were in the offing. If the militants presumed that the authorities were bluffing and dared not attack the sacred temple for fear of unleashing a country-wide revolt, then that showed the extent of their naivety.

All said and done, the militants possessed no authority to place the Golden Temple at risk. History reveals that Sikh militancy, be it under the command of Guru Gobind Singh or the Misl chieftains, were directed solely at combatants and so waged war as not to cause unnecessary collateral damage. The militants had so whipped up the emotions of the people that some of the Sikhs were willy-nilly sucked into vortex of the storm. However, a great

many of the Sikhs simply sat on the fence for one reason or another: some by their silence meant to convey the appearance of a united Sikh front hoping it would discourage the Centre from mounting an assault, thus a bloodless resolution, several agreed with the end (greater autonomy) but not the means (terrorism), some did not wish to invite retaliatory physical harm for openly questioning the tactics of the militants, a few did not relish being branded a traitor, and many more simply went about their customary life. These folks are the ones that media and pollsters usually refer to as the 'silent majority'. The Sikh *quom*, as usual, was adrift in a stormy socio-political sea without anyone minding the rudder.

I looked at *Bluestar* as a criminal act but, unlike many, my lament was private. Because my then sketchy understanding of Sikh history led me to believe that the Golden Temple was fated, once in a while, to be razed to the ground by some evildoer and then to be raised again by the faithful in a cycle of ruin and renewal. Yes, I was aware of marauders such as Abdali who are known to have sacked the holy temple more than once but that was at a time when emperors and rulers went on rampage to plunder neighbouring lands to shore up their treasury. But today it is different. Nations are now signatories to a code of human and civil rights and judged harshly for any violations of the protocol. But even then I knew that this latest episode of sacrilege was in a league of its own, simply because unlike Abdali who was a foreigner, Indira Gandhi claimed to be one of us. It is this, her collateral relationship, which makes the *Bluestar* assault such a diabolic act, no less heinous a crime than that of fratricide. And, as it has come to pass so often in the past, history was to be no different this time, proving that the consequence of pillaging or sacking the Golden Temple is equally predictable: *Sikh renaissance*.

The slaying of Indira Gandhi and the concomitant carnage were to change the life of every Indian. The Hindus tarred the entire Sikh community with the same brush of treachery and anti-nationalism. The Sikhs condemned the Hindu populace for carrying out "ethnic cleansing", accused the Hindu leadership for not enforcing law and order and blamed the Hindu intellectuals for their muted stance. The general upshot was polarisation of the attitudes of the two communities. Sikh industrialists spoke openly of moving their businesses and relocating in Punjab, some among the wealthy scrambled to buy premier properties in Chandigarh and even Khushwant Singh was so incensed as to return his *Padma Bhushan* award though soon after he admitted regret in doing so. And once Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi issued veiled threats for any precipitant move, the outrage and the lament turned covert.



# 20 Years Later

On 27 April 2004, nearly twenty years after, "Bluestar" the Division Bench of the Punjab and Haryana High Court has disposed of a petition seeking directions to the Government to return the valuables, books, scriptures, paintings, etc., that were ransacked from the Golden Temple during *Operation Bluestar* in 1984. It also ordered the CBI and the Punjab government to return whatever material was lying with them expeditiously.

The order was passed after the Union Home Ministry filed an affidavit acknowledging that it was in possession of many articles, including books, paintings, rare documents, hand-written volumes of holy Sikh scriptures etc. The Union Government also expressed its wish to return the material.

The Bench asked the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), which had earlier been impleaded as party to the case to approach the appropriate court to reclaim the material.

In his petition, S. Satnam Singh had said that the material plundered from the Golden Temple during *Operation Bluestar* should be returned. After being impleaded as party to the case, the SGPC had submitted a list of material, including cash, that was taken away from the Golden Temple. It had also said that despite repeated requests to top functionaries of the state, including the President of India and the Prime Minister, no effort was made to return the material, which are priceless for Sikh history.

## The "True" Story?

A match-stick packs power for good and evil. It does good when used to light a fire to cook a meal. But, it is an instrument of evil in the hands of an arsonist. The army is just like a match-stick, a latent power, which in the hands of a prudent leader will defend the honour and integrity of the realm; but in the hands of a cocky and an impudent leader it may be turned into a killing machine. Which is precisely what the arrogant Indira Gandhi did in June 1984 to crush the legitimate Sikh agitation in Punjab.

What diabolical steps were followed by Mrs. Gandhi to deploy the Army remains a secret but it is clear that there is no record of the local authorities having placed a requisition for intervention by the army to bring peace and order in turbulent Amritsar during 1983-84. Several months earlier, *Operation Bluestar* was practiced at Chakrata using an exact replica of the Golden Temple complex. Such a rehearsal presumes not only that it was blessed by Mrs. Gandhi, the head of state, but also that it was premeditated action. That the army was to mount an offensive military operation, on its own populace is unheard of in any civilised democracy. Again, *Bluestar* was unique for another deviation from the norm for example, the field commanders chosen to supervise the operation were ostensibly Sikhs (Maj.General K.S.Brar and Lt Gen R.S.Dayal) whereas the soldiers serving under them were mostly not. The fact that Sikh officers were ready and

willing to attack the temple was seen as giving legitimacy to the venture, a perverted illusion. The use of soldiers, whose faith differed from and sometimes clashed with Sikhism, were to free them from being burdened by religious consideration in using full force. In keeping with the dictums of the Sikh faith, the Army vowed not to desecrate the holy precincts by soldiers threading the grounds in boots and bared heads but photographs taken during and following *Bluestar* show otherwise.

The only accounting of *Bluestar* from someone actually involved in the operation is the written record in Maj.General K.S.Brar's "*Operation Bluestar - the True Story*". Brar's version has been severely criticised by several political analysts. One such challenger is Brig.Manmohan Singh Virk (Retd) who in his review ("*Black Spots in the General's Bluestar*") of Brar's book, wonders why the General failed to address compelling counter evidence such as "the linkages involved in the rise of Sant Bhindranwale, allowing weapons into the Golden temple even when it had been sealed and surrounded by CRPF battalions for over a year, and the build up of a situation where the use of the Army could be legitimised, the Constitutional Akali demands, tortuous course of negotiations between the Akalis and Indira Gandhi, and how on two occasions these were aborted after an agreement had been reached; of disinformation on Punjab which twisted the content of the problem from Constitutional to communal - including the stage managed discovery of a cow's tail and ears in Durgiana Temple and cigarette butts in the Golden Temple in 1983".

Brig. Manmohan Singh Virk believes that *Bluestar* was a "devious" plot since it ignored other more appropriate, and less traumatic measures. He feels that "Given the quantum of Army deployed in Punjab, the terrain, easy observation, and prevention of movement, and the narrow and congested city lanes, there could be no serious interference with the Operation, were it to be a siege". His accounting of the July 1984 meeting presided over by COAS, attended by top Army brass, is indeed illuminating. When at one juncture General Sundarji, Chief of Army, was quoting casualty figures of the terrorists and the civilians killed and wounded, Lt. General Bhupinder Singh, then GOC-in-C of Central Command, asked as to "how many of those killed were terrorists" to which Gen. Sundarji was to reply "practically all of them".

According to Brig.Manmohan Singh Virk, "the Army had no idea of how many militants were inside the Golden Temple", a statement when measured against the report of a journalist that weapons were added to the arms cache recovered reveals that Army brass not only exaggerated the number of terrorists killed but that *Bluestar* itself was not only ill-conceived but poorly executed.

**Bhupinder Singh Mahal**  
Toronto, Canada



# THE DARKEST DECADE

## Punjab in The 1980s\*

The Sikhs from their very founding have fought for India's freedom and restoration of secularism in the country. They fought resolutely against the formation of Pakistan and to safeguard national integrity. It was mainly the result of their sacrifices that the present day Punjab (and Haryana) were retained in India. At that point of time, they rejected outright the offer made by M.A. Jinnah for an autonomous State for Sikhs within Pakistan and resolutely threw their lot with their Hindu brethren in India, their motherland. In appreciation of the great patriotic spirit of the Sikhs and in gratitude for the tremendous sacrifices made by them in upholding their age-old kinship with Hindus, a special political status within India was agreed to by the Indian National Congress and announced publicly by Jawahar Lal Nehru himself. He said *"The brave Sikhs of the Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong in an area and a set up in the North wherein the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom"*.

It can be asserted that the Sikh leadership opted to cast their lot with India as an act of faith and in the firm belief that the values nurtured by their religion, history and tradition would best flourish in the democratic secular country envisioned by Gandhi and Nehru rather than in a theocratic and perhaps feudally inclined Pakistan. They also believed that their identity and future would be safe in a federal structure foreseen in the constitutional evolution of the new Indian State. This hope was founded on a firm, clear and solemn commitment by Mahatma Gandhi as far back as 1931. The events that led to this were as follows:

A Committee was formed by the Indian National Congress in 1928 under the chairmanship of Motilal Nehru to prepare a framework of the Constitution for free India. In its report the Committee upheld the principle of communal reservation for the Muslims while denying the same to other minorities like Sikhs. When Sikh leaders expressed grave thoughts concerning their future in India, the Congress Party, in its annual session at Lahore in 1929, passed a resolution that on achieving independence, no Constitution would be framed unless it was acceptable to the Sikhs. Before the second Round Table Conference organised by the Government of Ramsay MacDonald in

1931 to discuss the recommendations of the Simon Commission, a Sikh leader Madhusudan Singh, confronted Gandhi when he came to address a conference in Gurdwara Sisganj in Delhi with the question as to what guarantee was there that the Indian National Congress would implement the resolution of 1928 after India became free. Gandhi declared: *"I ask you to accept my word and the resolution of the Congress that it will not betray a single individual much less a community. Let God be the witness of the bond that binds me and the Congress with you"*. When pressed further Gandhi said that Sikhs would be justified in drawing their swords out of scabbards as Guru Gobind Singh had asked them to, if the Congress would resile from its commitment (Young India, March 19, 1931).

The Sikhs believed that leadership of the Indian National Congress had a firm, irrevocable and sincerely commitment to the creation of a State wherein justice, social and political, complete equality before law, welfare of the under-privileged and principles that govern a modern secular State would be pursued with deep and abiding commitment. This was a fundamental premise that motivated the Sikhs to cast their lot with India.

Mahatma Gandhi passed away soon after independence in January 1948. Unfortunately, Pandit Nehru through his utterances and actions at the time of reorganisation of the States on linguistic basis created an impression among the Sikhs that he had resiled from the promises made to them by Gandhi and by himself. Furthermore, the evolution of the Indian State has given the Sikhs a cause for deep concern, as the Indian State seems to subscribe to democratic and secular values more in letter than in spirit.

The Sikhs have a very strong sense of history and a long unbroken tradition of struggle against injustice, discrimination and oppression (witness: Guru Tegh Bahadur's defence of the Kashmiri Pandits right to their own way of worship even though the Sikh Gurus firmly repudiated the observance of rituals). They are now beginning to wonder if the clock of democratic evolution is being pushed back and the Indian State is becoming an engine of repression of the weak, numerically inferior, the poor and the under-privileged.



The Indian National Congress had consistently propagated a federal structure for the new India with autonomous unilingual States and had pledged constitutional safeguards to the minorities. In 1949 the Central Government formally elicited views of the Punjab Legislature on the draft constitution. The Akali representatives, reminding Congress of its promises, reiterated:

It has been the declared policy of the Congress from the outset that India is to be the Union of autonomous States and each unit to develop in its own way, linguistically, culturally and socially. Of course, Defence, Communication and Foreign Affairs must and should remain Central subjects. To change the basic policy now is to run counter to the oft repeated creed of the Congress.

Flouting its own solemn promises to the Sikhs, a basically unitary form of Constitution was framed. In protest, the Sikh representatives in the Constituent Assembly did not sign the Constitution. Strictly, therefore, the Sikhs are not a party to the Indian Constitution. Indeed that in no way detracts from the unmatched patriotism of the Sikhs for their motherland which is India. What is required is to effect such changes in the Constitution that will ensure their perpetual, enthusiastic and traditional sense of loyalty to their country.

### **Formation of Punjabi Suba**

Punjabi Hindus, prompted by the Congress party ruling at the Centre, opposed the formation of unilingual Punjabi State by disowning their mother tongue, thereby separating themselves from the Sikhs. This sinister falsehood was perpetuated to thwart formation of the Punjabi-speaking State when the map of the rest of the country had been redrawn on the basis of language. The Sikhs naturally felt aggrieved, as the Central stance was openly anti-Sikh in this case also. This became the basis for communalising politics in Punjab which eventually developed into the Hindu-Sikh divide.

The Sikhs had thus to wage a 15-year long struggle for formation of the unilingual Punjab (Punjabi Suba). During this period which saw many agitations, the Sikhs were regularly being dubbed as communal, anti-national and even anti-Hindu by the Punjabi speaking Hindus. This misinformation about them hurt them even more as it was utterly against their socio-political philosophy.

During the 1965 Indo-Pak War, the high unalloyed patriotism of the Sikhs was amply demonstrated by soldiers and civilians alike. It had to be recognised, and as a result the Government reluctantly acceded to the formation of Punjabi Suba the following year. But the great deal of anti-

## **BONDS OF BLOOD** ॐ

Common heritage in India's unique corporate culture, particularly between Hindus and Sikhs in regard to cultural, linguistic and socio-economic is a unique historic experiment in communal harmony. By and large Hindus have regarded the Sikh Gurus as their own Gurus and the Sikhs have enthusiastically participated in all Hindu festivals. To substantiate this aspect of the Hindu-Sikh unity, it is worth recalling what Prof. Gokal Chand had said in England in 1908 when he was addressing a congregation comprising of Britishers, Hindus and only a sprinkling of Sikhs: "Guru Gobind Singh is to us Hindus as Christ is to Christians".

Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya exhorted that at least one member in every Hindu family should become a Sikh.

Even after the partition, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, appreciating contribution of the progressive and hardy Sikhs to the economy of the country said, "I wish every Indian becomes a Sikh".

It is a great pity, therefore, that to gain petty political advantages such as setting up Congress Governments in Punjab and Haryana, the Congress-I brought about communal divide of unprecedented dimensions. The only silver lining is that there is still a large number of sensible people in the two communities who have not lost their sense of proportion and have tried to maintain the age-old relationship. It is also fortunate that despite the fact that there have been a number of cases of revenge killings and destruction of Sikh property in the wake of some terrorist actions in Punjab, there has been no such reaction against the Hindus who are extremely vulnerable in villages of Sikhs where they are a tiny minority. The number of Sikhs killed by the extremists was far more than the Hindus which proves that even the extremist groups of the Sikhs were not anti-Hindu. Theirs was a fight against Government tyranny and injustice.

Sikh bias played havoc with the whole process so that only a truncated sub-State with limited powers was formed. Even its capital city Chandigarh and large chunks of Punjabi speaking areas were kept out. The crucial subjects about the control, development and distribution of the waters and hydel power of Punjab rivers was kept in central hands in violation of the Constitution and the precedents set everywhere else. On the whole, it was yet another instance of discrimination. Even more serious struggle had to be waged for Chandigarh, left over Punjabi areas, and the river waters and hydel power. This further embittered Hindu-Sikh relations and increased the feeling of discrimination and loss of faith in the Central Government.



## Sub-State

The factual position at present is that not only have the Congress and its Government gone back on their commitment of an autonomous state within India but Punjab has been given an even lower status than other states.

These are glaring facts:

**Territorial Issue :** After the enunciation of Sachar Formula in 1949 the Punjab was divided into two distinct parts; one comprising Punjabi-speaking areas and the other Hindi-speaking. This demarcation was fully accepted and supported by all. Later, the Central Government devised a legislative measure under the name of "Regional Formula." Nobody even questioned the fairness of this demarcation. When ultimately the Punjabi Suba was formed, this clear-cut division was ignored and a new boundary in which large chunks of territory were ceded to the newly created State of Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. This mischief was a glaring case of discrimination and had in it the seeds of perpetuating disharmony. It is amazing how the Central Government goes out of its way to complicate simple issues rather than solving them. In the process it sets one section of the Indian society against the other, and to achieve its ends it has undermined practically every democratic institution. What could be more anti-national than the policies of the biggest political party, the Congress?

**State Capital :** Whilst everywhere in the country the State capitals e.g. Bombay for Maharashtra, Madras for Tamil Nadu and Simla for Himachal were retained in the reorganised state in which they were located, in the case of Chandigarh, Punjab is being bullied to compensate Haryana by giving the latter large areas of agricultural land which had been accepted by all concerned as Punjabi-speaking. Indira Gandhi awarded Fazilka and Abohar tehsils to Haryana arrogant style. A special clause was inserted in the Rajiv-Longowal accord to achieve a similar objective.

**River Waters :**

❖ In its nefarious game of denying the constitutional rights of Punjab over its rivers and hydel power, the Centre included Sections 78 to 80 in the Punjab Reorganisation Act 1966 which enabled it to give 75% of these resources to the non-riparian states of Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi through the Government of India Order of 1976. The powers of control, administration and running of the multi purpose projects and head works on these Punjab rivers were completely transferred from the Punjab Government to the Central Government. The extension or development of these projects involving

both irrigation and power also vests in the Central Government. Not only is it unconstitutional but Punjab is the only state in the country from where these strictly state subjects have been taken away from the purview of the State Government. The decision of the Narmada Tribunal which was argued by the best legal talent of the country including Palkiwala, Dapthary, A.K.Sen, Nariman and Niren De is worth quoting:

"The State of Rajasthan is not entitled to any portion of the waters of Narmada basin on the ground that the State of Rajasthan is not a co-riparian State or that no portion of its territory is situated in the basin of river Narmada."

Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi are non-riparian States as all these are outside the basin of the Punjab rivers.

❖ Out of 105 lakh acres of cultivable land in Punjab about 90 lakh acres are presently irrigated. Double cropping needs 5 to 6 acres feet annually. Approximately 37 lakh acres are partially irrigated by canals and 53 lakh acres by tubewells. Against 3 to 3.5 m.a.f. of sub-soil (re-chargeable) water available for drawing, seven lakh tube wells are extracting nearly 12 m.a.f. thus seriously depleting this source. With nearly one lakh tube wells being added annually, the problem will become even more acute. The time is not far (Government's Dhillon Committee Report estimation is 10 years) when it will not be possible to draw water from the resultant lower water table making 80% of 53 lakh acres barren. The havoc this will create to the ecological and social environment of the region is mind-boggling besides totally destroying the economy of the State. Punjab which is now contributing 73 per cent of food grain to the national kitty will become a deficit state. Remember, it was the progressive Punjabi farmer who turned the deficit East Punjab at the time of partition into the grainary of India because of water availability. Otherwise the country would still be tied to the apron strings of PL-480. River waters are the only natural resources of wealth of Punjab on which depends its economic existence and prosperity.

❖ In order to save Punjab from ruin, diverting its river waters to non-riparian states must be forthwith stopped. Against the assessed requirement of 50 to 60 m.a.f. water needed, the available river water is only 32 m.a.f. There is, therefore, not a drop to spare. Any arrangement for sharing Punjab resources between Punjab and the neighbouring States must be left to them to be worked out on strictly commercial basis. The central Government has, through its pronounced partisan policies, turned this simple constitutional problem into a highly complex issue.



## Operation Blue Star

June 1984 will forever remain the watershed in relationship with the Sikh people.

What was happening in the *Golden Temple Complex* was known to the Government and its agencies months before the attack. The massive assault on the holiest Sikh shrine was a most unjustifiable and a totally avoidable action. The Sikhs were incensed that the Operation was launched on the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev. It is unimaginable that, whatever might happen, the Saudi Arabian Government would mount a comparable assault on the Holy site of Mecca or the Italian Government on the Holy Vatican City.

Besides numerous casualties among the defenders including Bhindrawale and Maj General Shabheg Singh, a large number of pilgrims comprising men, women and children perished. The destruction of Akal Takhat, *Darshani Deohri* with priceless objects-de-art, library with rare manuscripts (burnt after "cease fire") and many other buildings in the Complex was an equally unpardonable offence. Here was a case in which maximum force including artillery guns and heavy tanks were recklessly employed against their own people. Hundreds of pilgrims were picked up and kept under unlawful detention, as being civilians they could not be detained without judicial sanction. A large number of them remained under detention in Jodhpur Jail including employees of the SGPC.

39 children (aged 2-14) were kept in unlawful custody before the Supreme Court ordered their release in September 1984. Despite repeated requests by the Sikhs, no list of casualties was furnished. This is perhaps the only country in the world in modern times where people can be deprived of their liberty without recourse to any judicial scrutiny for years. Because of the false and persistent propaganda, people were made to believe that there was no alternative to a full scale attack on the most venerated shrine to the Sikhs.

Scavengers were paid large amounts of money to load and cart away the dead and dying to be buried or cremated enmasse. Even General Dyer had handed over the bodies of the *Jalianwala Bagh* massacre to their relatives for performance of the last rites with solemnity and honour due to the dead.

*Operation Woodrose* which followed, was even more diabolical, imposing a reign of terror in the countryside resulting in large number of young people being killed and imprisoned. Some among them fled across the border to Pakistan. For the latter, it was god-send. Pakistan has been wanting to create a situation to do a 'Bangladesh' on India.

Altogether the situation in Punjab was worse than even in lands occupied during war. Atrocities committed on the people are too gruesome to be recorded.

Army troops were indoctrinated against the Sikhs over a period of time which not un-naturally resulted in hostile attitude towards all Sikhs who wear long hair. No wonder they committed such wanton destruction of life and property against their own countrymen in gross repudiation of the age old tradition of the use of minimum force. A circular known as *Baatcheet* (Talking Points) is routinely sent to all Army formations and units which commanders at various levels use to 'educate' the soldiers on current topics. Here is an extract from the July 1984 issue of *Baatcheet* :

*Although majority of the terrorists have been dealt with and bulk of the arms and ammunition recovered, yet a large number of them are still at large. They have to be subdued to achieve the final aim of restoring peace in the country. Any knowledge of the Amritdharis who are dangerous people and pledged to commit murder, arson and acts of terrorism should immediately be brought to the notice of the authorities. These people may appear harmless from outside but they are basically committed to terrorism. In the interest of all of us, their identity and whereabouts must always be disclosed.*

(All baptised Sikhs who wear long hair are Amritdharis. At the time of 'Blue Star', the President of India and the Home Minister and indeed all Sikh Ministers and other Government functionaries are all Amritdharis – thus dangerous people and pledged to commit murder, arson and acts of terrorism!)

## The Economic factor

Whereas the Sikhs outside Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan are located in the cities, in the aforesaid states they are very largely rural people with employment opportunities in agriculture and soldiering: fields in which they have been recognised as practitioners par excellence. They proved to be the best colonisers wherever new ground had to be broken in development of agriculture in virgin lands whether these were the newly irrigated canal colonies of Lyallpur, Montgomery Sargodha, etc. (now in Pakistan), Ganga Nagar district of Rajasthan in the early 1920s or in the most inhospitable Terai lands in UP after independence. It will be a safe guess that along with the state of Punjab, the Sikh farmers in Haryana and Terai areas of U.P. contribute more than 80% of the marketable surplus of food grains in the country. Their contribution in blood and toil in soldiering would stand out likewise.

It is an axiom of economics of rural agriculture development that as the stock of cultivable land in a state approaches near full exploitation and particularly when resources of water and power are strained, there must be major shifts in the employment pattern away from rural agriculture to urban industrial sector. In the last 120 years, the agricultural employment in USA has shrunk from 60%



to 3% and the same pattern is being followed in other developed and developing countries.

Historically the Punjabi farmers have found sources of employment for increasing population of rural manpower, in colonising new lands, through entry to the armed forces and through emigration out of India mostly to the UK and Canada in the 60s and to Middle East in the 70s. These traditional avenues for employment of rural youth of Punjab had been exhausted by the year 1980. Unfortunately the problem was exacerbated with the Governments of Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh embarking on policies which effectively prevented the farmers from Punjab to move into newly opened areas in the horticulture of Himachal Pradesh or the canal colonies of Rajasthan. This despite the fact that 52% waters of Punjab rivers are being given to Rajasthan even when it is a non-riparian State. Such a situation is bound to lead to economic distress and strong resentment among the rural youth in Punjab unless counter active measures are taken immediately and with a long term perspective to reverse the aforesaid policies and by making massive investments in industry and technical/ industrial education within the State of Punjab. Here it is pertinent to note that credit deposit ratio of the nationalised banks in Punjab is practically the lowest in the whole country which is indicative of the fact that the growth of industrial development in Punjab is totally stagnant compared to equally progressive States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu.

### Sikhs and the Defence Services

The foregoing economic analysis has to be seen in the background of earlier pattern of employment available to the rural youth; mainly the Sikhs. Recognising the fighting qualities of the Sikhs, the British Government soon after the annexation of Punjab, not only incorporated some of the units of the Lahore Darbar into the British Indian Army but also recruited Sikhs into all types of combatant and service units far in excess of their percentage. During the First World War, Sikhs comprised approximately 30 per cent of the Indian Army and during the Second World War nearly 25%. Shortly after the Second World War when courses for permanent regular commission had been commenced after the war, the Sikh cadets comprised nearly 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total which included Muslim cadets in the undivided India.

At present, the Sikh representation in the Armed Forces is down to about 8 per cent. The Sikhs would have no complaint had this been the outcome of the process of selection by merit as prevails in other employment avenues offered by the Government. If the unconstitutional policy of recruitment to the Defence Services on the basis of population is not immediately revoked, the Sikhs in the Army will be reduced to about 2 per cent. Besides causing

serious economic distress to the Sikh families, this policy will undoubtedly have disastrous repercussions on the Defence capabilities of the country. In the final analysis it is the man behind the gun that matters and any notion that with the sophistication in weaponry, tradition and martial qualities are not longer relevant, is fraught with great danger. Furthermore, the proposed system is contrary to the general method of merit alone governing recruitment to all other public Services. It is also violative of the principle of equality of opportunity embodied in Articles 15 and 16 of the Indian Constitution. It may be worth quoting the famous Pakistan General, *Atiq-ur-Rehman*, "Sikhs are the finest soldiers in the world because they have the best combination of mental and physical endurance".

It cannot be too strongly emphasised that populist, discriminatory and unconstitutional policies particularly in matters such as recruitment to the Defence Services in proportion to a particular community's numbers will gravely endanger the security of India.

### Black Laws

The draconian laws enacted during the 1980s reduced Punjab to a tyrannical police State with high degree of fascism. Life and liberty of the Sikhs in Punjab was at the mercy of the Government agencies and even a low level cop could deprive them of these God given attributes. There are numerous examples of the State police and the paramilitary forces killing innocent people with impunity. No action was ever taken against those who indulged in these heinous crimes. Being too well known and for want of space, no examples are considered necessary. Heads of the State Police openly stated that they would continue hiring men to kill so called terrorists. Would anyone call such a State civilised or democratic?

Individual terrorism emerged as a result of State terrorism let loose in this unfortunate land since the time of Operation *Bluestar*. More and more stringent laws were enacted which empowered the Government to perpetrate even greater repression. It has been proved not only in Punjab but elsewhere in the world that for self-respecting and brave people, harsher the Government oppression more determined the resistance. It is in the national interest, therefore, that the black laws violating the basic fundamental human rights enshrined in the Indian Constitution are repealed.

**\*Excerpts from the booklet published in 1988 by the Bharat Mukti Morcha, inspired by Ram Jethmalani, MP to articulate the Sikh case.**





# 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'

## Storming Of The Golden Temple

The Painting *Nineteen Eighty Four* depicts storming of the Golden Temple, the Sikh community's holiest and most historic shrine, by Indian troops in 1984. It reflects the personal sense of suffering and injustice felt by Sikhs world-wide at the attack and in the aftermath of violence which resulted in the injury and murder of thousands of innocent men, women, and children in the Punjab.

The different perspectives displayed by the composition seek to convey the "mixed feelings" experienced by the artist, along with many fellow British Sikhs, when news of the attack first appeared in the media. The distant, bird's eye view of the Golden Temple itself symbolises the geographic and physical separation of the Diaspora Sikh community from what was happening in India, and their consequent feeling of detachment which was heightened by "the notable lack of media coverage at the time". In contrast, the ground level close-up view of details in the foreground focuses on the atrocities carried out by the Indian Army, emphasising the Diaspora's emotional attachment and closeness to what was happening, despite being physically removed from the situation.

The painting was initially inspired by the artist's anger at the "inadequate and biased media coverage which contradicted the personal, eye witness accounts, that were filtering through from the Sikh community in India at the time and, later, the various Amnesty International and Human Rights Movement reports". In her "liberating" of the Golden Temple from alleged Sikh terrorists, who had based themselves in the grounds of the complex, the media generally portrayed Prime Minister Indira Gandhi as the moral victor. However, the painting shows that "the main casualties of the attack were in fact the thousands of pilgrims who had come to pay homage on one of the most important religious days in the Sikh calendar".

The bias of the media and "the damaging effects it has had on the image of the Sikhs" is symbolised by the group of blindfolded reporters who stand as 'partners in crime', shoulder to shoulder, with Indian troops (top left). As something all too often orchestrated by the powers that be, this media bias provides another level of interpretation that extends the significance of the painting beyond the actual event depicted and points to broader issues of concern. Namely, the manipulation of society and public opinion through State controlled media and selective censorship. In this respect the painting's title is intended as an allusion to George Orwell.

There is a sense of horror and panic as pilgrims scramble over one another to find refuge from the bullets and armoured tanks. The diagonals created within the composition by the steep line-up of soldiers (right) and the specific orientation of the square temple complex, lends to the visual disturbance and chaos of the scene. The surrounding borders of the painting hem in the fleeing crowds, enhancing the feeling of claustrophobia and revealing the futility of their attempts to escape.

The symbolic representation of the 17<sup>th</sup> century Sikh warrior and martyr, Baba Deep Singh, (seen here supporting his severed head in his hand) whose defence of the Golden Temple against Muslim invaders became legendary, "reflect the common belief among Sikhs that the attack of 1984 paralleled the worst atrocities perpetrated against them in past history." Indira Gandhi's inclusion within the painting, even though she was not actually present during the attack, clearly puts the blame of bloodshed ultimately on her shoulders. Her political motives for the attack are called into question through those features which demonstrate the faultless past record of Sikh loyalty to India in her early battles against repeated foreign invasions and persecution, and throughout the fight for Indian Independence. These include the Jallianwalla Bagh Monument which honours those Sikhs who lost their lives in the Amritsar Massacre of 1919 (a decisive turning point in India's struggle for Independence), the severed head of Independence freedom fighter Bhagat Singh Saheed and that of Guru Tegh Bahadur (the ninth Sikh leader whose martyrdom for the sake of the Hindu faith earned him the title of 'Hind Ki Chaddur' or 'Protector of India'). Having been offered to India on a sacrificial plate, both heads are shown being frivolously tossed aside by Mrs. Gandhi.

These symbols provide a context to the "total incomprehension, deep sense of betrayal and hurt which Mrs. Gandhi's actions evoked within the Sikh community". Essentially, the attack of 1984 was regarded by many as an ill judged move by Mrs. Gandhi in her wrangle for popularity in the polls. In this respect, this painting takes on board a more universal message where Mrs. Gandhi is depicted as a "multi headed demon" composed of various 20<sup>th</sup> century politicians (including Clinton, Thatcher and Churchill) who collectively "represent the kind of political abuse which manipulates the 'dispensable' masses in an obsessive thirst for personal power".





*Nineteen Eighty-Four ਉਨੀ ਸੌ ਚੁਰਾਸੀ*

SPECIAL FIRST EDITION

By the artist's estate, Amrit K.D. Kaur Singh, 1998. Printed in India.

1998

75.5 x 101 cm (29.75 x 39.75in)

Poster colour, gouache and gold dust on mountboard

Artist: Amrit K.D. Kaur Singh



# Painting Nineteen Eighty Four: A Personal Perspective

*The age is like a drawn knife  
Kings are butchers  
And righteousness has taken wings and flown  
In this dark night of falsehood  
No moon of truth is seen to rise*

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Majh, p.145

500 years ago Guru Nanak Dev ji uttered these immortal words, describing the desperate situation of his fellow countrymen - a people downtrodden and demoralised by a climate of political tyranny, religious intolerance and social inequality.

20 years ago as we watched reports of Indira Gandhi's assault on the Golden Temple at Amritsar and later came to hear about the organised massacre of Sikhs in Delhi following her assassination, it seemed to us that his words were being re-lived in the plight of thousands of innocent men, women and children who became victims of the political wrangling in Punjab.

Whilst the suffering of a people subjected to successive waves of foreign invasion during Guru Nanak's time was bad enough, the fact that in 1984 the atrocities in Punjab were not only being perpetrated by the then ruling party

of one of the world's largest democracies against its own people, but against a community which had a proven history of loyalty to and sacrifice for the 'homeland,' made the apparent systematic victimisation of Sikhs in India even more difficult to comprehend. After all, this was a religion which practiced the equality of all faiths; whose ninth Guru having been martyred in the defence of Hindu rights, became respected throughout India as 'Hind Ki Chaddur'; whose members played a key role in India's struggle for Independence and who continued to dedicate themselves to the defence and economic development of post Independence India. Given this history, we couldn't help but question: what had the Sikhs done to deserve such disdain?

Beyond the feelings of injustice and hurt that intensified with our increasing awareness about the extent of the ongoing hostilities facing Sikhs in Punjab, including other



*Amrit and Rabindra Kaur Singh, the twin sisters from England, whose paintings are also to be exhibited at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington DC, including the "Nineteen Eighty Four"*



Government attacks, like *Operation Black Thunder* on Sikh shrines; the looting; the staged encounters and illegal abductions, the disappearances and physical torture of men and boys; the extrajudicial detention, imprisonment and killings without trial. What frustrated and angered us most as Sikhs living in Britain, was the imbalanced, selective reporting and media censorship which effectively resulted in all Sikhs being perceived as "terrorists". Equally exasperating was the relative indifference of other global leaders to the Sikh predicament in Punjab. We recall thinking at the time that if the Italian Government had ordered a military attack on the Vatican, it would have provoked the outrage of the International community, so why the double standards? Was it owed to a lack of understanding about the significance of the holiest shrine of the Sikhs and therefore the full implications of Indira Gandhi's actions or was the Sikh community just not important enough in the higher scheme of global economics, politics and individual politician's agendas to be bothered about? Perhaps, in light of the generalised branding of Sikhs as extremists, militants, anarchists and separatists by media and political propaganda, they felt that the assault on the Golden Temple was justified and that the Sikhs simply didn't warrant their sympathy.

At that time we were still teenagers and the only Sikhs in a predominantly white British Convent school. So in many ways we felt helpless to do little more than try and defend the Sikh corner against the overwhelming negative perceptions of our white classmates whose only knowledge of the Sikhs and who they were, stemmed from prevailing media coverage of 1984. It wasn't until several years later when we embarked on a career in art that we discovered a vehicle for responding in a more tangible and permanent way to our own emotions and frustrations about 1984, particularly following the disturbing stories which began to filter back to UK through friends in India as well as certain officially documented eye witness accounts which appeared in journals like *The Sikh Messenger* and from Amnesty International. As artists who believe in the purpose of art to function as a social and political conscience in the world and in its power to communicate and influence individual and collective opinion and ideas, we decided to create a painting that not only attempted to express to the 'outside world' something of our experience of Sikh sentiments and responses to the storming of Harmandir Sahib but which, at the same time, offered a context to understanding the extent of the mixed feelings of, devastation, betrayal, disappointment, anger and loss amongst Sikhs worldwide. Our ultimate goal was to use the painting as a visual aid for raising greater awareness about the reality of *Operation Bluestar* and its aftermath: in

some small way to give the Sikhs a voice and tell this like it was from the human perspective. Because, regardless of the various and complex political debates on both sides, we believed there could be no justification for the human tragedy that *Operation Bluestar* and its ongoing consequences represented to us on so many levels. Not just in terms of the physical and emotional injury, loss of life and mass displacement of families through the destruction of property and livelihoods during the Delhi riots but also in terms of how general attitudes towards Sikhs altered in the changing political climate of Punjab. Having traditionally been respected as peaceful, dependable, loyal citizens of India it was especially heartbreaking for us to hear from friends in India that Sikhs now felt like they were regarded with suspicion, fear and mistrust, particularly as a result of the inter communal hatred whipped up by the self interests of certain political parties and in particular, following the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards.

However, whilst wanting to create a piece that was direct in its criticism of what happened, we were conscious not to allow the painting to become an anti India statement or to be misconstrued in any way as promoting the cause of an Independent Sikh State or Khalistan. Because despite all, on a personal level we like many Sikhs we know, still have nationalistic feelings for India and cannot separate that strong sense of Indianness and what that represents in all its diversity, from our Sikh identity. Furthermore, we maintain that Sikhs have a right of ownership to the whole of India and should never settle for anything less. And besides this, India as a Nation was no more responsible for what happened in 1984 than the whole Sikh community was for the Prime Minister's assassination. We couldn't ignore also that there were many non-Sikh Indians who spoke out against the atrocities, who sheltered Sikhs during the three days in November when organised mobs terrorised the streets of Delhi, and who continued to fight the cause of Sikh human rights up to this day. Sadly we had also to concede to the fact that a small minority of Sikhs, whether reluctantly or otherwise, were also party to some of the abuses committed. Whilst our deep rooted sentiments towards India remained the same, what did change after 1984 however, was our attitude to Indian politics. Until then, Mrs Gandhi had been our idol not only because she broke Western negative stereotypes of the subjugated Indian women in her position as India's Prime Minister but because as naive teenagers, she (her Congress Party) represented for us a proud period in India's history - the nostalgic era of the Indian freedom struggle and a character of rule which in aspiring to a vision of India as a united, secular Nation offering justice and equality to all, was a



model of good practice for the world. *Operation Bluestar* and the ugly politics that surrounded it stripped our naivety away as the hard truth hit home that politics and politicians are the same everywhere. This realisation in itself represents a key element of interpretation for our painting.

It was our intention that the painting should be seen by as many people as possible and we have been lucky that our developing profile as international artists has over the past years afforded us the opportunity to bring our painting of 1984 to the attention of global audiences. In the main stream galleries that we have exhibited worldwide we always make a point of hanging it within a prominent place within the show as a focal point for drawing people into a wider understanding of what 1984 meant to so many Sikhs. Fortunately, it has generally never failed to attract audiences, generate interest and stir the emotions of visitors from diverse cultural backgrounds who, in being able to relate to the Universal issues of politics and common human experiences of suffering explore through it, are sympathetic and positive in their response.

When we exhibited the painting in the U.S and Canada only last year, the attitudes and reactions to it were just as emotional and just as strong, particularly from members of our Sikh community. But there are some who feel that it's time to put the events of 1984 behind us. So when interviewed by Mark Tully recently for a Radio 4 programme which looks at Sikhs responses 20 years on, we were asked why, we as U.K. artists, still felt it was important to promote greater awareness about what happened through our work, whilst Sikhs in India just wanted to forget the whole terrible saga and move on. Our reply was that for us, this was like saying we must forget the Jewish Holocaust and that whilst we could sympathise with and understand how those who were directly affected in India would not want to re live the harrowing events of 1984 by keeping the memory of those times alive, we felt a responsibility as Sikhs living outside India (and therefore, less deeply effected by the mental trauma of those times) to try and redress in some small way the widespread misperceptions that still persist today about Sikhs in relation to the whole 1984 affair. At the same time we believe it's important to keep this episode of our history in the public eye because the victims of 1984, including hundreds of widows and orphans will never receive the justice and compensation they have been fighting for all these years if the cause of the dire circumstances they now find themselves in is forgotten; because many of those responsible for the atrocities that were perpetrated against the Sikhs have never been brought to account for their actions; because many younger generation Sikhs are completely ignorant about what happened and because we

believe it is knowledge of one's history, however painful, that makes us who we are. It develops our sense of identity, purpose and pride in a collective heritage and provides us with lessons and role models for the future. In this respect we believe it is as important to remember 1984 as it is the historical periods of Sikh persecution, no less for the fact that in both experiences, there is a message of hope and encouragement for our Sikh youth - that against all the odds, the Sikh community is resilient enough to survive the greatest hardships and finds the courage to preserve and protect its values, beliefs and identity.

So in 2004, as we commemorate the 20th anniversary of 1984, we continue to explore ways of using our art to engage and raise awareness within the International community. For example, in January we launched a Special Edition Fine Art Print of our painting depicting the storming of the Golden Temple, copies of which will be sold in US and Canada with the help of *The Sikh Foundation* California and the *Sikh Centennial Committee*, Toronto to raise funds for the *Sikh Film Foundation* - a charity that was established at the first Sikh Film Festival in Toronto last October to support landmark films by Sikhs and about Sikhs but for global audiences. Films like the documentary currently being produced by the L.A.-based producer Michael Singh called 'Riding the Tiger' which recalls his personal experience of the Delhi riots using original, chilling footage taken by Michael in 1984 and updated interviews with both the survivors and those who helped them escape the carnage. The aim is to create a documentary that will be as non biased and as representative as possible in reflecting a diversity of experience. In this respect, besides presenting a unique eye witness account of what happened over the three days of rioting, 'Riding the Tiger' will also deal with wider issues relating to the grass roots, human disaster of the whole 1984 affair.

Finally, there are also plans for the painting to be used as a promotional image by the UK Sikh Human Right Group who are organising a major art Festival ([WITNESS84.COM](http://WITNESS84.COM)) over the coming year which will highlight the unresolved issues and problems facing 1984 victims through art exhibitions, commissions of new art work, poetry and music and theatre performances.

Then from July this year the painting will feature at the opening of the newly established Sikh Gallery at the Smithsonian Institute where it will remain on loan and be accessible to visitors over the next five years along with two other works depicting the Sikh Diaspora experience from our own personal touring collection.

*The Singh Twins  
Amrit and Rabindra Kaur Singh*



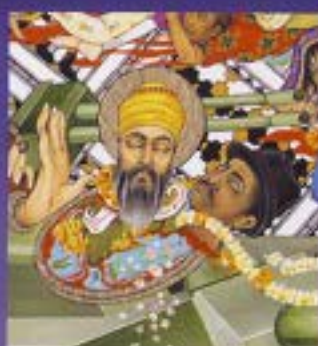
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# Lest We Go Astray

**A** Sant Baba ji who used to visit our family, once admonished my mother for not covering Guru Granth Sahib with a quilt during the cold months of severe winter in the north. It was my early childhood and it had a deep impression on me at that tender age. It let my imagination run amuck. I would press the legs of Guru's cot as if it was indeed the Guru's leg, to receive divine blessings. Sant Baba ji would quote *sau sakhi* presumed to be uttered by Tenth Master and frighten us with the impending devastation of the society and the whole world. He had a ready stock of rambling, mixed up stories from the *puranas* and vast Hindu mythology without reference to any context, perhaps, to impress the audience about the vastness of his knowledge and study. His admirers had dug a huge underground cell where he assured us that his devotees would take cover when devastation took place. Of course, it never happened!

There was an old couple who used to tie *nakhis* to the leg of Guru's cot as a talisman! They daily would place a jug of water and a *neem* twig for Guru's early morning ablutions. The fan in Guru's room switched was on for the whole summer season and a heater in the winters. This would be readily appreciated by our Hindu brothers, who habitually do so in their temples.

The institution of Sant Babas systematically induces fright in the common folks, spreads lack of self confidence and promotes dependence on them. In the garb of Gurbani, they employ *Vedic* and *tantric* charms and spells. Our Gurus worked so hard to cleanse Sikh society from such confusion. It has become difficult to get out of such virus of doubt, fear and idolatry. It is diametrically opposite to the clear injunctions of *Guru Granth Sahib* and the pristine doctrine of the Tenth Master who infused courage, self reliance, and freedom from fear in the Sikh psyche so as to create a brave new community and asked them to vow to abjure all *karmkand*. On the one hand majority of Sikhs have to endeavour hard to blot out the impression of generations of their ancestry of polytheism which was firmly rooted in their mental build up. On the other hand, the human mind by nature tends to run away with weird imagination and speculations of the Unknown and tries to find peace by the short cuts of ritualistic acts and to cast away inappropriate omens.

ਮੈਨੇ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਕਹੀ ਨ ਜਾਇ

Japji.

Bounds of a mind cannot be fathomed.

SGGS p.3

In order to assist Sikhs in breaking the bonds of ignorance and gullibility, Guru Gobind Singh had affirmed the *nash* doctrine. It was essential to break the fetters of widely prevalent ancient religious and cultural shackles and mental set up of people. Guru Nanak had gone out fearlessly far and wide to show the shallowness of such *Vedic* rituals to the society. The message was being repeated during 239 years of the *guru* period to wean away the Sikhs from such rites and ceremonies; the living with charms, and taboo traditions. The *panth* was given in the care of *Guru Granth Sahib* to keep the direction, to shed false practices influenced by the old temple cultures. Once a Hindu friend remarked that there still seems to be no difference between Hindu idol worship-cum-tantricism, with rituals in the Gurdwaras.

Yet, five hundred years of Sikh preaching has firmly established the mind set of the Sikhs to reject off-hand any suggestion of their being idolaters which will evoke strong protests to such innuendo. Sikh culture abhors such insinuations. Any act or even a tinge of such idea is fiercely contested. The Sikh culture has gradually come into being. The Sikh by now has formed habits which are totally different from other systems. He has standardised on *Wahe Guru* in happiness and sorrow. Saying "Wondrous Lord" in the face of calamity is a matter of courage and deep conviction in God. He traditionally distributes *prasad* in joy and in sorrow as well. Guru's injunction to shun wailing and crying, a *Vedic* tradition, is firmly established. He maintains dignified appearance in the face of heavy odds and abhors any label of cowardice. A Sikh has become synonymous with bravery, courage, honesty, fair play and empathy. He is ever ready to assist the needy. A vast difference in the traditions and outlook of the Sikhs has thus emerged. Nevertheless, the Sikhs are still prisoners of their ancient linkage to *Vedic*, *post-Vedic* and *tantric* roots. This is being exploited by Babas overtly and the weak Gurdwara managers covertly.

In the 19th Century, the Lahore Durbar, popularly acclaimed as *Sarkar-e-Khalsa*, fell under the charm of



Brahmanic influence. The Maharaja, princes and aristocracy visited and worshipped at *Jawalaji*, *Vaishno Devi*, *Chintpurni*, *Hardwar* and other temples. By the time of annexation of the Sikh Empire, the Darbar Sahib premises at Amritsar were full of idols of the Hindu pantheon. The dying wish of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was to donate the famous Koh-i-Noor diamond to Jagan Nath Puri diety.\* The abhorrent sight of *sati* rites brought total chaos and dishevelment of Sikh values. Well-to-do families requisitioned Brahmins to fulfil marriage rites. Only Jat Sikhs in the countryside continued to perform the *Anand Karaj* ceremony.

The caste-wise division of Sikh society became complete within 100 years of solemn vows and oaths taken at Anandpur Sahib in March 1699 to eradicate this, with *mils* being based on caste, like the Ramgarhias and Ahluwalias.

Guru Nanak initiated Sikhism with a new philosophical angle to it. He had opposed the rituals of Hindus and Muslims not for mere contraposition or contradiction. Nine Gurus after him laboured to extend its influence to upgrade common folks who were deprived of any significance or meaningful role in life. The common man to this day remains discarded, devoid of a responsible and respectable position in society.

Our two revered Gurus, Angad Dev and Amar Das were converted to Guru Nanak's faith, even after their earlier practicing pilgrimages and worship at popular temple centres, by their adopting the religion of simple, wholesome truthful living, showering love, sympathy, sharing all with devotees and others, bestowing dignity to the oppressed classes chained by superstitions and fruitless rites and ceremonies.

Guru Gobind Singh, our tenth Master, rider of the blue steed, self negating, upholder of Truth, Honour and Honesty, sacrificed all he had, so that the common man could stand tall, with much confidence and strength. This poet-prophet par excellence, propounder of composite Sikh culture and traditions, our Father was giver of nectar of the double edged sword, for whom generations of Sikhs readily plunged into martyrdom. Seeing today's slippery, hesitant hypochondriacs as that Guru's Sikhs is painful and distressing.

The Gurdwara liberation movement started with great resolution, much good will, honest effort and sacrifices. Many good Sikhs were martyred and maimed. The Harmandir Sahib was cleared of all idols and a divine atmosphere of purity and sanctity was restored after a long

time. But these glorious beginnings petered away owing to the passing on of the administration to illiterate, short sighted totally incompetent managers who readily pulled down the sacred institutions to their own low level. *Akhand Paths* became a profitable commodity, on sale like in the Roman Catholic parchments of confessions and exoneration in the middle ages and the Hindu pilgrimages to sacred river banks, to absolve man of his past sins. Empty rituals and money power became the sole criterion of religious principles and decisions. Today we have to pause and think whether all that hard work and sacrifice of thousands of devout Sikhs was worth the present state of affairs.

The popular provision of having a separate room for resting Guru Granth Sahib at night with a spacious bed and fan is now become universal practice. Simple minded devotees kneel and bow even at empty rooms when Guru Granth Sahib is placed in the main hall during the day time. Another import from old temple culture is the closure of the sanctum sanctorum at some of the gurdwaras in mid-day, signifying that the deity is resting! How are such un-Sikh ideas being foisted on the Sikh *Sangat*? *Akhand Paths* conducted by Babas remind one of the elaborate *Vedic yagya*, with all its trappings (including *kumbh* and oil lamp), which is cost-wise quite beyond the capacity of an ordinary poor devotee. And the scourge of worship of the paintings of Guru Nanak! It has induced people to make and freely sell the idols of Guru Nanak which are now installed in Sikh homes, with offerings of flowers and incense and lighting just like the idols of Hindu gods with evening *arti*, on a decorated salver.

At the same time, we proclaim that Guru Granth Sahib is of essence and not to be merely venerated as a body. *Guruvak* contained in the corpus of Guru Granth Sahib is our Guide ever since it was compiled by Guru Arjan Dev ji, as well as the works of Guru Gobind Singh which, out of his utmost humility, he declined to add in *Adi Granth* (but remain a vital part of Sikh prayers from the very beginning). The main difference is that Idols do not speak. They do not communicate, but Guru Granth Sahib does! Each time a devotee approaches it for guidance and prayer, he hears *guruvak* showing him the way.

Along with the misdirection by the Sant Babas, the lack of training, knowledge and qualifications of many of the Gurdwara managers has also wrought havoc. The absence of basic dogmatic knowledge in the dogmatic Babas as well as the ill equipped managers of our shrines have damaged the pristine doctrines of Sikhism. These rustic, under educated, self proclaimed leaders have even less

\*Yet we call him a great Sikh! Ed.



understanding than the village Brahmin *purohit*, and tend to mix truth with falsehood. Heavily leaning on distorted Hindu mythology with assorted *tantric* and *Vedic* rituals or their semblance, they feed their fare to lay members of the community, which is quite un-Sikh like. It is a more serious threat to Guru Nanak's *sehaj* than all the atrocities of theocratic governments, Muslim or Christian and the pooled resentment of established religions like Islam, Hinduism or Christianity.

Sikhs are asking why they have to be different and not merge into the crowd like others. Why cannot they live their lives like all others? There seems to be no answer coming forth, logical and ethical, for the young and old from these ignorant custodians of religion.

The fact is that the Sikh has pledged his very being to the Guru: that is the basic stipulation of being a Sikh. It was not Guru Gobind Singh, as is being made up by these semi-literate defenders of Faith, but Guru Nanak himself who enjoined this condition. His famous couplet asking for the head of the Sikh if he wanted to play the game of love, there being no going back on it, is well known. In the same refrain, Guru Nanak says:

ਸੀਸੁ ਵਢੇ ਕਰਿ ਬੈਸਣ ਈਸੈ, ਫਿਨੁ ਸਿਰ ਮੋਹ ਕਰੀਸੈ।

ਵਡਹੀਸਮ: ੧

*Put your ego under the feet of the Master;  
Serve Him without your ego.*

SGGS p.558

To a Sikh, God is all around him, with him, within him and he dare not act or think of wrong ideas. A Sikh is a sacrifice unto God and lives in the glow of his Guru and God. This is the true state of Nanak *jivatian mar rahiye, esa jog kamaiye*. There is no turning back or personal opinions to be flaunted.

Comparatively and contradictingly, Hindu gods live in the third plane of Heaven, the *dyuloka*. To get boons, Vedas had appropriate rituals and ceremonies and mantras, of which the sole purpose was to coerce the particular deity to yield. The Hindu mind-set, for thousands of years is fixed on performing *havans* whenever the need arises for which specific mantras are prescribed to urge and compel the particular god whom they want, to yield. Hindus have always worshipped gods as manifestations of *Sagun* Brahman. They address them, feed them, dress them, plead and demand of them to concede to their desires. That is why they offer individual prayers in preference to group or congregational prayers as every one chooses his or her own favourite deity for personal worship. Whereas the Hindu, by prayer, seeks to induce the gods, or a particular god to grant desired boons, the Sikh cannot even think of

matching his small prowess with the Infinite Being. Sikhs only pray for good of all: ਸਭਲਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ.

In aggregate, even intense efforts in appeasing gods/goddesses may yield only some particular boons and no more. It is not the route to soul's salvation, *mukti*. Hindu scriptures pointedly state that all such *yagyas* and *havans* do not lead to *nirgun* Brahman, the ultimate destination; who remains beyond the *dyuloka* of gods and goddesses. Limited demands yield limited results:

ਜੇ ਮੇ ਕੀਆ ਜੇ ਮੇ ਪਾਇਆ, ਏਸ ਨ ਦੀਜੈ ਅਵਰ ਜਾਨ।

ਆਸਾਸਮ: ੧

*I reaped what I sowed; Do not blame others.*

SGGS p.433

On the other hand, the Guru grants,

ਜੇ ਮਾਗਹਿ ਜੇਈ ਜੇਈ ਪਾਵਹਿ  
ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਚਰਣ ਰਸਾਇਣ ॥  
ਜਨਮ ਮਰਣ ਦੋਹਰੂ ਤੇ ਲੁਟਹਿ  
ਭਵਜਲੁ ਜਗਤੁ ਤਰਾਇਣ ॥

ਟੋਡੀਮ: ੫

*Obtain whatever you desire; Serve God, the Elixir.  
It liberates from cycle of births and deaths,  
So swim this worldly ocean.*

SGGS 713-4

The difference in the attitude of a Sikh and the Hindu is thus clear and distinct. Would we, the Sikhs still hold on to our subconscious when the Sant Baba culture is fanning it, or, we sit idle seeing a vast majority of people around us conducting such rituals and anti-Sikh ceremonies?

What we are doing today is replacing the idol with Guru Granth Sahib and fixing responsibility on the gurdwara or the Baba to do what they seems right. Our superstitious priests have institutionalised Sikh rites like the Brahmins, charging fixed fees for services rendered and relieving the person from all further worry. In the innermost recesses of our hearts we know that the Gurus wanted each Sikh to be a model of piety, courtesy, a good house holder, and a useful member of society, where all are equal in importance and religious position. We know that our Gurus launched a crusade against *karmkand* in straight and clear injunctions. We know what Guru Gobind Singh did to those *masands* who misrepresented the Guru to the devotees and fooled and robbed them in the name of religion.

Today we all look at each other and wait for someone else to stand up and lead the Sikh community to puritan ways, discarding the chaff of hollow rites and rituals and liberate the *Panth* from all false practices and delusions.

*Let us begin by adopting the Sikh way of redemption.*

Gajinder Singh



## Prime Minister of a Billion People

Manmohan Singh, born in Gah, southwest of Rawalpindi on 26 September 1932, is one of ten siblings whose father, S. Gurmukh Singh Kohli would often despair of his son's lack of interest in the family's business. Only interested in studies, the father would say, "at this rate, he will be the country's Prime Minister."

Six decades later, the prescience was almost prophetic when, on 22 May 2004, he took over as India's 13th Prime Minister.

As Tejinder Singh Kalra writes, "the largest democracy in the world can take pride in the fact that our PM is a man of impeccable integrity, with an excellent track record as an academician, economist and finance minister. At the most one can have the soothing consolation that he has been made the PM *in spite of* being a Sikh and not *because of* being a Sikh. And yes, the honour, dignity and nationalism of the Sikh community now stands fully restored which had been badly tarnished because of intense anti-Sikh propaganda."



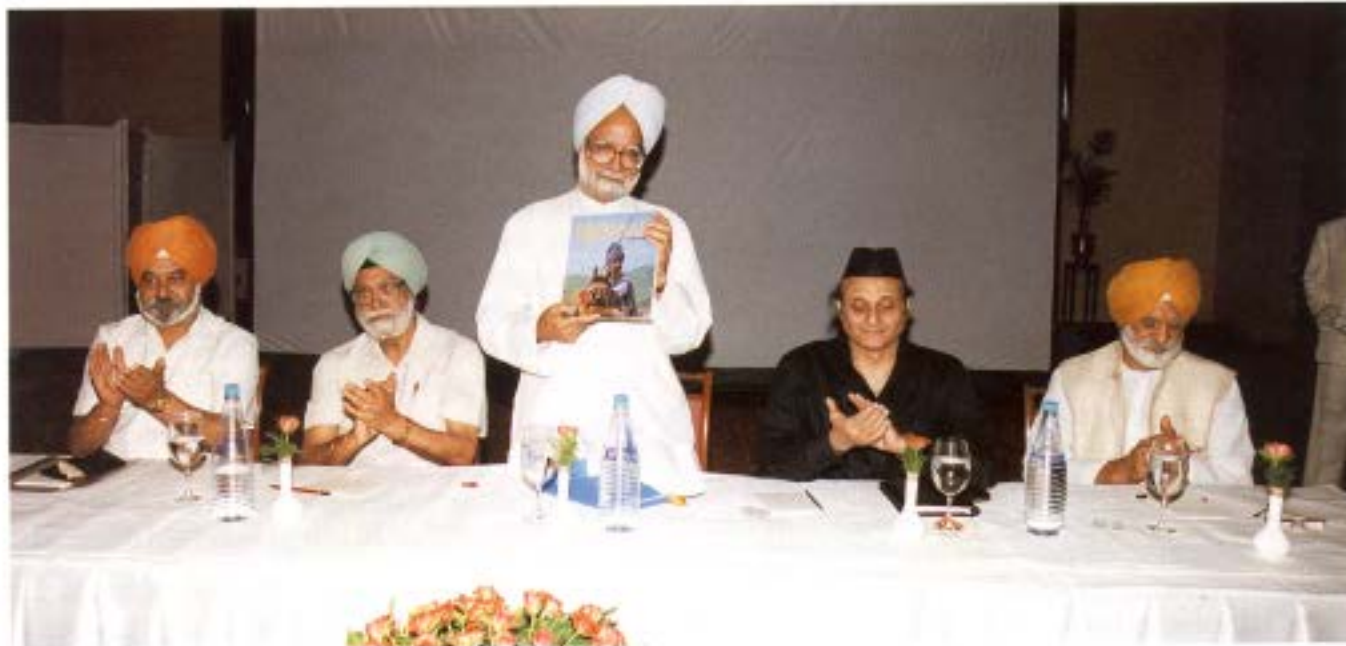
The Sikhs believe in the gospel 'Maamas ki jaat sabhei eiko pehchanho' and 'Sabhei sanjhiwaal sdayan, koei naa dissei baahara jio', meaning all human beings are to be treated equally. 'Manmohan' means one who is dear to everybody. Let him be extolled as a true nationalist and a secular prime minister, not as a Sikh Prime Minister."

The self-effacing Dr. Manmohan Singh is more akin to a fatherly professor than a politician, having completed his M.A. in Economics from Government College at Hoshiarpur and then doing his Tripos in Economics from Cambridge University. He married Gursharan Kaur in 1958 and they have three daughters. After his D.Phil from the University of Oxford in 1962, Dr. Manmohan Singh has worked in every level of economic management, having been chief economic advisor, finance secretary, governor of the Reserve Bank of India and Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

Dr. Manmohan Singh became Union Finance Minister in 1991 and rapidly restructured India's ailing economy, beginning the process of liberalisation which, today, is robust and on the way to becoming a key global player.

Dr. Manmohan Singh has been likened to a role model in the widest sense, "retaining the image of an honourable man, a decent soul, a sensitive human being on whose mature shoulders can rest the fate of a resurgent India."

The Nagaara Trust, publishers of the *Nishaan*, shares the pride of the community and country with Dr. Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister of India. It was Dr Manmohan Singh who, on 22 April 1999, released the Premiere Issue of the *Nishaan* at a dignified ceremony in New Delhi.





## Laser Shows on Sikh history

Oscillating between the past and the present and between antique and modernity, Amarjeet Singh, who is involved in promoting Sikh history, has found a unique way to blend the two: laser shows to depict the history of Sikhism. After presenting the first ever laser film show at the Tercentenary celebrations of the Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib, the artiste is now devoted to the life history of the four sons of Guru Gobind Singh.

Meant for the tercentenary celebrations of the martyrdom of the Sahibzadas, Amarjeet Singh says "This laser show will be an improved version of my last show as I am going to use ultra-modern techniques of advanced computer backup of laser beams and dynamic sound to recreate story of the Sahibzadas and their sacrifices".

The 40-minute show which will be presented to a large audience would cost about Rs. 8 lacs. To create the laser images with three dimensional effects, technical help has been sought from a foreign based company. "A team of about 25 people will be working on this project, looking after the technical side that includes recordings of the script, music and creating special audio visual effects", Amarjeet states.

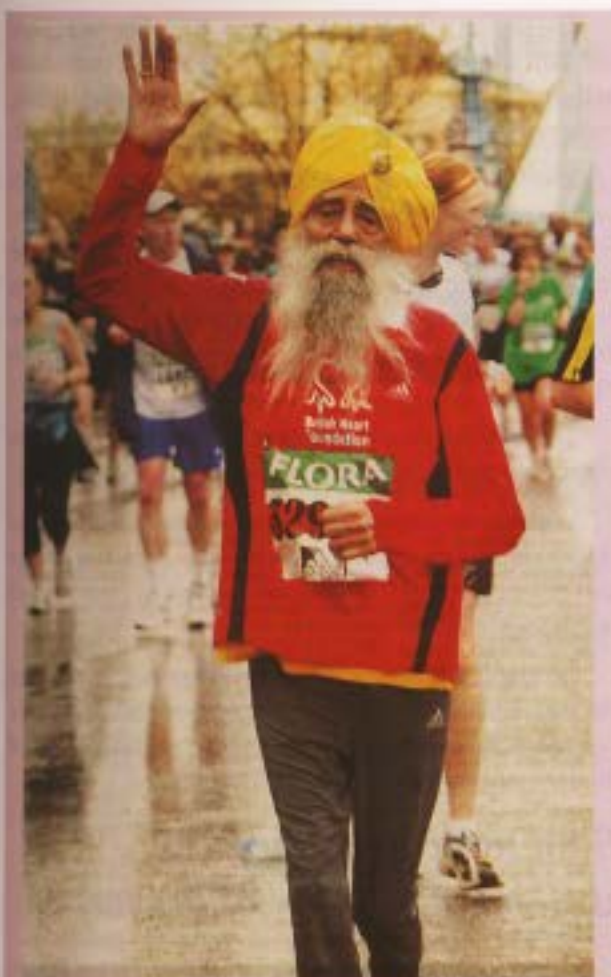
The premiere of the show will be held at Fatehgarh Sahib, on the eve of martyrdom of Sahibzadas before it is taken to the foreign countries.

Amarjeet Singh already has some documentaries and tele films to his credit. His documentary including "Amar Khalsa" and telefilms like "Maharaha Dalip Singh" and "Sanjha Dukh" on Indo-Pak relations has already gained acclamation from various critics.

## Sikh Leaders Memo to Pak PM

Various Sikh leaders, including Sanmukh Singh Mokha of the SGPC, Harbhajan Singh Matharu of the Delhi Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Harpal Singh Bhullar of the International Bhai Mardana Yaadgari Kirtan Darbar Society, Dr Pritpal Singh, head of the America Gurdwara Committee, and Sham Singh President Pakistan Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, met with Zafarulla Khan Jamali, Pakistan's Prime Minister, and Pervez Elahi, Chief Minister of Pakistan's Punjab and gave them a memorandum regarding their demands during the Baisakhi celebrations at Panja Sahib.

Harpal Singh Bhullar said that the Sikh leaders, in a memorandum given to the Prime Minister desired to observe the 400th martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev in



*Fauja Singh, 93, the oldest participant in the London Marathon, jogs past much younger runners at the Tower Bridge over the Thames in London. Fauja, who had done six marathons — four in London and one each in Toronto and New York — crossed the finishing line in six hours, seven minutes and 13 seconds, slightly behind what he clocked last year: six hours, two minutes and 43 seconds. The former from Punjab, now settled in Essex, runs for BLISS, a charity that helps premature babies.*

## Walkathon to Raise £ 1 Million

Balwant Singh Grewal, Chairman of India Association, a London-based charity, plans to undertake a 5000 km walk from Islamabad to Kanyakumari to raise £ 1 million for charity in India and the UK.

Announcing this at the annual Baisakhi event organised by the Association at London on 25 April, Grewal said it would take him approximately five to six months to complete the 'walkathon' commencing in October 2004, from the Pakistani capital to the extreme tip of southern India. Grewal had completed the London Marathon in 2001 and raised substantial funds for charity.



2006 at Dera Sahib Gurdwara and perform *kar seva* at Chuna Mandi, birth place of Guru Ram Das.

He said the Pakistan Prime Minister and Chief Minister of Punjab had assured them that permission would be given for a 20,000 Sikh jatha on occasion and that Pakistan would also release a special postal stamp.

## Sultana Begum Seeks Forgiveness

"Tears rolled down the cheeks of Sultana Begum as she offered *Ardas* at Akal Takht in mid-April as her act of repentance for the atrocities committed on Sikh Gurus by tyrant Mughal Emperors," reports the *Tribune*.

Sultana Begum, great grand daughter-in-law of the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah Zafar, who is living a life of penury on the pavements of Kolkata, said she learnt that her great Mughal forefathers had unleashed terrible torture on the Sikh Gurus and their disciples during the most traumatic rule of Aurangzeb in the 17th century.

## Akal Purakh Di Fauj Observes Turban Day

On 13 April, the eve of Baisakhi, an international turban day was observed in the *Darbar Sahib* premises at Amritsar by the SGPC and the "Akal Purakh di Fauj".

*Kar seva* of the Golden Temple, which had been started on March 25 was virtually completed overnight following which a Rs. 5 crore filtration plant was installed by the Tut Brothers of America. A special stage was set up by the SGPC and all devotees of the Fauj sported turban strips with words *dastar Sikhi di shaun hai* and *saabat surat dastar sira* in a show of strength to counter the "threats" being faced by the 'turban' internationally.

## Scholars for Preserving Cultural Heritage

"With the changing scenario of modern global societies, there is need to preserve one's cultural heritage", stated eminent Sikh scholar Giani Gurdit Singh after performing the clod-breaking ceremony of the *Heritage Village* project on the campus of Guru Nanak Dev University on 13 April 2004. The Vice Chancellor, Dr S.P. Singh, greatly praised Giani Gurdit Singh for his book *Mera Pind* that depicts a village life.

The project will be spread over six acres. The first phase will start with an initial investment of Rs 50 lakh, earmarked in the university budget. The project is aimed to establish, preserve and promote cultural heritage among the youth.

The Vice Chancellor said the village would depict various units of a typical village in Punjab around the 1950s, would house a museum, an open-air theatre and have sites for *teejan*, *peeng* and *akhara*. In addition, medicinal plants and shrubs would be planted. A *dhaba* would also be established where traditional fare would be served to visitors.

The *sath* (common place) would also be a part of the village where folk artistes from the state would perform.

In the museum, traditional Punjabi dresses, *jutees* (footware), *utensils*, *folk instruments*, *baag*, *daris*, bed covers and other commonly used articles related to farming and household would be exhibited.

Dr Harjit Singh Gill, Professor Emeritus, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, emphasised the importance of making the heritage village with a combination of modern and ancient architectural techniques.

## Sikh Representatives at U.S. National Day of Prayer

The U.S. Congress had created a National Day of Prayer under President Harry Truman in 1952, inviting people of all faiths to pray for the nation. In 1983, President Ronald Reagan affixed it to the first Thursday of May. The prayer proclamation is drafted by the *World Centre for Thanksgiving* located in Dallas, Texas, where this was held on 6 May, 2004 at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. A special proclamation from President Bush was read to the audience. Mary Jane Ryan, best selling author and speaker spoke on "Attitudes of Gratitude". Sixteen faiths were represented in reciting prayers from their traditions. Dr. Harbans Lal recited a verse of Guru Ram Das from Sri Guru Granth Sahib page 461, first in original and then in English translations.

*Mai o: par Ndar karee pir saachai  
Mai chhodia-rhaa mayree layna*

(I tender my gratitude to the Eternal Wisdom that granted me the gift of inner understanding towards abandoning every distinction between mine and others.)

In Washington DC, Dr Rajwant Singh, Chairman of the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE) was invited to join President George Bush in prayer, the first



## Sikhs of Montreal Honoured

The Sikh community of Montreal was invited by Hon. Michel Bissonnet, President (Speaker) of the National Assembly of Quebec, Canada, for lunch on 5 May 2004 at the Speaker's Dining Hall in the Assembly Building.

A luxury coach to transfer the Sikhs from Montreal to Quebec City was also provided by the Speaker. The Sikhs were received by Hon. Christos Sirross, First Vice President, and his counterpart Mme. Papinesu. Hon. Bissonnet welcomed members of the Sikh Community and also spoke few words in honour of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Miss Vaishali Bhandari thanked the President in English while Mr. Harpawan Singh Kainth thanked him in French.

A plaque was presented to the President on behalf of the Sikh Community of Montreal, specially designed with *Ik Onkar* in the middle with two *khandas* on the sides. It was the art work of S. Dilbagh Singh of "Dil Signs." The Plaque was presented by the five representatives, while the *khanda* and the *Ikonkar* was presented to all the participants in this event.

"*Agya bhai Akal ki tabhi chalayo panth, Sabh Sikhian ko hukam hai Guru Manyo Granth*" was recited by the participants. The *Jaikam* by S. Surjit Singh Kainth, President Gurdwara DDO was as loud as it should be and it echoed through the Assembly! The motion was presented by Hon. Michelle Corchesne Minister for Citizen Relations and Immigration and supported by Hon. Pierre Marsan who delivered the speech.

"The National Assembly of Quebec realises the importance of the 400th Anniversary of the compilation of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib for the Sikh Community."

The responsibility for this project goes to Prof Pavitar Singh Bhadhari, PRO of the Institute for Understanding Sikhism at Laval, Quebec in close collaboration with the Gurdwaras and Sikh Community of Montreal.

time a Sikh was invited to this observance. President Bush made his remarks after the prayers, before a small gathering in the East Room of the White House. "God is not on the side of any nation, yet we know he is on the side of justice", Bush said. "And it is the deepest strength of America that from the hour of our founding, we have chosen justice as our goal". He added: "Our greatest failures as a nation have come when we lost sight of that goal in slavery, in segregation, and in every wrong cause of justice for own citizens, and for the people of other lands".

## Australian Labour Party Candidate

Harmohan Singh Walia has become the first Indian-origin politician to be endorsed as an Australian Labour Party candidate for the Parliamentary seat of Mitchell in New South Wales state. Hailing from Hoshiarpur in Punjab, Walia migrated to Australia in 1991 and became a citizen of the country in 1994. "I was looking for a better future for my children and myself and immigrating to Australia was not difficult then," he said. "As general-secretary of various gurdwaras, I used to invite senior Australian Labour Party (ALP) leaders for our functions. They saw my active participation in the community and asked me to join the party", stated Walia.

## King Zahir Shah with Afghan Sikhs

Afghan Sikhs called on King Zahir Shah of Afghanistan, when he visited New Delhi recently. It was a nostalgic moment for the scores of Sikhs who had left Afghanistan nearly three decades back, and who recalled the peaceful



and purposeful lives in that country under the benevolent rule of the monarchy. King Zahir Shah was overwhelmed to meet his former subjects and spent a happy hour discussing their the past (and future?). S. Khajinder Singh, President of the Afghan Hindu Sikh Welfare Society presented the King with a copy of the Japji Sahib written in the Persian script.



## French Sikhs Celebrate *Baiskahi*



Photographs received from France, show the great turnout of Sikhs and their traditionally led procession with the Mayor of the town giving her address.



## The 10th World Punjabi Conference

This event took place in Chandigarh from 28 May, with a large delegation from Pakistan giving a clarion call for the abolition of visas and free travel for Punjabis and others, through the Wagah border, which was also suggested by Prof. S.S. Gill of the Punjabi University, Patiala. There were many emotional scenes, when Pakistani Punjabi's including numerous women writers, expressed themselves freely. Afzal Ahsan Randhawa, an eminent Punjabi author, born in Amritsar was unable to calm down emotionally, days after crossing the Wagah border. He wished to take back mangos from Hoshiarpur. *Ambian nu tarseen gi, chhad ke desh doaba*, he wrote in his book "Doaba" in 1981. An announcement was made for establishment of two chairs in the name of Hazrat Mian Meer, who laid the foundation of *Harmandir Sahib*, and this will be instituted at the two Punjabi Universities, in India and Pakistan.



## "Remembering and Forgetting: Memory and Trauma in Recent Sikh Experience"

The prestigious Hofstra University of Long Island N.Y., was the scene of international intellectual activity on May 8-9, 2004. The occasion was the fourth Annual Conference, "Remembering and Forgetting: Memory and Trauma in Recent Sikh Experience", under the auspices of Sardarni Kuljit Kaur Bindra Chair of Sikh Studies. The general theme of the debate was evaluation, remembrance and traumas of the

the importance and relevance of deliberations of conference and praised the accomplishments of the Sikh Chair. The popularity and success of the Chair and its holder, Dr. Arvind-pal Singh Mandair, has prompted the University to expand the study of religion and develop a new religious studies programme as a 'Major' for graduation. President Rabinowitz thanked Ishar Singh Bindra for establishing the Sikh Studies Chair and now the University is setting up a Catholic Chair followed by a Jewish Chair.



*Members of the Bindra family with Dr. Paul Taylor of the Smithsonian alongwith members of Heritage Foundation.*

A highlight of the proceedings was the presence and speeches of two important New York State Assembly persons, Thomas Dinapoli and Donna Ferrara, a Democrat and a Republican. They personally presented a 'proclamation' in the form of a unanimous resolution passed by the New York State Assembly, honouring the event and 400th Anniversary of the Compilation of Guru Granth Sahib, the holy Sikh scriptures.

The final session was co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institute of Washington D.C. about 'Sikh Heritage' and was ably addressed by Dr Paul Taylor, the curator of the Institute. His audio-visual presentation on the subject was much appreciated. There were additional presentations on 'Coins of the Sikh Raj' and 'Treasure & Travails of the House of

1947 Partition of India, 1984, post 1984 events, and a reference to the 9/11 events. An impressive array of eminent educationists from universities and colleges of U.S.A., Britain, Japan and Canada, having diverse ethnic backgrounds, presented their original papers and findings on the main theme and many related subjects ranging from 'Punjab in modern Hindi Cinema', 'Gendering Refugees', 'Nationalism and Sikh Symbol', 'Preservation of Historical Treasures' and Internet Dialogues.' The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Edith Wyschogrod, Professor Emerita, Rice University and past President of the Prestigious American Academy of Religion on the subject of 'The Historian as Custodian of Moral Legacy and Truth'.

As with the speakers, a great number of audiences had come from distant places including London and various U.S. and Canadian states. President of the Hofstra University, Stuart Rabinowitz, spoke very eloquently about



*Dr. Paul Taylor*



*Dr. Gurpreet Maini*

Bagrian' by Dr. Gurpreet Maini. Mr. T.J.S. Bindra presented a 'Vote of Thanks' on behalf of the Bindra family and rightly declared the conference a major historical event.

He also announced the two forthcoming events to be held by the University, the 400th anniversary of the compilation of Guru Granth Sahib on 29 May 2004 and the Sikh Film Festival in September 2004.



# 400th Anniversary of the Prakash

## Publications planned

- **Heritage of the Sikhs:** An insight into the Sikh Relics, Art and Artefacts. This volume will be a veritable mine of information and will contain pictures which have been obtained from various archives. This will be produced at Singapore.  
(Publication date: November 2004)
- **The Magnificent Guru Granth Sahib:** celebration of 400 years of the Prakash Utsav: 96 pages on art paper, size 8.5" x 11" (Publication date: November 2004)
- **24 hours at the Golden Temple:**  
96 pages on art paper, size 8.5" x 11"  
(Publication date: December 2004)
- **Guru Nanak: His life and teachings:**  
96 pages on art paper, size 8.5" x 11"  
(Publication date: December 2004)
- **Guru Gobind Singh: His life and teachings:** 96 pages, on art paper, size 8.5" x 11"  
(Publication date: Birth Anniversary January 2005).
- **The Five Takhts: the seats of Temporal Authority:**  
96 pages on art paper, size 8.5" x 11"  
(Publication date: December 2004)

## Heritage of the Sikhs: An insight into the Sikh Relics, Art and Artefacts

At the tercentenary of the birth of the Khalsa in 1999, the National Institute of Punjab Studies, New Delhi, took up the major project of locating and cataloguing relics of the Sikh Gurus and other historic Sikh personalities. During the last three years the research team from the Institute visited various parts of India, Pakistan and the United Kingdom. During their fieldwork the team was able to locate, list and photograph some very rare relics such as:

- Chola of Guru Nanak Dev, pyajama, rumals, dastars and charavan of the fifth, sixth, ninth and the tenth Gurus with various private families such as the Sangha family, Bhai Rupa family, Dalla family, Bhai Behlo family, the Bagrian family and Capt. Amarinder Singh of Patiala.
- Collection at the Takhts – *Sri Akal Takht, Sri Kesgarh Sahib, Damdama Sahib, Takht Patna Sahib and Takht Sri Hazoor Sahib.*



- Toshakhana of the Golden Temple, Amritsar.
- Relics of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharani Jindan and Maharaja Daleep Singh from the Ranjit Singh Museum, Amritsar, Sikh Regimental Centre, Ramgarh.
- The Lahore Fort Museum, the Lahore National Museum, the private collection of Fakirkhana Museum, Lahore the Princess Bamba Collection.





# Utsav of Sri Guru Granth Sahib



- The India Office Library, Imperial War Museum, London and the private collection of Lord Dalhousie in Scotland, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.
- *Moolmantar* written by Guru Arjan Dev Ji from the original Guru Granth Sahib Bir with the Sodhi family in Kartarpur, Bhai Mani Singh Bir with the Sethi family in Delhi, Valayatwali Bir from India Office Library,

London, Bahawalwali Bir from Bhai Vir Singh Sadan and a most beautifully illustrated Guru Granth Sahib Bir and Janamsakhis from the National Museum, Delhi.

- Historic Khanda with which Guru Gobind Singh Ji prepared the *amrit* in 1699, Miri Piri swords of Guru Har Gobind, Kara of Guru Tegh Bahadur and Chakra of Guru Gobind Singh with mool mantar inscribed along with various other weapons of the Gurus, Banda Singh Bahadur, Maharaja Ranjit Singh.
- Rath used by Mata Ganga and other Guru Maharajas, now with Bhui Rupa family.

We would like to share the results of our three year's research and fieldwork with the world by publishing a book depicting this unique heritage of the Sikh Community. This book will have a detailed introduction by Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India and a brief text by Dr. Mohinder Singh, Director of the National Institute of Punjab Studies, detailed captions with the photographs and historical buildings, photographed by Raghu Rai, Hardev Singh, Ashok Diwali and Sondeep Shankar.

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