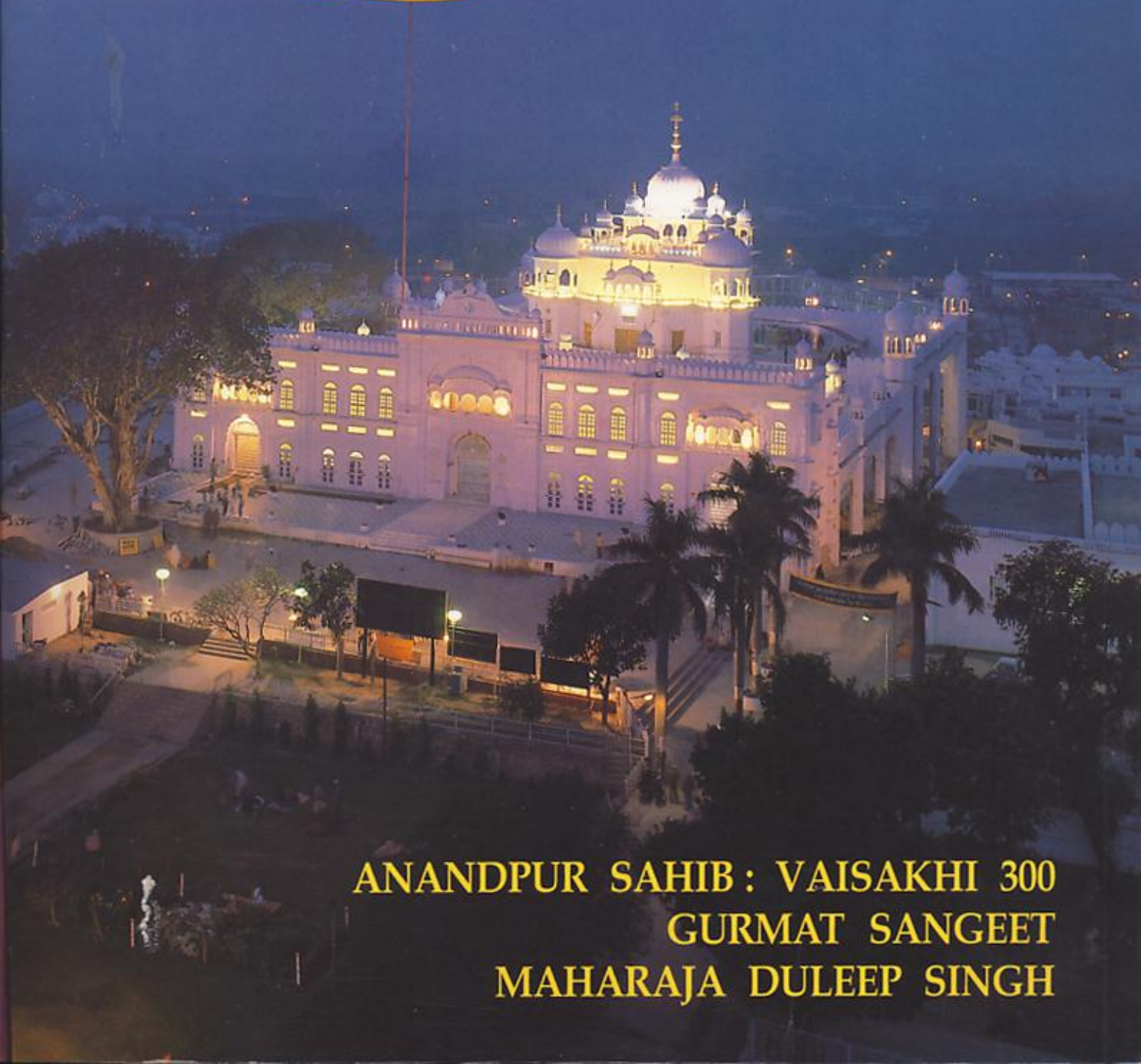


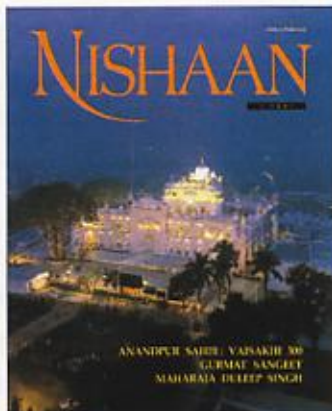
NISHAAN

I / 2000



**ANANDPUR SAHIB : VAISAKHI 300
GURMAT SANGEET
MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH**

NISHAAN



Cover : *Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib*
(Transparency by S. Hardev Singh)



53

A Defining Moment
by Harbinder Singh Rana

2

Imprimis
by Prof. Darshan Singh Maini



4

Birth of the Khalsa
by Kamal Gurtaj Singh



6

Anandpur Sahib : Vaisakhi 300



46

Maharaja Duleep Singh
by David Jones



28

Gurmat Sangeet
by Sikandar Singh Bhayee



58

*The Nagaara Trust and...
The Nishaan Journal,
The Khalsa 300 Video,
The Gurmat Sangeet Tapes*

Editorial Director
Prof. Darshan Singh Maini

Executive Editor
Pushpinder Singh

Editorial Board
Sikandar Singh Bhayee
G. P. Singh
Birinder Singh Malhans
Hardev Singh
Manjit Singh

Editorial Office
D-43, Sujjan Singh Park
New Delhi 110 003 India
Tel: (91 11) 4626183 Fax : 4628615
e-mail : nishaan@malcity.com
website : www.nishaan.com

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

Designed by
Kraftwerk Print & Design Pvt. Ltd.

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

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

64

The Mystic Year 1999
by Prof. Darshan Singh Maini

With the inaugural issue of the *Nishaan*, an international quarterly journal launched by the *Nagaara Trust* to mark the tercentenary of birth of the Khalsa in April 1999 now in the hands of select readers in India and abroad, it is surely the time to reaffirm its *raison d'être*, its rationale, its line of thought and vision, its format and form. In a way, perhaps, this is not quite necessary, as the premiere issue and its commissioned articles and features are themselves a fairly transparent philosophy of the magazine. For, as the modem linguists argue, the very language or idiom and the mode of the narrative carry a whole freight of both spoken and unspoken thought. And if, as McLuhan puts it, the *medium* is the *message*, then, I trust, the *Nagaara Trust's* progenitors and trustees should be most pleased to see their offspring, a child of love, devotion, duty and reverence, take off so splendidly and become a visible and viable project of immense promise. As future issues see the light of day, the contemplated blueprint and the projected panorama of Sikh thought, culture, literature, world-view and, inevitably, politics, as also the problematics of modernism in relation to the community in India and abroad would, I believe, get constitutively structured into our discourse. For the magazine is so conceived and designed as to carry its dialectic in a free, open, unbiased manner, unburdened by overt or covert pressures. Since it is seen as a vehicle fit and ready to accept the challenges of the new millennium and offer articles from persons of authoritative, independent and candid mindset, we may expect the *Nishaan*, symbolic in name and redolent of Sikh history, to emerge as a definitive manifesto embodying in word and picture, the grand dream of the Khalsa at this bend in our history.

plurality of thought since the magazine in its seed and sod, in its make-up and meaning comprehends such a passage. In fact, we would ideally like the *Nishaan* to become a forum for fruitful discussion on almost all the issues that we have inherited from history, and all the issues that the assault of reality presents today. And this is only possible when we allow what the Russian linguistic thinker, M.M.Bakhtin, calls the "dialogic imagination" to colour our discourse. That is to say, opinions and views and thoughts of everchanging hues would find hospitality in these pages so long as the nuclear vision of the *Nishaan* is not violated wilfully. In fact, the dialogic mode is, at best, a mode of plurality, and undermines all forms of the Establishment—of interests, ideas and doctrines.

And to achieve such a discourse it is necessary to link word to deed, thought to action, communication to consummation. In the premiere issue, several writers have forcefully underscored the concept of consecrated action as seen in the life, *bani* and vision of the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh. For mere thought or argument ends up in what John Keats called "cold philosophy". Not intellection or ratiocination as such can bring out any change in our conduct, or in our responses to reality. Abstractions always get lost *enroute*. Thus, an affirmative, positive, committed form of discourse would be the aim in so far as it is possible to carry all the ambiguities in a dialogic form.

In *What is Literature?*, Jean-Paul Sartre quotes a French colleague to define the basic concern of an artist or writer: "He knows that words, as Brice Parrain says, are loaded pistols. If he speaks, he fires. He may be silent, but since he has chosen to fire, he must do so like a man, by aiming at the target....." So, in this

The reader is assured of a pleasing diversity and

journal we do mean to offer not only thought, but also agendas of action, not only polemics but also the positives of life. And the basic religious-humanistic concerns of all mankind should eventually converge in the mandate and the message of the *Nishaan*. That is why we foresee a larger readership outside of the Sikh and Punjabi and Indian communities as our target. As I have argued, like some others in the premiere issue, Sikhism is known for its Catholicism, prodigality of concerns, and for its hospitality to diverse strains of thought, theological doctrines and so on.

Since the aim of the magazine, as we have spelt out, is to make the common reader conscious of the thought that supports a structure of facts, our effort would then be to go beyond the immediate reality and put our finger on the pulse of things, on the nerve that hurts. Mere facts or stately statistics remain a despairing exercise if the energies or the poetries animating those statistics remain continually out of our line of vision. In short, an event, a personality, a policy or a doctrine needs always to be seen in relation to the text and the sub-text. And such a process often involves echoes and analogies, on the one hand, prognoses and projections, on the other.

One word more. I do not believe that there is anything like "white prose" or "neutral writing". Each writer in the end is tied to a vision of reality which is his experience. Still, he too is obliged to link it to that grid of moral energies and spiritual endowments which flow from the larger racial or communal reservoir. The *Nishaan* writers are then expected to keep the voice within the Voice, the word within the Word.

With the second issue, we are, we trust, already launched on a high dream. It is the maiden issue which presents the problems of nativity and christening in a manner of speaking. There is, as Oscar Wilde affirmed, pain at the birth of a star as at the birth of a child. Our

labour-pains are now behind us and we look forward to a brisk, fruitful and vigorous future.

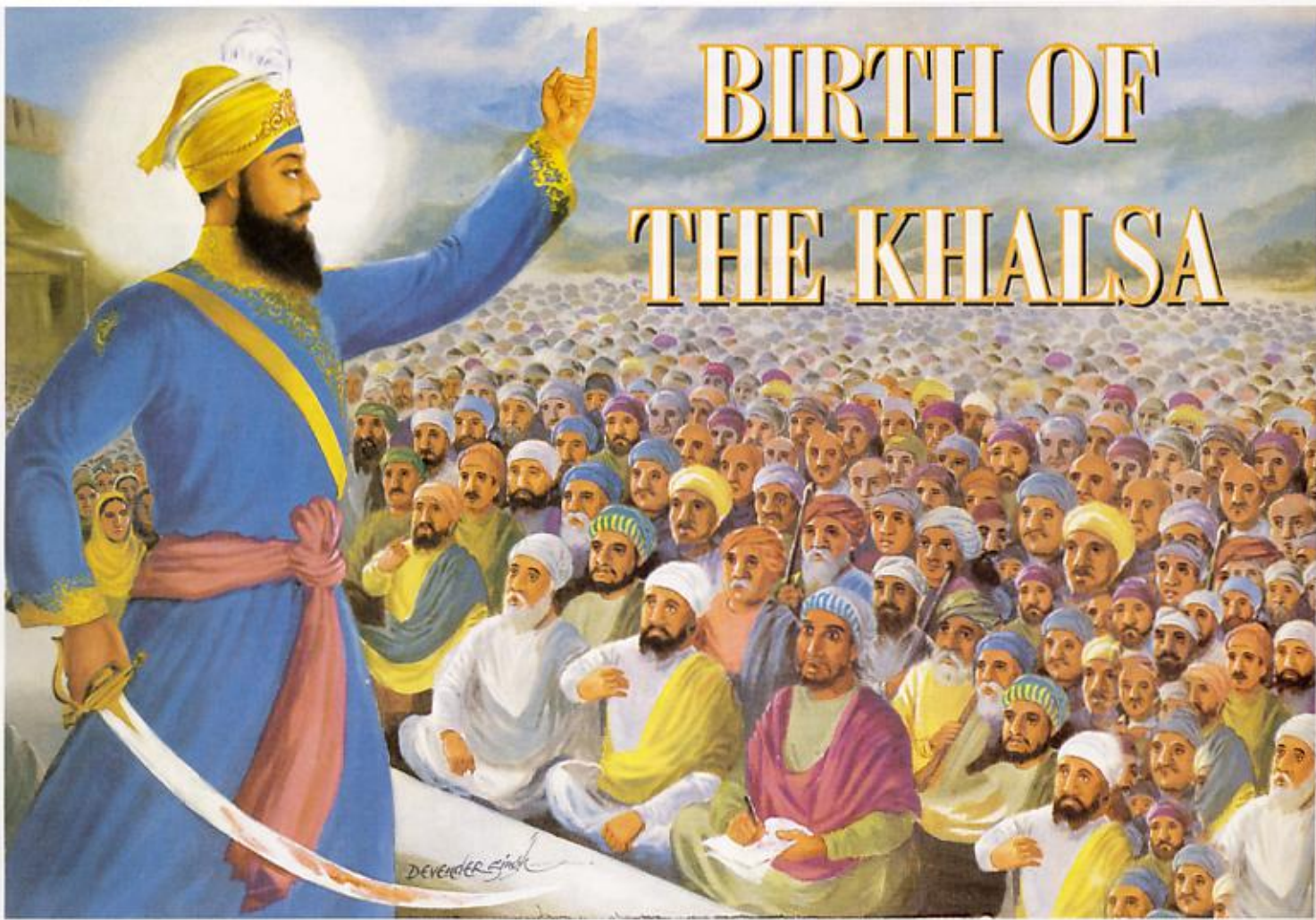
Darshan Singh Maini
Editorial Director

Darshan Singh Maini,
Formerly Professor & Head,
Department of English,
Punjabi University, visiting
Fulbright Professor (Harvard),
Visiting Professor (New
York University), British
Council Visitor (U.K.
Universities), "Visiting
Scholar to the Northrop Fry Centre", University of
Toronto, and the U.G.C. "National Lecturer", has
continued to write extensively for Indian and foreign
papers, periodicals and journals since the early fifties.



His published books include Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady: An Assessment* (O.U.P. 1977), *Henry James: The Indirect Vision* (Tata-McGraw Hill, & UMI Press, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1987), *Cry, the Beloved Punjab* (Siddharth, New Delhi, 1987), *The Spirit of American Literature*, (Sterling, New Delhi & Envoy Press, New York, 1990). His three volumes of poetry are: *A Reluctant Flame* (1987), *A House For Dreams* (1995) and *The Aching Vision* (Writers Workshop, Calcutta, 1999). Dr. Maini has edited, with introductory essays, several volumes on British, American, Indian and Commonwealth writers, besides volumes on Sikhism, Professor Puran Singh etc. He is also a permanent member of the *Henry James Review* (Louisiana/Louisville State University Press) since its inception, and a member representative for India on the *Bulletin* published by the International Association of University Professors of English. He is Chief Editor (Punjabi) for the Series "Modern Indian Novels in Translation" (Macmillan, India). And, finally, the English Department, New York University, at a special function released a *Festschrift*, entitled *The Magic Circle of Henry James: Essays in Honour of Darshan Singh Maini* (Envoy Press, 1990).

BIRTH OF THE KHALSA



And then he rose
His head held high
Valiant, striking features
Fierce and determined
The Guru's steely grey eyes glow with a
Strange brilliance
His face – a fiery red!
His 'Kalgi' emblazoned and aglitter!
Tightening his fist over the golden hilt
He raised his naked sword aloft.
It dazzled with the light of a thousand suns!
Scimitar – like
Akin to a tiger's claw
Its sparkle blinded the Sikh congregation.
A sea of humanity
They had converged from all corners
To hear their Guru speak!
Their leader and Saviour!
'What is all this? they wondered
'Why is the Guru much unlike his
Unruffled self?
Like a lion, looking down on his vast
Kingdom
He surveyed his Sikhs

In thunderous overtones, that
Echoed far and wide -
He roared – "Today is a special day
When this sword of mine thirsts for the
Blood of a Sikh
Is there anybody here who is proud to
Be a Sikh?
If so, rise!
Is there anyone here, ready to lay down
His life for the Guru?"
If so, come hither!
There was hushed silence
Cold and forbidding!
The entire congregation sat dumb-founded
Blank, wan faces stared back
The Guru repeated these words
Fervour ringing out in his voice
Still no response.
The Guru tried again –
'Who amongst you is a true Sikh of mine?'
From one corner, a figure stood up
With folded hands and bowed head,
He said – "O true King, pray cut off my head
And let my body lie forever, at

Thy sacred feet
This is my one and only wish"
So spoke – Bhai Daya Ram
The Guru took him by the arm
The frightened audience watched with
Bated breath!!
From inside a richly caparisoned tent,
Where they went
Came the sound of a blow!
Then a 'thud' of a falling body!!
The silence became painful
All eyes were on the tent
Worry writ large on their faces.
The Guru then burst forth out of the tent.
Tall, elegant and stately
He held his sword aloft
For all to see,
It dripped dark crimson blood!
A gory sight indeed!!
The congregation shuddered
And recoiled with horror!
What untoward happening is this?
The Guru's face shone with an
Unusual glow

Like the radiance of a fresh spring morn
 His eyes redder than ever before.
 Appeared kindled by the flame of emotion
 In a voice louder than ever before
 He cried – "My sword thirsts for the blood
 Of another true Sikh !
 Is there anybody amongst you,
 Who can call himself one ?
 Speak !
 Arise ?
 Be true to yourself !"
 Gaunt faces and lowered eye lids
 Met the powerful gaze of the Guru !!
 None spoke !
 None stirred !
 The Guru called for the third and the
 Last time
 His voice ringing with fervour
 Echoing far in the distant brown hills
 Something stirred in his heart
 Something clicked in his throat.
 And then Dharam Das stood up
 He had travelled all the way from Delhi
 Just to hear his Guru speak.
 With bowed head and praying
 Eyes, he spoke :
 "O mighty King, I welcome Death !
 What is more noble than dying in
 Your Holy Presence ?
 I do not fear thee, O monster of Death.
 Thy menacing tentacles strangle me
 No more !"
 The Guru felt elated !
 He and this noble disciple disappeared
 Into the tent again
 A 'blow' and a 'thud' are heard.
 The entire congregation shuddered
 Terror stalked the numb gathering !!
 A few Sikhs, even fled the scene
 The Guru again raised his voice
 His resonant tones ringing far and wide
 "There is a dire necessity for the blood of
 More Sikhs !
 Can ye, O People, listen to my plea?"
 None dared,
 No one spoke
 More Sikhs slipped away.
 The rest sat numb with shock,
 With dry lips and bent heads,
 They sat with downcast eyes, thinking,
 What has come over the Guru ?
 Why does he behave so ?
 A few even slipped away
 To sound Mata Gujri Ji, the Guru's aged
 Mother,
 With the flame of fear rising in their eyes
 With pallid faces, and in soft
 breathless tones,
 They pleaded – "The unexpected has

happened,
 The Guru is killing his own Sikhs !
 His own brethren !
 He is not fit to be a Guru !
 Dethrone him !"
 Together they went into the tent,
 The congregation shuddered
 Another noble Sikh leaves the world
 Forever – they thought
 The same thud !
 The same blow !
 The same gory sight of blood !
 The gathering became a thin one
 Many Sikhs fled !
 Dazed and stunned
 Not to be deterred
 Bhai Sahib Chand and Bhai Himmat Rai
 Answered the Guru's call
 Unhesitatingly, they offered their head
 'O, Guru, the torch-bearer of one's faith
 We offer our lives to you !
 Why squander life away on puny matters ?
 "Another two precious lives snuffed out ?
 How many more will follow ?
 When will it all end?"
 The gathering wondered,
 Anxiety writ large on pallid faces.
 This time, the Guru stayed longer
 Why ! oh ! why does the Guru keep us
 guessing ?
 The small gathering wondered
 Like the golden orb dispelling gloom
 Like a ray of light in surrounding darkness
 So did the Guru emerge !
 Attired in saffron and gold,
 His sword sheathed –
 His face aglow !
 Behind him came five Sikhs
 Attired in the same saffron robes
 All resembling their Guru
 The same glow, the same ethereal halo !
 How have they come back to Life ?
 How have they defied Death ?
 Does Life exist after Death ?
 Are Life and Death, two sides of a coin ?
 What a Divine sight it was !
 Five Saints between their Guru !
 All looking alike.
 The Guru spoke -
 His voice full of fervour
 Ringing with resonance –
 "My dear brothers
 Here stand my 'Punj Pyaras –
 My Five Beloved ones
 Who are nearest and dearest to me !
 They are in me !
 And I in them
 They are one with me

They are my torch bearer
 They keep the Flame of Faith burning
 Kindling and a glowing
 Far and wide !!
 The Guru rose –
 Like a resplendent king among
 his courtiers
 And in a voice like thunder, exclaimed :
 'Let History be made, today
 Let the Khalsa or the 'Pure One's
 Lead this world of violence and bloodshed
 To a new order of
 Peace and Brotherhood !
 His voice fell like the waves of the Ocean
 And then rose again –
 'Let the Khalsa stand for heroism
 That knows no bounds !
 Let the Khalsa stand for work
 That stands for unmatched perfection !
 Let the Khalsa stand for courage
 And will-power
 That is truly Invincible !
 Let the Khalsa be
 A truly liberated soul !
 Sometimes a singing brook
 At other times, a turbulent stretch of sea!
 Let him be a perilous brook
 Awesome and challenging !
 At other times a descending valley
 Humble and condescending
 The Guru paused.
 All faces aglow with pride
 All eyes shone with happiness
 He began again –
 "The Khalsa will rise
 At first like a suppressed flame
 Then like leaping tongues of fire
 Onto higher realms of splendour and glory.
 All attempts to crush him shall fail.
 Khalsa is the Guru !
 Guru is the Khalsa – the Saint Soldier.
 Shouts of 'Sat Sri Akal' rent the air.
 The earth, sky and hills resounded with it
 'Sat Sri Akal !!

Kamal Gurtaj Singh

Daughter of Major
 General Gurbaksh
 Singh, MVC, Kamal
 Gurtaj Singh (b. 1953) is
 a prolific writer and
 poet.

The above is extracted
 from her book *The Blue
 Saga*, which attempts to highlight the
 tempestuous, and awesome historic
 events, so unique to Sikhism.



Anandpur Sahib:



Vaisakhi 300

April 1999

Five million pilgrims, on a quest for spiritual renewal. Five *Jathas*, converging upon Anandpur Sahib from the five places that the Panj Pyaras had come three hundred years ago. Coming to the gleaming white townscape of Anandpur Sahib, burnished for the Tercentenary with five billion rupees spent on architectural embellishments and celebratory functions, is how Bhavdeep Kang, writing in the *Outlook*, described it. "Shabads sung by famous singers, the Indian Prime Minister paying his obeisance, release of a special postage stamp by the President, laser shows, a martial sports festival, sound and light shows, religious conclaves, exhibitions on the Khalsa heritage, fireworks display... no expense has been spared to make Anandpur Sahib, home to gurdwaras Keshgarh Sahib, Damdama Sahib, Sisganj, Manji Sahib and Thara Sahib alongwith the Anandgarh, Taragarh and Fatehgarh forts into the epicentre where the millions were expected to come during the epochal event in the second week of April, 1999."

Continuing in his review, Kang wrote "To Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal goes the credit for the beautification of the historic township... for laying the foundation of the ambitious Khalsa Heritage Memorial, for getting the highways widened, a new railway station to be built, ...but also the blame for turning the celebration into a *sarkari tamasha* ...failing to reach out and so involve the people at a personal level. Also culpable is Gurcharan Singh Tohra, for treating the SGPC as his personal fiefdom for 25 years, subverting it to serve his political ambitions."

Dismissing the politicians and their narrow, petty agenda, the Sikh *quom* (community) went about celebrating the epochal event by coming to Anandpur Sahib with unparalleled zeal and spirit, the hundreds of thousands swelling to the millions as the day of Vaisakhi dawned.

Summed up the headlines of *The Indian Express* on April 14, 1999:

"Unprecedented Khalsa upsurge grips the region".

All Roads To

The great Khalsa March from various parts of the Punjab—and from far-away places in India including Patna and Nanded and nearer, Delhi congregated at Morinda before heading towards Ropar, along the roads flanking the river Sutlej as they approached the holy city of Anandpur Sahib on April 12, 1999.

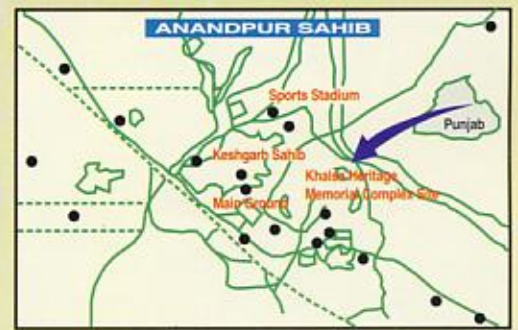
A virtual sea of saffron and blue, turbans, dupattas and Nishaans resplendent, as hundreds of thousands participated in the Khalsa March, every road crammed with vehicles of all descriptions:



Anandpur Sahib

luxury buses to trucks to tractors to cars to motorcycles to scooters - even horses and elephants!

Almost all the roads—national highways, state roads, village tracks—from Ludhiana, Amritsar, Bathinda, Fatehgarh Sahib, Chandigarh to Morinda and Ropar were lined by scores of langars and chabeels, manned by the young and the elderly, serving the devotees food, milk, cold water and sweets even as the columns moved slowly towards Anandpur Sahib and the 300th Vaisakhi celebrations.

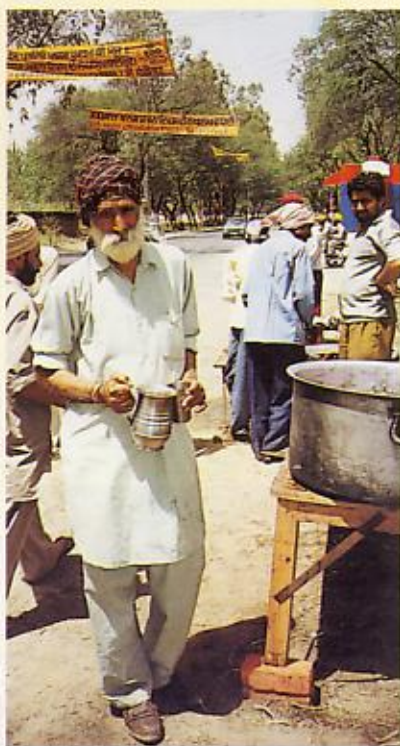




With Faith and Fervour

Gates, banners, buntings, flags, streamers, balloons, posters and hoardings were everywhere, mostly in the hues of the Khalsa : saffron and blue. By day and through the night, the lakhs of devotees moved towards Anandpur Sahib, the langars performed *Seva* around the clock, women working in shifts to keep the food coming, the men at service all through out.

And, the overwhelming religious fervour at Anandpur Sahib : the shabad keertan relayed from the Gurdwaras, announcing the *vaar* at *amrit vela*, queues that went on for miles before an opportunity of making obeisance at the Takht Keshgarh Sahib, birthplace of the Khalsa.





Lakh, Lakh Vadhaiyan



The "Anandpur Sahib Foundation", set up and run by the Akali-led Punjab Government, organised the week-long Tercentenary celebrations at Anandpur Sahib, albeit *Sarkari*-style. The Government had made "elaborate arrangements to make the stay, travel and participation of visitors to Anandpur Sahib as smooth as possible", but as reported in *The Statesman* of April 13, "the authorities found it difficult to manage the massive crowds and then problems were compounded by security arrangements for visiting VVIPs as the Badal-government sponsored Khalsa Chetna March entered Anandpur Sahib".

It was virtually a sea of humanity as wave after wave of devotees from all walks of life, dressed in white, saffron and blue, flowed from Kiratpur Sahib to Takht Keshgarh Sahib, flying the *Nishaan Sahib*, reciting *shabads*, demonstrating the *gatka* and raising the call "Wahe Guruji Ka Khalsa Wahe Guruji Ki Fateh" and 'Bole So Nihal-Sat

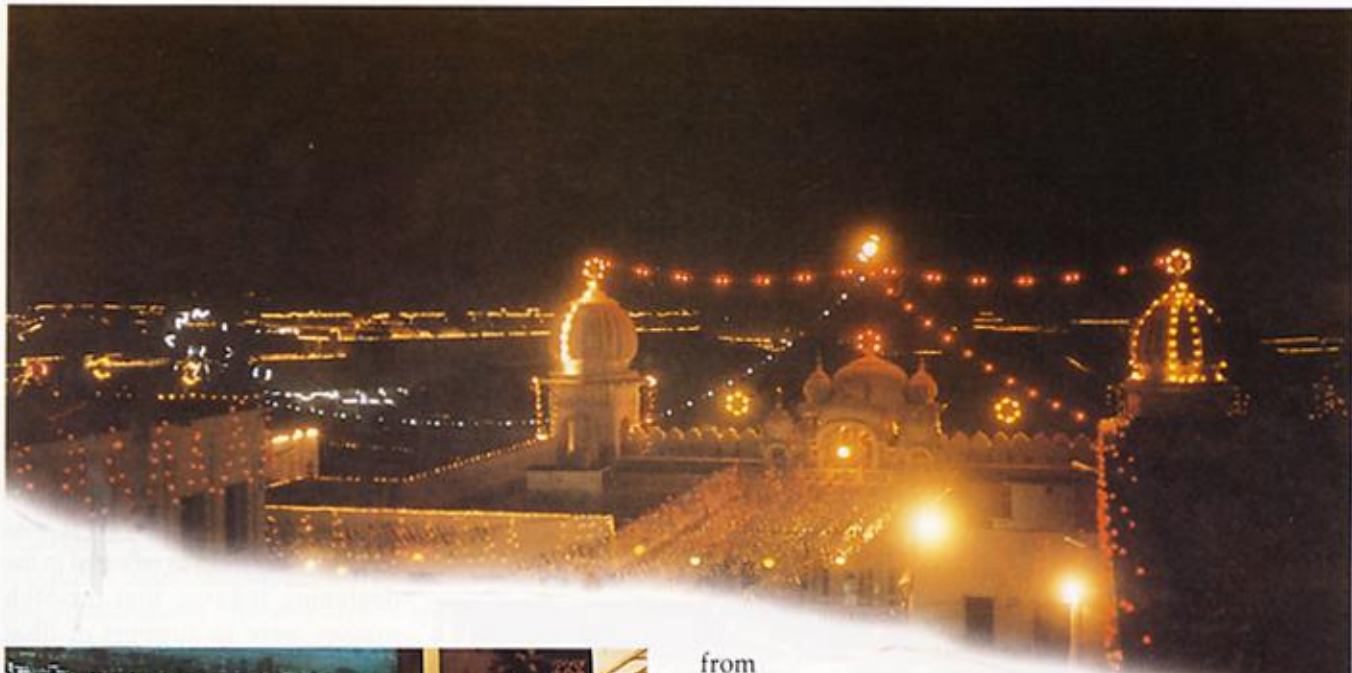
Sri Akal" as they walked the 11-kilometre stretch.

The Khalsa Fateh March started from the Markfed-sponsored 'Welcome Gate', led by youth doing the *gatka*, followed by two caparisoned elephants carrying the *Nagaara* drums. They were followed by the *Panj Pyare* and the Singh Sahibs from the Takhts at Damdama Sahib, Keshgarh Sahib, Sisganj Sahib, the Akal Takht and Head Granthi of Durbar Sahib, Amritsar. A contingent of 101 Akali Youth volunteers in white and saffron turbans were followed by 60 mounted policemen of the Punjab Police while three Army and



two police bands, a mixture of brass and pipe bands, played three marches en route: *Deh Shiva.....*, *Gagan damama.....* and *Kadam barae ja....*. The Army bands were from the Sikh Regimental Centre, Ramgarh and Sikh Light Infantry Centre, Fatehgarh.

There were large contingents of RSS



workers and VHP leaders, led by Prem Singh Sher, the Parliamentarian who was recently baptised by Baba Virsa Singh in New Delhi. The Punjab Chief Minister Prakash Singh Badal rode in an open jeep while the Vice President of India, Members of Parliament, Ministers



from Haryana and H.P. and various diplomats, including the High Commissioners of the U.K., Canada and Australia were present. The American Sikhs were resplendent in white.

The Khalsa Fateh March symbolised the culmination of five marches which were started from the birthplace



of the five beloved men who were baptised by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699, creating the Khalsa Panth. These marches (apart from the many more organised by voluntary organisations and the sangat itself) had reached Kiratpur Sahib earlier from Lahore (birthplace of Bhai Daya Singh), Hastinapur (Bhai Dharam Singh), Dwarka (Bhai Mokham Singh), Bidar (Bhai Sahib Singh) and Jagannath Puri (Bhai Himmat Singh).

On the evening of April 13th, the township of Anandpur Sahib was dressed up with lakhs of lights while the sky above lit up with fireworks even as a laser display show commenced at the site of the Khalsa Heritage Memorial Complex. This was followed by the *Sarab Sanjhi Gurbani* concert at the KHMC site, illuminated by special high intensity lights installed at the venue. Apart from Bhai Lalji and Dyalji, descendents of Bhai Mardana, the companion of Guru Nanak, others who recited shabad on the occasion



Gurcharan Singh Tohra, Baba Sarabjot Singh Bedi but also Union Cabinet Minister Surjit Singh Barnala, Simranjit Singh Mann, former Prime Minister Chandra Sekhar and BSP Chief Kanshi Ram. It was under these massive shamianas, with some 50,000 men and women attending, that the true upsurge amongst the Sikhs clearly reached a crescendo. Riding religious fervour, most devotees had come on their own, and not mobilised by the feuding camps of the Akali Dal. It was resoundingly clear, as reflected in the deafening *Jaikaras*, that the Sikh masses were in support of Bhai Ranjit Singh, and the response to his presence was overwhelming. Many of the tens of thousands at Anandpur Sahib had marched with Bhai Ranjit Singh from Amritsar, a few days earlier, and were in full support of the seven resolutions adopted on April 14th, particularly the demand for complete autonomy of the Akal Takht.

A third march, led by Capt. Amarinder Singh of Patiala, also culminated in a conclave at Anandpur Sahib ☪



were Hem Lata, Jagjit Singh, the Singh Bandhu, and Hans Raj Hans, with the shabads dedicated to Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa Panth.

The Sports Festival at Charan Ganga Stadium was inaugurated on 9th April and ran till the 13th April.

Some few hundred yards from the Takht Keshgarh Sahib, near Gurdwara Anandgarh Sahib, was the venue of the "parallel" tercentenary celebrations which commenced on April 13, under the leadership of Bhai Ranjit Singh and attended not only by



Seven Million At Anandpur Sahib

Far exceeding the initial expectation of 2.5 to 3 million visitors to Anandpur Sahib for the Khalsa's Tercentenary, official estimates put the total number of devotees who came to the birthplace of the Khalsa during the week at *seven million*, a truly astounding reaffirmation of their faith, quite oblivious to games of the rival groups.

In his final message, Prakash Singh Badal had stated that, "The Khalsa will remain in the forefront of the struggle for safeguarding the defence and dignity of India" while Gurcharan Singh Tohra continued to castigate the "sarkari tamasha," and contended the Chief Minister could not be trusted in any religious or political matter".

On April 14, the last day of the festivities, was an Interfaith Conclave attended by representatives of Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism : the conclave of spiritual leaders and concluding ceremony of the official Tercentenary celebrations.

Not so for the Khalsa, with tens of thousands continuing their pilgrimage towards the epicentre of their faith, long after the sarkar had gone back.

Delhi Of The Khalsa

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) has planned a year-long programme to celebrate Tercentenary of the birth of the Khalsa which began on April 10, with an impressive march displaying weapons of Banda Bahadur from Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib to Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib. On April 11, the column of marches from Delhi left for Anandpur Sahib, to meet at Morinda with the main Khalsa March, led by Jathedar Ranjit Singh from the Akal Takht in Amritsar where also the marches from Darudana Sahib and West Bengal would rendezvous. All Gurdwaras in Delhi were brilliantly illuminated through the week and kirtan darbars held, including hymns rendered from the *Dasam Granth* at Bangla Sahib by Sharafat Ali Khan and Shafqat Ali Khan of the Sham Chaurasi Gharana in Pakistan.

The General Secretary of the DSGMC, S.Bhajan Singh Walia, stated that several projects were being set up, including the Guru Gobind Singh International Sikh Centre in Delhi, Guru Tegh Bahadur College of Engineering and Guru Tegh Bahadur Sikh Study Centre at Khalsa College. A proposal for the Bala Sahib Medical College and Hospital was also made. Another move is the Khalsa Ozone Friendly project, keeping the environmental degradation of Delhi in mind.

Sava Lakh Are Baptised

At least 125,000 people sought and received the *Amrit* baptism during the second-week of April 1999 at Takht Keshgarh Sahib. According to Prof. Manjit Singh, the Jathedar Sahib, the majority of the new *amritdharis* were first-timers including young Sikhs and new converts from India and abroad. The figure of 125,000 or *Sava Lakh*, is both significant and auspicious because this was also the number that the *Dashmesh Pita*, Guru Gobind Singh, had baptised during the Second-Baisakhi of 1700 at Talwandi Sabo (now in Bhatinda district).

During the days leading up to Baisakhi 1999 the SGPC and Prof. Manjit Singh made special arrangements for the amrit baptism ceremonies, involving several thousands of devotees at a time.

"Order Of The Khalsa"

On April 12, the Punjab Sarkar handed out 85 "Order of the Khalsa" awards (*Nishan-e-Khalsa*) to chosen individuals for their "contribution to the community and the country". These included chosen Sikhs from the field of politics, judiciary, sports, literature, defence, agriculture and industry but the order was also given to those long departed, including Shaheed Bhagat Singh. Former Supreme Court Judge Kuldeep Singh refused the award because of the Punjab Government's "callous attitude in regard to gross human rights, violations...." while author and architect, Patwant Singh, also declined to accept this award.

Pandits to Anandpur Sahib

Panun Kashmir, a premier organisation of displaced Kashmiri people, has advised Pandits all over the world to undertake pilgrimage to Anandpur Sahib, singly or in batches, during the tercentenary celebrations of the birth of the Khalsa, as a mark of reverence and a token of gratitude to Guru Gobind Singh who along with his followers had come to the rescue of Kashmiri Pandits then being massacred and forcibly converted to Islam during the reign of Aurangzeb.

Such a resolution was adopted by the Executive Committee of the *Panun Kashmir* which met in Jammu on April 14. Dr. Agnishekhar, convener was in the chair. A three-member committee was constituted to chalk out modalities of the programme for celebrating the birth of the Khalsa by the Kashmiri Pandits.

Dr.K.L.Chowdhary, Chairman of the Political Affairs

Committee, recalled that the Pandits had four years ago organised a *kritegta yatra* (pilgrimage of indebtedness) to Anandpur Sahib.

Felicitating the entire Sikh community on the 300th year of the birth of the Khalsa, the *Panun Kashmir* said it could never forget the sacrifices rendered by the Sikhs and their revered Gurus in saving the minority community of Pandits from total annihilation.

The organisation suggested to the displaced people from Kashmir to visit Anandpur Sahib to seek inspiration from the great saints for the political, spiritual and intellectual rejuvenation of the Pandits who after many centuries had been driven out of their homeland.

Greetings from Pakistan

A special saffron-coloured greeting card in Gurmukhi from Pakistan has been sent by Mr. Illias Ghumman, Chairman of the Punjabi Languages and Cultural Department, Lahore, the card processed at his Gurmukhi script computers. Mr. Ghumman, a civil engineer, is wedded to the promotion of Punjabi in West Punjab, having joined scores of Punjabi lovers in taking out peaceful processions in the past decade. He brings out two Punjabi magazines — *Meeti* (for children) and *Ravel* and also edits an annual Punjabi Magazine *Sahit*.

ਸਤਿਕਾਰਯੋਗ...ਸ੍ਰੀ...ਯੋਗ...ਸਤਿਕਾਰਯੋਗ...ਜੀ
ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖਾਨਾ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਭੀਡ
ਖਾਲਸੇ ਦੇ 300 ਸਾਲਾ ਸਾਜਨਾ ਦਿਵਸ
ਦੀਆਂ ਭਾਂਤ ਖੁਸ਼ੀਆਂ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨ ਉੱਤੇ
ਆਪ ਜੀ, ਆਪ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਨਿਯੰਤ੍ਰਿਤ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਮੈਂਬਰਾਂ
ਅਤੇ ਸ਼ੁਰੂ ਸ਼ਰੀਆ ਸਾਥੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ

1999 ਦੀ ਵਿਸਾਖੀ ਦੀਆਂ
ਲੱਖ ਲੱਖ ਵਧਾਈਆਂ ਹੋਣ

ਪੂਰੇ ਜੰਗ ਦੇ ਪੰਜਾਬੀਆਂ ਲਈ ਸੁਖ ਦੀਆਂ ਦੁਆਵਾਂ ਮੰਗਣ ਵਾਲਾ
ਇਲਾਹਾਸ ਘੁਮੰਟ

ਚੇਅਰਮੈਨ: ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਅਤੇ ਸੱਭਿਆਚਾਰ ਵਿਭਾਗ, ਲਾਹੌਰ (ਪੰਜਾਬ)
ਸੰਪਾਦਕ: ਵਰ੍ਹੇ ਵਾਰ "ਸਾਹਿਤ" 24- ਅਮਰੀਕਾ ਰੋਡ, ਬਿਨਾਲ ਗੰਜ, ਲਾਹੌਰ, ਪਾਕਿਸਤਾਨ

Ghumman travelled extensively to visit and highlight the present condition of gurdhams (places visited by Guru Nanak and other Sikh Gurus in West Punjab). This forced the Waqf Board of Pakistan to remove encroachments and beautify certain places. Non-resident Sikhs have taken the task of looking after the repairs and renovation of some historic places but this was not the end of his mission.

Ghumman has written six books in Punjabi, highlighting the religious journeys by Guru Nanak Dev,

the life of Guru Gobind Singh, the birth-places of Mata Sahib Kaur, Mata Sundri Ji, Baba Nanaki Ji and the antiques of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's regime.

This group of Punjabi writers and journalists organised the World Punjabi Conference at Lahore last year, but the Indians were denied visas by Pakistan authorities. Ghumman was honoured with the Sadhu Singh Hamdard International award for the promotion of the Punjabi language.

The card from Pakistan conveys greetings on Baisakhi-1999 and the tercentenary of the *Khalsa Panth* celebrations with good wishes for the welfare of all Punjabis in the world.

History has it that when Guru Gobind Singh had to leave the town of Macchiwara, with the Mughal army attempting to close in, not a single Hindu or Sikh family agreed to give him shelter. Only when the Guru reached Raikot a local Muslim, Rai Kalha, took him to his house.

Rai Kalha's descendant, Rai Azizullah, who had migrated to Pakistan in 1947, returned to Anandpur Sahib with 15 others to be part of the grand celebrations marking 300 years of the Khalsa.

Their trip had become possible through the untiring efforts of a former Punjab Congress legislator, Harnek Singh Gharun, who not only made many trips to Pakistan, but also spent months lobbying with Indian authorities to arrange special visas.

"Guru Sahib had taught us the great values of tolerance, co-operation and respect for each other's religion," stated Azizullah.

Recounting a story that has been told and retold in his family over generations, he said, "Guru Gobind Singh was in our house when he was told of the execution of his two sons and the subsequent death of their mother". According to Azizullah it was the Rai family retainer, Naur Mahi, who brought the news from Sirhind. "When Guru Sahib left, he in appreciation gave a metal *Surahi* used by him for drinking water. The vessel has remained with the family as the one most prized possession".

Also among the 16 Pakistanis on a "pilgrimage" to Anandpur Sahib were Rai Rashid Bhatti and his young son Haroon. Unlike Azizullah, who had come because of his family links with the Tenth Guru, the Bhatti's connection with Sikhism dates back to the 15th century, when the family donated half its land holding (15,000 acres) to the Guru.

Later, the shrine of Nankana Sahib — Guru Nanak's birthplace — was built on a portion of this land. The remaining acres still fringing Rai Rashid Bhatti's present

farms are now with the Pakistan Government's Aukaaf (Waqf) Department.

Both Rashid and his son Haroon are devout Muslims. On this first trip to India and Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of the Khalsa tercentenary, they said; "It has given us a distinct sense of being on a pilgrimage."

"A Great Moment in Indian History"

Addressing a gathering at Rakab Ganj Gurdwara in New Delhi, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said the Government had extended all possible financial and physical help for the celebrations and would pitch in more, if required. He described the tercentenary celebrations as a great moment in Indian history

"Establishment of the *Khalsa Panth* by Guru Gobind Singh has given humanity a new meaning, philosophies and principles which are relevant for all times to come." The Chief Minister of Delhi, Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, who was also present on the occasion, promised that the state Government would soon give second official language status to Punjabi. "The Government is committed to the promise".

Urging the Sikhs to follow the tenants of Khalsa, religious leaders stated that "Khalsa" was defined by the holy scripture as, "he, who is constantly aware of the External One and is perpetually enjoined to Him in spirit and thought. He, who does not worship or recognise any deity or idol. He, who does not indulge in any form of aimless penance, pilgrimage or other such superfluous activities".

The tercentenary celebrations of the birth of *Khalsa Panth* and Baisakhi were celebrated in New Delhi on April 14 with fervour and gaiety. Gurdwaras were decorated and special kirtan durbars held in which noted "Shabad" singers including sufi singers from Pakistan of the Sham Chaurasi Gharana, Sharafat Ali Khan and Shafqat Ali Khan, rendered hymns from the Dasam Granth.

A special kirtan durbar was held at Gurdwara Rakabganj Sahib to mark the occasion as also at the other historic gurdwaras. Gurdwara Nanak Piyao, Gurdwara Majnu Tila; Bangla Sahib Gurdwara; Bala Sahib Gurdwara; and Mata Sundari Gurdwara which have their origin's with the lives of the great Gurus.

The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee general secretary, Bhajan Singh Walia, said that the DSGMC planned a year-long programme and also submitted projects worth Rs. 20 crore for the setting up of the Guru Gobind Singh International Sikh Centre in Delhi, Guru Tegh

Bahadur College of Engineering and Guru Tegh Bahadur Singh Study Centre at the Khalsa College.

"A brighter future for us all"

"By building on a rich past, you are helping to make a brighter future for us all" stated President Bill Clinton in the message released through Dr. Rajwant Singh, Executive Director of the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation at Washington D.C.

"Throughout our nation's history, Americans have drawn strength, hope and inspiration from their religious traditions and ethnic heritage. Even as we seek to become a more united people, we must not forget our roots, for they remind us of who we are and of what we have to share with others", Clinton said. The Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, which represents the Sikhs in an umbrella organisation of all religious faiths, and gurdwaras in the United States are celebrating the tercentenary with religious functions, meetings and seminars, stressing that Sikhism is a faith to unite all religions.

The U.S. President sent his "warm greetings" to the Sikhs on occasion of the *Khalsa Panth* Tercentenary, commending the community for its commitment towards preserving the values of religion.

"As you mark this important milestone, I commend each of you for your commitment to preserving the values and traditions of the Sikh faith and to sharing them with a new generation."

Sikhs "vital element in Indo-UK ties"

"The celebrations at Anandpur Sahib are an extraordinarily important occasion and it is extremely important for me to represent my country at the celebration for we have a large Sikh community in Britain which has reached the top in almost all walks of life. And Sikhs are an important element in improving the relationship between India and Britain," stated Britain's High Commissioner in India, Sir Rob Young also accompanied by Lady Catherine Young, visited Anandpur Sahib, sharing the dais with the High Commissioners of Canada and Australia. Sir Rob Young carried the message from his Prime Minister Tony Blair which was read out on the occasion.

Praising the tolerance and humaneness of the Sikh religion, Blair noted "a society where every individual, regardless of colour, creed or race has the same opportunities. The Sikhs contribute much to today's multicultural society of the world."

Celebrating The Khalsa Tercentenary In Britain

Following inauguration of the spectacular exhibition *Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* at the world renowned *Victoria & Albert Museum*



Main entrance to the V&A Museum.

resounded to *jaikaras* with over 5000 Sikhs in the packed hall, who watched and heard the HRH Prince of Wales, the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, leader of the Conservative Party, William Hague, and other national and political leaders of the U.K. as also the heads of the Church of England and the Jewish Faith, present to greet the occasion.

Planned by *The Network of Sikh Organisations* in the UK, under the direction of S.Indarjit Singh, assisted most ably by Sardarni Kanwaljit Kaur Singh, the four-hour programme began in the early afternoon.

There were keertans by children of the Sikh Gurdwaras of South London, by the Sikh Nari Manch, the Dhandhi Jatha, Vasaikhi song by Malkit Singh, Keertan by Avtar

Singh Arpan, Gatka displays, play by children of the Guru Nanak Sikh College in Hayes, presentations to Prince Charles and other invitees.



At a special counter at the V&A Museum.

in London from March 1999, were a number of events in Britain that marked the tercentenary of the birth of the Khalsa. There were posters and banners displayed in the great city, with radio broadcasts and TV programmes aired through April and May 1999.

On 25th April, the spectacular *Royal Albert Hall* in the heart of London



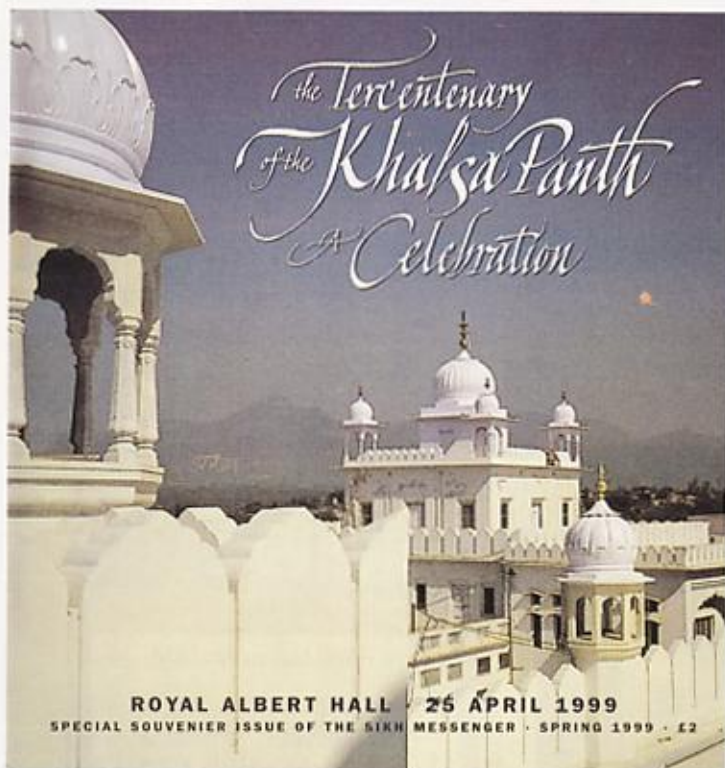
All London underground stations carried the V&A Exhibition posters.

On May 2, the celebrations were marked with similar fervour at Birmingham's Symphony Hall, ICC. The Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair specially flew in for the occasion (extracts of his speech are given). There were keertans, speeches, gatka demonstrations, honours and presentations, and a dhol sequence. The culmination was rendering of "*Deh Shiva*", the Sikh Anthem.

Extracts from the Special issue of The Sikh Messenger, Spring 1999

Today friends from other faiths join with Sikhs throughout the world to celebrate the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa, a dramatic turning point in world history. It was on the spring festival of Vaisakhi 1699 that Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs, announced with dramatic and telling effect, the creation of a new community of equals, dedicated to the service of humanity.

The story of how the Guru tested the Sikhs for their readiness to stand up for their ideals is told



called them the *Panj Piare*, or the Five Beloved, the first members of the Khalsa, a community of equals dedicated to stand up and be identified for their beliefs, whatever the cost. Then, in a remarkable gesture of humility, he asked the five to administer *amrit* to him. The Master and disciples were one.

What are these beliefs and how relevant are they to today's times? Firstly there is the total rejection of all notions of caste or race. As Guru Gobind Singh reminded us *there is but one human race*, and, as



The young Khalsa at the Royal Albert Hall.



Sikh policemen of London were on duty.



Young Sikh scout at the Royal Albert Hall.

elsewhere to the delight of the Guru, the Sikh community passed the test with flying colours. The Guru then prepared *amrit* or nectar whilst reciting prayers by dissolving sugar crystals in a bowl of water and stirring the *amrit* with a steel sword,

the steel to symbolise the strength of resolve and the sweetened water an equally important saintly temperament.

Guru Gobind Singh then bestowed *amrit* on the first five Sikhs who had responded to his call and

Guru Nanak had stressed two centuries earlier, this equality is naturally for the women. Then there is an obligation to stand up for the rights of the oppressed but always with compassion even for the oppressor.



At the Royal Albert Hall on April 25th.



Prince Charles, being presented a model of the Golden Temple by Dr. Mohinder Singh.

It may come as a surprise to many in the West that nearly a century before the French Revolution, the ideals of liberty, fraternity and equality tempered with humility and compassion, had already found powerful expression thousands of miles away in the Punjab.

As we look around the world today, we still see inequality, injustice and oppression on a scale that shames our one human race. In the 20th century, more people have been killed by their fellow humans than in the rest of recorded history put together. At the turn of a century, it is natural to look to practices that we should discard and to values that should be carried forward. Looking to the latter, the ideals of the Khalsa are not only the



S. Indarjit Singh

proud heritage of Sikhs, but also important guidance for all humanity in the trials and challenges of a new century.

*Indarjit Singh, Editor
The Sikh Messenger*

The Network of Sikh Organisations is a loose linking of Gurdwaras and other Sikh bodies in the U.K. to facilitate the development of common approaches to spiritual and secular life. It is highly appropriate that its formation came about in 1995, the year marking the 400th anniversary of the birth of Guru Hargobind who had laid particular stress on the need to combine active concern for social improvement with a spiritual way of life.

The Network of Sikh Organisations, representing some 80 affiliated bodies, has tremendous support of the British Sikh community in marking the celebrations of the 300th

anniversary of the formation of the Khalsa Panth through local and national celebrations, as also the support of national press, radio and television.

The Network will continue to organise the celebration of major Sikh events, and will also assist to develop a co-ordinated approach to helping young Sikhs become aware of the richness of their heritage; further understanding of the Sikh way of life in the wider community and promote inter-faith dialogue. The Network will work to counter negative images and articulate the common hopes and concerns of British Sikhs.

The Birmingham Convention

Throughout the United Kingdom and the world-over, the Sikh diaspora has launched the Vaisakhi 1999 celebrations with a declaration of unity and coming together of the Sikh and Punjabi communities like never before — a phenomenon which, because of upheavals in Sikh history, has never previously been possible. More importantly the celebration of the tri-centenary of the Khalsa has allowed non-Sikhs, particularly from the host community, to get an insight into their dynamic and progressive Sikh neighbours, who often tend not to actively “blow their own trumpet” but get-on with their own day-to-day activities !

Sikhism is the world's youngest and arguably most innovative faith, stressing the importance of equality, unity, expression and spirituality.

The Sikh community has much to celebrate as we mark the 300th Anniversary of the birth of the Khalsa. It was late in the 19th century when the Sikhs began to settle in the United Kingdom. A few years later, in 1904, the first Gurdwara Sahib (Sikh place of worship) was established in London.

Today there are more than 600,000 Sikhs living in Britain, forming a visible and vibrant community that has established over 250 Gurdwaras, Vaisakhi, which marks the birth of the Sikh *quom*, is an opportunity for the entire community to celebrate its progress in the United Kingdom.

The community has indeed come a long way since the first Sikhs arrived in the 19th Century. This progress is an indication of what unity and equality can accomplish. It is these values that members of the community will continue to nurture as the community continues to grow and move forward from the tricentenary celebrations into the 21st Century.




The future generations at Birmingham.

Jaswant Singh Heera
Chairman, Tricentenary
Celebration Committee,
Birmingham



At the Birmingham Convention.



SIKH ANTHEM

Deh Shiva bar mohe ihai
O Lord, grant me this boon,
Shubh karman te kabhu na taraun
May I never refrain from righteous acts.
Na daron arr siyoo jab jai laroon
That I might fight without fear of all foes,
Nischai kar apni jeet karaun.
and with firm resolve claim victory.
Arr sikh haun apne hi mun-ko,
May the directive of Thy glory guide my mind,
Eh laa-lach hau gun Tau Uchraun.
and my highest ambition be to sing Thy praises.
Jab aav kee aud nidhaan banay
When the time comes, for this mortal life to end,
At hee rann mein tab joojh maraun.
May I die on the battlefield fighting courageously.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji

(From : Tricentenary Celebration Of The Khalsa, Brimingham)

**Speech by the Rt.Hon. Tony Blair, Prime Minister of the U.K.
at the International Convention on Sikhism
The Symphony Hall, Birmingham 2 May 1999.**

Wahe guru ji ka Khalsa
Wahe, guru ji ki Fateh !

I am honoured to join you in celebrating the 300th anniversary of the founding of the Khalsa. This, I know, is just one of many celebrations happening up and down the country, throughout the year.

I am pleased that other members of the Government have been able to take part in the celebrations. The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, attended an event at the Royal Albert Hall in London last Sunday at which the Prince of Wales was present. Other MPs, including, of course, our two Sikh MPs Piara Singh Khabra and Marsha Singh, have been joining in other celebrations.

Those celebrations have included exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum, weekend festivals here in Birmingham, TV programmes, and street processions. In Southall, there is a magnificent new Sikh Gurdwara being built. And I know many people in the audience will have visited Anandpur Sahib in the Punjab this year to take part in the celebrations there.

I am proud that Britain is home to the largest number of Sikhs outside the Punjab. Almost half a million live in communities from Southall to Cardiff, from Glasgow to Leeds, from Coventry to Gravesend. And of course here in Birmingham.

The Sikh community is a vital part of British life. In every walk of life, in business, culture, the legal profession, Sikhs are adding to the strength of Britain.

I want to pay tribute to the Council of Sikh Gurdwaras in

Birmingham which has done so much to foster an appreciation of the Sikh way of life in the wider community. The events which have been organised through April and May have been superb and will greatly have enhanced the lives of those in the community.

The anniversary we celebrate today is of a great moment in the history of democracy. For the community born under Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru, was based on throwing off the caste system and doing away with

programmes *Thought for the Day*, has written that *Sikhism is about achieving a balance between having independence and self-respect and living and sharing equally with others.*

The founding principles are equality, a just social order for all, tolerance of others and other religions, earning a living through honest labour, hospitality and sharing one's fortune with those less fortunate. These values are as powerful and relevant today as they were 300 years ago.

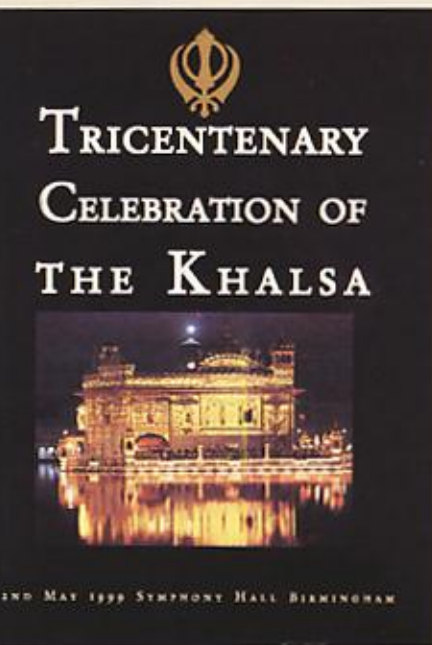
The idea of mutual tolerance and respect is at the heart of your beliefs. Today, here in Britain and in the wider world, it is a timely message.

As the Sikh teaching tells us, we must *never refrain from righteous acts, whatever be the cost.*

That is why I thank the Sikh community, just as I thank other communities in Britain, for supporting ... and uniting behind our values — British values, the values of the Sikh community. It is that belief that is enshrined by Gobind Singh when he says: "Recognise the Human Race as One"

We have a long way to go in Britain and elsewhere before this vision is realised. But in describing the journey still to go, we can take hope from the distance already travelled. We have time and history and all the good forces of humanity on our side.

Today we celebrate the creation of a Nation whose temples are open to all — rich and poor, male and female, old and young. We celebrate a religion that respects all other religions. And a people who seek to lead a life of compassion, humility, piety, justice ☯



all forms of hierarchy. It was a profoundly classless and egalitarian philosophy. From then on all Sikhs took the name of Singh, all women became equal with men and took the name Kaur, or princess. Yours in an inspiring vision!

Indarjit Singh, whose wise words I often hear on (the radio)

The Khalsa Of America



The beautifully adorned pedestal with the Guru Granth Sahib.

Many hundreds of American Sikhs made the pilgrimage to Anandpur Sahib for the Vaisakhi of 1999. Camping in Delhi, they first held *Keertan Darbar* where thousands of their Indian co-religionists joined them at a farm on the outskirts of the capital. *Shabad Keertan*, religious discourses and display of brilliant craftsmanship culminated in the many thousands of Sikhs, both Indian and American, sitting together for *langar* on the

lawns, as seen in the pictures taken that evening.

On display was the sword designed and crafted by Jot Singh Khalsa, of Boston, one of the most talented steel craftsmen of the United States and presented at the Takht Keshgarh Sahib in Anandpur Sahib on April 14.

The sword is made of special Damascus steel, gilded with solid white gold and 18 carat gold. The handle is made of carved jade, in the shape of a falcon's head. The sword bears an ode to Guru Gobind Singh, describing him as the "father" and Mata Sahib Kaur as the "mother". The sword is embellished with vignettes of Sikh history, connected with the Tenth Master and depict the birth, baptism, sacrifices, and has portraits of the Guru Sahib near the handle and one depicting him on horse back. The blade has "Jaap Sahib" engraved on both sides and bears three words: "Sovereign", "Khalsa Nation" and "Spiritual". The names of the Guru's four sons and the 'Panj Piare' are also inscribed.



Jot Singh Khalsa with the special sword crafted by him.

The scabbard and the sword are studded with diamonds, pearls, emeralds and garnet with the material cost reportedly \$70,000 (Rs. 55 lakhs).

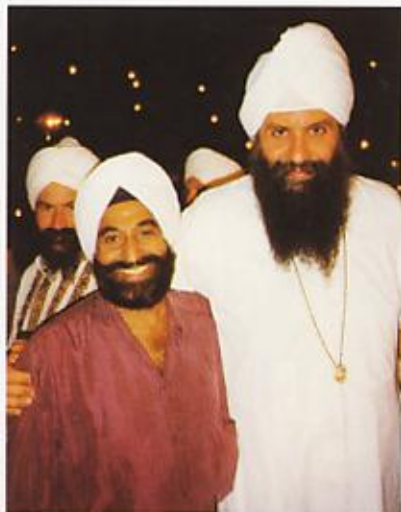
Back in the USA, the First International Sikh Convention was held in New Jersey on April 4 while on the same day, across the vast North American continent, the Sikhs of Los Angeles celebrated the Tercentenary with a colourful



American Sikh ladies at the langar....



..... and the Sangat on the lawns



Vice Admiral Inderjit Singh Khurana, former Director General of the Indian Coast Guard (left) and Gurbachan Singh Khalsa, formerly of the U.S. Coast Guard (right).

procession of floats, bhangra dances and display of martial arts. Between them, the events attracted 75,000 people. New York City, Washington D.C. and the San Francisco Bay Area had large turnouts of Sikhs, the men resplendent in saffron turbans and the ladies with similarly-coloured dupattas, in processions led by the *Panj Pyaaras*.

The Sikhs to the north, in Canada, celebrated Vaisakhi in equally splendid and spirited manner: Toronto's Skydome was the epicentre of the Khalsa celebrations with over 60,000 converging there and moving out in processions that went through downtown Toronto on

Celebration of A Century of Sikh Presence in Canada

In conjunction with the
Tricentenary of the Khalsa – Sikh Faith



Monday, April 19, 1999
Museum of Civilization
National Capital Region (NCR)
in the presence of
Rt. Hon. Jean Chrétien
Prime Minister of Canada



The Khalsa on Capitol Hill in Washington D.C.



One of the many floats in downtown Los Angeles.

April 25. Vancouver, home to nearly half of Canada's half-million Sikh population, had its colourful processions and ceremonies conducted in scores of Gurdwaras that abound in British Columbia. An estimated 150,000 Sikhs marched through Vancouver and suburban Surrey in the first week of April. B.C. Premier Slen Clark praised the contribution of the Sikhs to the cultural life and economy of British Columbia. As tens of thousands marched past the Ross Avenue Gurdwara, holy relics of Guru Gobind Singh were put on display, the first time such sacred artefacts were allowed out of India. The Tenth Guru's sword, spear and shield were later carried in the Vancouver parade in a revolving glass-case.

The Khalsa celebrated the tercentenary of its founding all over the world, including the Far East and the Southern Hemisphere, in Australia and New Zealand.



The Sikhs of Manhattan, New York

The Message From Anandpur Sahib

Wednesday, 14 April 1999 was a historic day for Punjab, nay India and the world. The birth of the Khalsa on Baisakhi day 300 years ago set off a process which continues to move millions of people the world over, besides shaping the destiny of the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh, who established the *Khalsa Panth*, had a divine vision — a vision that was tuned to the heartbeats of ordinary human beings. He gave a definite thrust to the teachings and practices of Guru Nanak Dev and the other Gurus, and widened the sweep of the *Panth*.

For the Tenth Guru, the power of faith is not a matter of convenience or opportunism of the meek and the weak.

Rather, it is a weapon of those having compassion and the courage of conviction. Herein lies the strength of the *Khalsa Panth*.

Transparency, shared values and democratic norms are the hallmarks of Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa and not secret manoeuvres for power of self-perpetuation, however noble the intentions. The

purity of the means, according to Guru Gobind Singh, determines the morality of the ends.

To be human is sublime. The *Panth* stands for sublime human qualities of liberalism, tolerance, secularism and fellow-feeling. It does not divide people on the basis of caste, creed or class. It is all-encompassing and all-embracing. "If there is one God", Guru Gobind Singh said, "then there is also one man". Only he could have proclaimed. "O God of no denomination, greetings to Thee"! Under the Guru's umbrella, the weak have the right to be protected while the oppressor cannot get away unchallenged.

The *Khalsa Panth* represents thoughts and values of a very high order. The loving words of the Gurus uplift the Sikhs and non-Sikhs alike to noble human values. The pristine purity of their message has to be understood and followed in its original form. Any deliberate twist goes against the very spirit of what the Gurus have taught us.



Today's guardians of the *Panth* must keep this in mind. They should not narrowly interpret a great faith which instils in us powerful impulses of love, compassion, tolerance, mutual respect and equality. This is the need of the hour. The *Panth* unites Sikhs, Hindus and people of other faiths. Its appeal is universal. Everything else has to be tuned and retuned to the essence of this message.

The Guru's concept of the Khalsa is democratic, compact and community-oriented. It is free of petty sectarian politics. It shows the right path. It calls for fight against tyranny, injustice and all forms of exploitation. Its ideals are based on love, devotion and sacrifice. Sacrifice in pursuit of a noble cause makes one's life worthwhile.

Indeed, Guru Gobind Singh's God not only brings forth earthly power but also directs one's "inner self" to harness it to serve society as much as one's own interest. In victory magnanimity; in defeat defiance; in peace equal sharing of power and grace!



It is a pity that petty battles are being fought in the name of the *Panth*. Somewhere down the line something is missing. On this historic occasion everyone should reflect quietly on the purity of the *Khalsa Panth* and revive its divine glory for the good of the community and humanity.

Guru Nanak Dev laid stress on moral and spiritual values based on goodness. Guru Gobind Singh emphasised the elimination of evil which he thought was essential for the victory of all moral and spiritual forces.

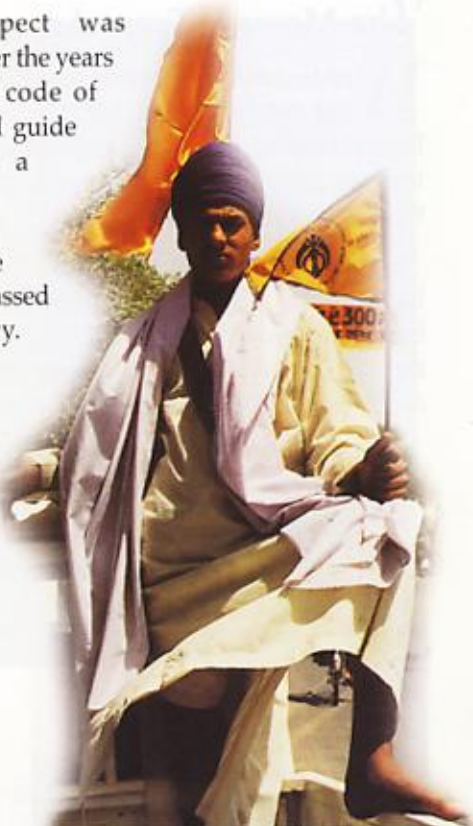
The *Panthic* message in its original form is what the Punjab needs today. It is equally relevant to the rest of India and the world at large. More than any extravaganza in rituals and ceremonies, Punjab needs a sure touch of love, brotherhood, mutual understanding, tolerance, peace and development.

History is not made by routine filling of blanks. History is written by the bold and the beautiful in spirit. Boldness and beauty can be sustained only by the community's inner strength nourishing justice, fairplay, morality, compassion, understanding and the caring attitude for the people belonging to other faiths. The Khalsa symbolises the great Indian spirit of secularism, tolerance and love. In the pursuit of sectarian politics, we must not lose sight of the essence of Guru Gobind Singh's teachings. (*Hari Jaisingh in The Tribune*)

Beyond The Tercentenary

In a time of diffused identities, the uninitiated could be forgiven for confusing the terms Sikhism and Khalsa. There is, of course, a difference: the first refers to the pacifist faith Guru Nanak founded and second to the millitaristic brotherhood Guru Gobind Singh created two centuries

militia. One aspect was institutionalised over the years as the *Rahit*—the code of conduct that would guide the pure-hearted, a sort of Sikh Bushido. The other, the prowess of the Sikh warrior, too passed the test of history. Today the very zeal and enthusiasm have been deployed in a million ways: by farmers who feed a nation, by the breathtaking audacity of a man who builds an aircraft atop his house. This is not a creed for the self-conscious. Nor for the fainthearted.



Three hundred years ago, the Guru baptised the five chosen to inaugurate the Khalsa—and was then baptised by them, establishing an equality of teacher and disciple. He decreed that there would be no gurus after him save the Guru Granth, the holy book and the Guru Panth, the fraternity that in its collective wisdom would interpret the book. It is no wonder then that Man Singh Nirankari, the Chandigarh-based religious scholar, calls Sikhism a "most democratic institution, God resides in the congregation".

The legacy of the Gurus is a legacy of conviction. Conviction, of course, can often be in competition. Contemporary Sikhism is not without debate—about a clergy that may have usurped the role of the larger community rather than merely articulating it; about—to quote H.S. Soch, vice-chancellor, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar—"a value system that cannot afford to remain static yet must retain its core". What then is the mission statement for the Khalsa today? As the Khalsa turns global—with a presence stretching from Vancouver to Visakhapatnam—it must reassure the community that wherever its members may be, the same fire burns within them. With the same intensity as 300 years ago.

(Ashok Malik & Ramesh Vinayak
in the *India Today*)



later, on Vaisakhi, 1699, To the devout though the two represent a creed in continuum, two milestones in the great battle against oppression—whether represented by an iniquitous Hindu caste system or a bigoted Muslim ruler. The Gurus were mortal: the revolutionary impulses have conquered time. Banda Bahadur, the general who galvanised the Khalsa after Gobind Singh's death, called for "land to the tiller" reflecting a socialistic aspiration well before such terms became fashionable. Why, in this very century. Bhagat Singh could famously declare himself an atheist—and yet embody the Khalsa (the pure) as few have.

The Guru's action on that momentous day in Anandpur Sahib represented a trenchant break in Indian existence. The Khalsa remains this land's only spiritual



Music for the Soul

Music Today's service to sustaining the legacy of Indian classical music has indeed been unparalleled. Its quest for excellence, however, is overshadowed by its ability to time a release according to a pertinent and integral celebration which automatically appeals to the *rasika*.

This time, in the tercentenary of the Khalsa, an exclusive set of four tapes of Gurmat Sangeet by the virtuoso Bhai Avtar Singh Ragi has been released.

bring back the 15th and 16th century traditions of Sikh devotional music. Apart from rigorous training, which began at the age of 10, his kritis abound in the skirmishes of two notes courting each other teasingly and then silencing themselves to a mute sacrosanct whisper. That his rendition is marked by emotional intensity is apparent in all the invocatory pieces in the four cassettes. However, *Jap Gobind Gopal* is the *piece de resistance* of the collection, while *Kaisee Aartee Huay* becomes an aesthetically profound rendition



It was in December 1978 in Patiala as college students that we first heard the sonorous and passionate voice of Avtar Singh Ragi. Since one didn't quite know the intricacies of the melody or the verses in question, what actually remained in memory was his ability to soften and bring out a mellifluous tonality just to present a sweetly probing *entendre* in his rendition. It was obvious that he was endowed with a unique *vani* — he was able to pass through a range of notes and emotions.

That ability remains, albeit now with the maturity and depth added by the years. This selection of *shapads*

which spurs you to rewind and partake of the pentecostal flavour of *saadhna*.

The hallmark of the collection is the ability to present the Gurmat in its pristine form as well as reflect the raga's salient phases in which the compositions have been so rendered. As a veteran, Bhai Avtaar Singh Ragi sings in a full-throated sonorous voice which modulates itself according to the emotive passages of the Gurmat. His precision over the *swaras* and the octaves never seems to pose any difficulty at all, in fact, it is this vintage predilection that conquers the delicacies of music.

Uma Nair

M

AHARAJA DULEEP SINGH



The complex and strange life of Duleep Singh compresses into the life of a single individual all the tensions and violence brought about by the clash of two great cultures. It contains the sadness and dignity of human beings trying to act decently towards each other, despite being caught up in this clash and, on one side at least, an almost complete misunderstanding of the other's position.

Duleep Singh (1838-93), the last Sikh ruler of the Panjab, was the youngest son of Rani Jindan, a junior queen of Ranjit Singh and came to the throne at the age of five on 1843 after a series of bloody coups and counter-coups left no other contenders. At first, the young boy catapulted on to the throne cannot have been aware of the struggles behind the scenes. The first years of his life were played out against the rich background of the court and the beautiful Mughal palaces of Lahore. He enjoyed falconry and had the best horses and elephants to ride. Every day costumes and trays of jewels were brought for him to choose from. He received a royal education with two tutors, one for the Persian of the court and the other for the Gurmukhi of the Guru Granth Sahib. He was taught to shoot with gun and bow, and trained in command by being given a troop of sixty boys. The love of his mother and her brother Jawahir Singh, who played a particularly affectionate role in the boy's life, surrounded him.

It must have seemed a kind of heaven to the boy, but the brutalities of politics soon invaded. Jawahir Singh had been removing his rivals and following a pro-British line that alienated the Khalsa army, who summoned him before them on 21 September 1845. Although accompanied by Rani Jindan and Duleep Singh, he was killed before their eyes, despite the desperate pleas of his sister. The child was horror-struck and in later life often recalled his fear and shock, describing how he had been in his uncle's arms and realised he might be next.

Maharaja Duleep Singh,
F. X. Winterhalter, 1854.
Oil on canvas, 152.7 X 91.8 cm.
Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.
The Royal Collection

The military history of the First Anglo-Sikh War which now broke out has often been told. The complex nature of politics at the court of Lahore is revealed by the peace settlement, under which the Khalsa army was cheated but its nominal commander Tej Singh rewarded by the British. The other major figure in the Sikh government, Gulab Singh Dogra, had negotiated the peace and was made the independent Maharaja of Kashmir. The British had won because the Sikh state was divided. By the terms of the Treaty of Byrowal in December 1846, a council of Regency (excluding Rani Jindan) was set up and a British Resident and garrison imposed as a temporary measure until Duleep came of age. At first sight the treaty seemed very generous,

his mother had been seized in his absence and placed under house arrest, and that he was forbidden to have any contact with her. Both mother and son were devastated, Rani writing to Lawrence:

'Restore my son to me, I cannot bear the pain of separation - my son is very young. He is incapable of doing anything. I have left the kingdom. I have no need of a kingdom - there is no one with my son. He has no sister, no brother. He has no uncle, senior or junior. His father he has lost. To whose care has he been entrusted?'

Although it is possible to conclude that the governor-general and Henry Lawrence, as well as his successor, his brother John Lawrence, took the Treaty of Byrowal seriously, it is clear Rani Jindan felt they had no intention of upholding it. In desperation she wrote, 'Why do you take possession of the kingdom by underhand means? Why do you not do it openly? On the one hand you make a show of friendship and on the other you have put us in prison. Do justice to me or I shall appeal to the London headquarters.'

*Ranjit Singh, Imam Bakhsh.
Gouache on paper, 19 X 24 cm.
Musée National des Arts, Asiatiques-Guimet.*

Lord Dalhousie, the governor-general who replaced Hardinge, had absolutely no time for indirect rule and his new resident, Frederick Currie, was partially responsible for igniting the complex chain of events that led to the Second Anglo-Sikh War. While the rebels claimed to be fighting in Duleep Singh's name, no evidence was ever provided to show that he had any part in the revolt. Isolated in the palace, he can have had little idea of what was going on. Nevertheless, the rebellion gave Dalhousie the legal fig-leaf he needed and, despite the fact that the British had sworn to uphold Duleep's throne against rebellion, they now deposed him and the Panjab was formally annexed. The boy was sent into internal exile to a town called Fatehgarh in the care of a new guardian, Dr. John Login. He left behind his throne, his palaces, much of his personal fortune and his country, never to return.

Fatehgarh was a remote provincial town near Kanpur and an admired centre of Christian missionary activity in North India, with churches, orphanages, schools, a carpet factory and a village of Indian Christian converts. Duleep's extensive household was part-European and part-Indian, shared with his sister-in-law and her son. He was allowed



protecting the young maharaja until his state could be handed over to him intact, although reduced in size. In reality the British began to dismantle the Sikh state.

Henry Lawrence, who ruled the Panjab as resident, was charmed by the boy and personally kind to him, organising activities and magic lantern parties. However, the maharaja's first recorded political act enraged Lawrence. At the annual Hindu festival Dussera in 1847 Duleep Singh publicly refused, despite British instructions, to mark Tej Singh as his commander-in-chief. Lawrence and Henry Hardinge, the governor-general, were convinced, probably correctly, that Rani Jindan had put him up to it. Lawrence acted swiftly. He asked the young prince to ride with him late at night; it was impossible to refuse and when Duleep asked to return to the palace, Lawrence told him that he was to spend the night in the Shalimar Gardens. The next day he learnt that

elephants and hawks, and had a guard of honour made up of Sikhs and the Skinner's Horse. Rumours were spread by Dalhousie about Duleep's mother, who had fled to Kathmandu. It was said that an impotent Ranjit Singh had encouraged Rani Jindan to have an affair with a poor watercarrier for the elderly maharaja's entertainment, and that Duleep was the result. Dalhousie described Duleep Singh as 'a brat begotten of a bheeshtee' in his private

It would have been surprising if Duleep had not been affected as one of his servants, Bhajan Lal, was a Brahmin Convert to Christianity and read to him from the Bible.

The strange feature of the conversion, which was reported at length by Bhajan Lal, is that the points which seemed to have convinced Duleep Singh that Christianity was to be preferred were all connected with Hinduism. He asked the former Brahmin about the Hindu scriptures, the benefits of bathing in the Ganges and the merits of giving cows to Brahmins. He wanted to take tea with his best British friend, Tommy Scott, which would have had momentous significance in Hindu eyes as he would thereby have lost caste. All these points involved Hinduism, not Sikhism, as he was later to point out on reconverting.

Duleep Singh's conversion may have been genuine, or may be regarded as the result of psychological pressure, or perhaps it was a political act.



Rani Jindan, George Richmond, London, June 1863. Pencil drawing 20 X 15.5 cm. Collection of F. S. Aijazuddin.

correspondence, while at the same time writing to the young maharaja: 'Believe the strength and sincerity of the regard in which I shall ever feel towards you, and to remain, now and always Your Highness's sincere and affectionate friend.'

The boy knew enough to agree with his guardian Login that it was all true and claimed that in Lahore he had thought of executing her, though an Urdu letter sent back to Lahore suggests a different story. In it, Duleep, now about fourteen, asked eagerly for information about his mother. Her personal influence was to remain very strong throughout his life, with no sign of animosity between the two.

In Fatehgarh Duleep became a Christian. Login and his wife had taken on the role of father and mother in the boy's life and were devout Christians. Two British boys were his closest friends, and one of them was the son of a missionary. The British textbooks he studied were full of Christian messages. He was an intelligent young man, with sudden bursts of curiosity for all sorts of things, above all people.



Maharaja Duleep Singh, probably by Imam Bakhsh, c. 1840. Gouache on paper, 18.7 X 25.8 cm Musée National des Arts Asiatiques-Guimet.



Maharaja Duleep Singh, George Beechey, Mussoorie, 1852. Oil on canvas, 19.5 X 74 cm.

However, there is no doubt that he himself forced the pace, setting up the fateful tea party with Tommy Scott and over-riding the resistance of his servants and sister-in-law, and the hesitation of the British. It was a decisive act which changed his whole situation. Whatever his motives, he acted with customary generosity in supporting financially all the mission schools in the area.

Dalhousie had earlier refused requests to allow the young prince to visit Britain, reflecting his concern about the number of Indian ex-rulers turning up in London and appealing directly to the queen or the Home Government. Dalhousie was pleased at the conversion because it appeared to destroy any possible political threat from Duleep and

opened up the possibility of marriage with Princess Victoria Gouramma, the recently baptised daughter of the deposed Raja of Coorg, which would have created a highly influential family of Indian Christian ex-rajas.

Thus, on 19 April 1854 Duleep Singh set sail for Britain. Dalhousie had given him a Bible inscribed 'This Holy Book in which he [Duleep] has been led by God's grace to find all inheritance richer by far than all earthly kingdoms is presented with sincere respect and regard by his faithful friend'. Duleep later referred to this note in a manner that showed that its irony, in coming from the 'friend' who had cost him his earthly kingdom, had not escaped him.

On arrival he quickly gained a royal audience and was an immediate success with Queen Victoria, who kept him close on state occasions despite opposition from some British grandees and continental diplomats. She invited him into her family circle at Osborne where she sketched him several times playing happily with her children, and Prince Albert photographed him. Bizarre incidents still surrounded him, however, perhaps none more so than during the painting of the Winterhalter portrait. While the maharaja stood in his full costume on a plinth, a brief conversation was held between the queen, Prince Albert and a nervous Mrs. Login. To the latter's astonishment, at a signal a party of yeoman warders in full uniform entered the room, escorting an official carrying a box. The queen called the maharaja over and showed him the newly recut *Koh-i-Noor* diamond, which he took to the window to inspect. With a gesture worthy of the most polished Renaissance courtier the maharaja presented the diamond back to the queen, saying how much pleasure it gave him to be able this time to make the gift in person.

The friendship between the queen and the maharaja was sealed, and he was even able to skate over the lethal depths that news of the Indian Mutiny of 1857 brought. He learnt to sample all the pleasures of a British gentleman. He had estates in Scotland, apparently dressing himself and his household in kilts, and also in Yorkshire; he liked shooting and photography, and he travelled on the Continent.

In 1859 Duleep Singh returned to India in order to rescue his now ageing mother from political exile in Nepal. While he was in Calcutta he was besieged by ex-members of his court and, more dangerously, by hundreds of soldiers from Sikh regiments visiting him. He could find nowhere to settle his mother, his own movements were curtailed by the government, and he was seriously worried that over-enthusiastic Sikhs would compromise him. The visit was an unhappy and painful experience.

Mother and son returned to London.

The Rani made considerable attempts to adapt, attempting to wear British dress, going to church, encouraging him to take a British wife. And he was delighted to be reunited with her, commissioning portraits and sculptures of her hands in

marble. Then, in 1863, she died. She had, however, made him remember the past. Following a return to India for her cremation, the maharaja was determined not to remain alone. Finding a wife was no easy matter. He had already alarmed Lady Login (Dr. Login had been knighted in 1854) by telling her of his plans to propose to one of her relations, but finally chose, by correspondence from a Cairo mission school, a part-German, part-Ethiopian girl who spoke only Arabic. Her name was Bamba Müller.

He took her home to his newly acquired estate at Elveden, selected and purchased for him by the India Office. He transformed the run-down estate into an efficient, modern game preserve, and the house into a semi-oriental palace. With halls decorated with glass mosaic in the fashion of a *shish mahal* and dominated by the huge oil paintings of Ranjit Singh in *darbar* or at the Golden Temple and of his brother Sher Singh in regal splendour, and with sculptures of past glories and cases of jewels, the whole place was a powerful reminder of his former status. He lived with his wife and growing family, the sons wearing a variety of costumes but frequently photographed in Sikh clothes, and with uncut hair. He invited Edward, then Prince of Wales to highly successful shoots; Sikh visitors would discreetly come and go. Duleep loved Elveden and rebuilt the church, cottages and a school. At the height of his troubles the threat of his leaving the village panicked the rector into describing the effect that this would have on 'the afflicted, the aged and the extreme poor', 'for the schools, clubs, and charities, hitherto entirely supported by His Highness, will be supported by him no more'.

The new home had brought new expenses and, as the father of three



Maharaja Duleep Singh, from *Photographic Portraits* vol. 1/59 (1853-1857). Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Royal Collection © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.



Duleep Singh on the Lower Terrace at Osborne. Carbon copy print of 1889 from original of 1854 by Dr Ernst Becker, 17.4 X 25.4 cm. Lent by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Windsor Castle, Royal Photographic Collection.

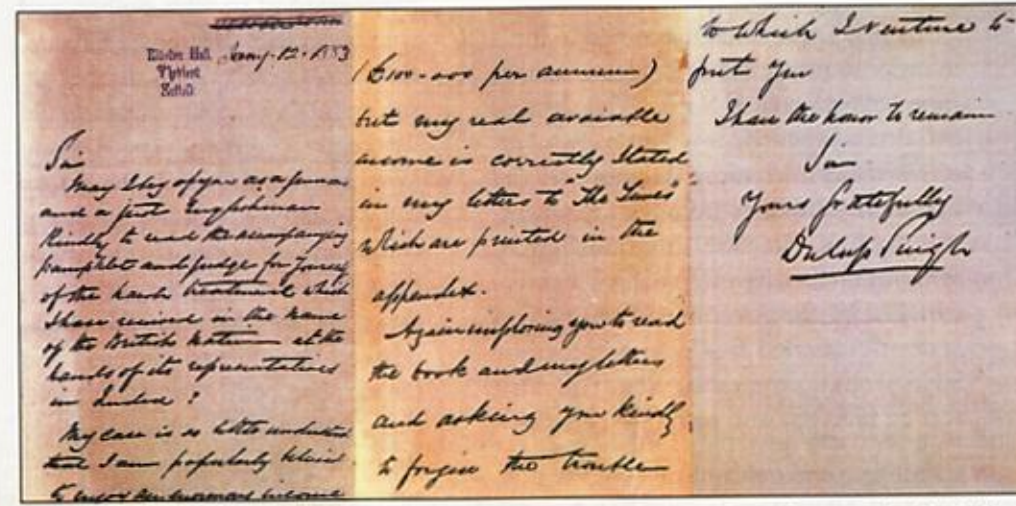
boys and two daughters, he had to look to his future. His treaty pension was controlled by the India Office and at first all he wanted was an increase, a settlement of his existing debts and to see the fund's accounts. The queen asked the India Office to look into the matter favourably. The maharaja agreed to his accounts being examined to see if he had been extravagant, and all looked set for a reasonable compromise. The queen supported him, as did many of his high society friends, including Lady Logan and others who had direct personal knowledge of his treaty rights, but the India Office was flatly hostile. In 1886 the Duke of Grafton wrote of the India Office, 'the truth is, they have spent the money and have no

funds to fall back on and so fear an investigation'.

Duleep Singh's grievances about the loss of his kingdom re-emerged. The stakes rose on both sides with the India Office successively suggesting that he was a spendthrift and a gambler, and that he kept mistresses, before returning to Dalhousie's old libel that he was a bastard. In the face of the India Office's determined resistance and the increasing note of challenge by the maharaja, Queen Victoria was forced to distance herself. In 1882 the maharaja went public with a letter to *The Times*.

Almost as explosively, he began to realise how far he had been misled over the teachings of Guru Nanak as these were progressively revealed to him by his relatives. Rani Jindan had reminded him of the rumours that had circulated amongst Sikhs that her son had been mentioned in prophecies by Guru Gobind, and he began to think of reconverting. Finally, in 1886, he made up his mind to return to India and place himself as the prophesied moral head of the Sikh people, revitalising the religion and purifying it of Hindu influences, especially caste. He published a public message in the papers to that effect and set sail.

He was stopped at Aden, where the Indian government's authority began, and was accused of issuing a disloyal proclamation. Difficulties were put in the way of his receiving *pahul*, or re-initiation into Sikhism. Duleep challenged the viceroy, Lord Dufferin, to substantiate the charge of disloyalty but his government refused, being keen to keep the matter out of court. They did however allow the *pahul* to go ahead and Duleep Singh once more became a Sikh.



A letter written by Duleep Singh to Bhai Narain Singh of Bagrian, along with which was enclosed a booklet, containing various letters to *The Times* of London giving details of his true and decept financial position which clearly proved the indifference and perfidy of the British Government of the time (original letter at Bagrian library)

Unable to proceed to India from Aden, he sent his family back to Elveden but could not himself bear the humiliation of returning. Instead, he went to Paris and from there wrote that he would be content with his private estates in the Panjab, and a seat on the Council of India. This appointment would be to "enquire into and amend the petty grievances of the natives of India, which believe me are like thousands of little fires ready to be blown into a great conflagration at any

moment by the merest accident, and I shall be more than content to serve England loyally and undertake to establish Her Empire on the sure foundation of justice. No one (though I say it myself) knows so well as I do both the English and the Indians by the particular circumstances of my life."

No viceroy would agree to this.

In Paris Duleep Singh entered the world of intrigue. His own agent, Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, a founder member of the Singh Sabha, the major Sikh reform movement, had created a large undercover movement in the Panjab. Then Patrick Casey of the Fenians contacted him: travelling on Casey's passport, Duleep went to Russia. On the way, at Berlin railway station, a British agent picked his pocket and he lost most of his money. In Russia he was supported by the leader of the anti-British party and newspaper editor Katkoff, and met Jemal al-Din al-Afghani, an agent dedicated to the pan-Islamic anti-colonial movement. The maharaja was thus at the centre of a web that included Sikhs, Irish republicans, Russian, Afghan and Egyptian agents. With them he created a master plan in which a combined Russo-Afghan force would invade India, precipitating revolts by the Sikh regiments and mutinies amongst the Irish. The surviving Sikh rajas would join them while the Bengalis sabotaged the railway system. Meanwhile, Egyptian nationalists would cut the Suez canal.

However, the Russians were more interested in using Duleep as a pawn to persuade the British government to pressure anti-Tsarist dissidents in London than in grandiose geopolitical adventures. The web soon unravelled: his principal Russian backer Katkoff died, Thakur Singh too died (or was poisoned) in Pondicherry, and Duleep's secret correspondence with Indian rulers was traced.

With hardly any money of his own, deserted by his Russian backers, and with his Indian organisation broken, Duleep had no political influence left. In Britain Princess Bamba died, and the maharaja's family was in trouble. He returned to Paris where he suffered a massive stroke. While ill, he was visited by his eldest son Prince Victor and those

In Paris Duleep Singh entered the world of intrigue. His own agent, Thakur Singh Sandhanwalia, a founder member of the Singh Sabha, the major Sikh reform movement, had created a large undercover movement in the Panjab.



Cartes-de-visite of Duleep Singh, Mayall. 2831-1934

of his British friends who had remained faithful to him, and taken care of his children. The queen was holidaying unofficially in Nice, and it was these friends who arranged for her to have one last meeting with the maharaja. According to the queen it was a highly emotional meeting in which the obviously very sick man broke down and asked her forgiveness. He was buried at Elveden in 1893 and amongst the wreaths was one from Queen

Victoria and another from the Prince of Wales.

The maharaja's loyal circle of British friends thought that his attempt to regain his throne and his reconversion to Sikhism was the result of madness. However convenient a diagnosis for them, it hardly stands up in hindsight. Thakur Singh's organisation in India was quite real, and Duleep was perhaps the first Indian nationalist to attempt to reconcile the different interests of the princes, non-princely India and Sikhs, Muslims, and Hindus. His attempt to build up an anti-colonial alliance showed an awareness of the need to organise internationally, but he had only come to this point after finally realising that all other avenues were closed to him.

Perhaps it was the India Office which showed the greatest lapse of judgement in denying resolutely any partnership in the real government of India even to the most loyal and most anglicised Indian, and insisting, as Dalhousie once wrote, that any Indian, no matter how well received in London, would have to leave his slippers outside the door of the viceroy's office in India.

David Jones

David Jones: studied Social Anthropology at Sussex and at the University of London. Since 1974, has been working as Keeper of Human History at Ipswich Museum and has written widely on ethnographical and museological questions including the issue of restitution.



THE LAST MAHARAJAH & THE JEWEL IN THE CROWN

By the age of 11, he had won and lost a kingdom. Making his home in England, he became a favourite of Queen Victoria and lived the life of an aristocrat.

Then, in a final twist of fate, he died penniless and disgraced after apparently plotting the downfall of the Raj.

But on July 29, 1999 more than a century after his turbulent life ended, the Maharajah Duleep Singh was once again recognised by the country to which he had emigrated 150 years ago—when he became the first Sikh to settle in Britain.

Watched by representatives of the U.K.'s 500,000-strong Sikh community, Prince Charles unveiled a bronze statue of the remarkable Maharajah on a small wooded Island in Thetford, Norfolk.

As an 11-year old boy, Duleep Singh was forced to surrender control of the Punjab when it was annexed by the British in 1849. The independent state, on the northern borders of India, had been torn by a power struggle for its control following the death of his father, Maharajah Ranjit Singh.

Thanks to the efforts of his mother Rani Jindan, the youngster was proclaimed Maharajah on his fifth birthday. Six years later, however, he suddenly found himself a prince without a people.

The British moved in and Duleep Singh was presented with a treaty which demanded he cede power immediately. "He shall resign for himself and his heirs all rights and the title to the sovereignty." It said, "All the property of the state shall be confiscated to the Honourable East India Company."

Another condition was that the fabulous *Koh-i-Noor* diamond should be surrendered. The gem, also known as "the Mountain of Light", is considered the Sikh Kingdom's most treasured relic. Today, it is the centrepiece of the state crown of the Queen Mother and still the subject of impassioned debate over its rightful home. Back in the 19th century, the Maharajah reacted to the loss of his country positively by starting a new life under the watchful eye of a Scottish surgeon.

Within months, he was speaking English, adopted a new hairstyle and, crucially, shed the vestige of his royalty by making a cup of tea for himself.

By the age of 13, he had converted to Christianity and six years later arrived in England. Tall and good-looking, he was an instant hit in Queen Victoria's court and she ordered that the teenager be granted both money and a grand home.

She wrote, "As we have been in complete possession of

his enormous and splendid kingdom, we should do everything to render the position of this interesting and amiable Prince as agreeable as possible."

A suitable residence was swiftly identified. Elveden Hall in Suffolk (where the Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman movie *Eyes Wide Shut* has recently been filmed) was bought and renovated. Its 17,000 acres soon echoed to the calls of peacocks and elephants and it became a regular venue for Royal shooting parties headed by the Prince of Wales. Duleep Singh, known as the Black Prince was provided with a yearly pension of £50,000 and became a dead eye with a shotgun living the life of an English aristocrat. In 1864, he married the 17-year-old daughter of a German missionary, Bamba Müller, who bore him three sons and three daughters—all of who were given English names and several of whom became Queen Victoria's godchildren. As he grew older, however, the deposed Maharajah's playful decadence was replaced by a sobering realisation of what he had lost in his homeland. A trip back to the Punjab after his mother died sent him into a spiral of depression as he reflected on what might have been. His wife died in 1837 and he set the tongues of polite society wagging when he took up with a working-class London girl called Ada Wetherill.

After fathering two children by her, he travelled to Russia—where he said to have posed as an Irish rebel in an effort to persuade Czar Alexander III to invade India.

The audacious plot, which involved the supposed raising of Irish troops against the British was soon uncovered by Army intelligence. The Maharajah was arrested and all his possessions confiscated. In 1893, at the age of 55, he died penniless in Paris.

His remains are interred at Elveden which has become a place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. Six years ago, on the 100th anniversary of Duleep Singh's death, it was decided to erect a lasting memorial to him.

Harbinder Singh Rana, the Director of the £100,000 statue appeal, has stated "This restores Duleep Singh to his rightful place in history. He has been neglected in the past and the Sikh community has not always been aware of this contribution."

"He symbolises Sikh sovereignty and the Sikh presence in this country. While it is true that Britain annexed the Punjab, we are trying to put a positive interpretation on history. What happened was well-documented and cannot be changed."

(Ben Taylor, in the *Daily Mail*)

“A DEFINING MOMENT OF POSTHUMOUS GLORY”

At 12.27 on Thursday 29 July 1999, one hundred and five years after the demise of the last ruler of the Sikh kingdom, HRH the Prince of Wales unveiled the granite plaque which dedicated a majestic memorial to *Maharajah Duleep Singh* at Thetford in Norfolk near the great estate at Elveden. It was a defining moment, not only for the people of Britain and for the *Maharajah Duleep Singh Centenary Trust* which had undertaken this visionary project, but also for the entire Sikh community.

Condensing his life in the few words etched into stone, the inscription reads :

MAHARAJAH DULEEP SINGH STATUE, THETFORD

THIS PLAQUE COMMEMORATES THE OFFICIAL
UNVEILING OF THIS MONUMENT BY H.R.H.
THE PRINCE OF WALES, K.G., K.T., ON 29TH JULY 1999.

IN 1843 MAHARAJAH DULEEP SINGH SUCCEEDED
HIS FATHER TO THE THRONE OF THE SOVEREIGN
SIKH KINGDOM OF PUNJAB. HE WAS DESTINED TO
BE ITS LAST RULER.

IN 1849 FOLLOWING THE CLOSELY FOUGHT ANGLO-
SIKH WARS THE BRITISH ANNEXED THE PUNJAB,
DULEEP SINGH WAS COMPELLED TO RESIGN HIS
SOVEREIGN RIGHTS AND EXILED. IT WAS AT THIS TIME
THAT THE KOH-I-NOOR DIAMOND, LATER TO BE
INCORPORATED INTO THE CROWN JEWELS PASSED
TO THE BRITISH AUTHORITIES.

DULEEP SINGH EVENTUALLY CAME TO BRITAIN
AND SETTLED AT THE ELVEDEN ESTATE IN SUFFOLK.
HE WAS A CLOSE FAVOURITE OF QUEEN VICTORIA AND
BECAME A PROMINENT LOCAL FIGURE.

LATER IN HIS LIFE HE ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION
TO RETURN TO HIS BELOVED PUNJAB BUT WAS NOT
ALLOWED TO DO SO. HE DIED IN PARIS ON
OCTOBER 22ND 1893 HAVING REEMBRACED
THE SIKH FAITH AND WHILST STILL ENGAGED IN A
STRUGGLE TO RECLAIM HIS THRONE.

EVEN TODAY THE SIKH NATION ASPIRES
TO REGAIN IT'S SOVEREIGNTY.



The momentous significance of the unveiling was not confined to Duleep Singh. Certainly it immortalises his historical symbolism to the Sikh peoples but the impact of this event resonates well beyond the regal, yet tragic, life of this individual. Indeed his brief life spanned unimaginable triumphs, emotions, intrigues, challenges and eventual cataclysmic disasters whose repercussions remain with us to this day.

Duleep Singh himself, and by implication the actions of those who seek to promote his life, are too often misrepresented and misunderstood. However, a momentary step back from the myopia surrounding his life reveals a vivid canvas covered with invaluable lessons for the generations to come. Those who ascribe Duleep Singh to the dustbin of obscurity choose to eschew imperialistic and historical mischiefs in favour of a



HRH The Prince of Wales is greeted by Harbinder Singh Rana

The strange feature of the conversion, which was reported at length to Bhajan Lal is that the points which seemed to have convinced Duleep Singh that Christianity was to be preferred were all connected with Hinduism. He asked the former Brahmin about the Hindu scriptures, the benefits of bathing in the Ganges and the merits of giving cows to Brahmins. He wanted to take tea with his best British friend, Tommy Scott, which could have had momentous significance in Hindu eyes as he would thereby have lost caste. All these points involved Hinduism, not Sikhism, as he was later to point out on reconverting.

The "corruption" of the young Maharajah was an integral part of the British strategy. Having seen the fate of their precious Empire lie precariously in the balance during the Anglo-Sikh wars, how convenient it was to disband the gallant Khalsa armies and exile the heir to the Sikh throne to a strange land, thousands of miles away from his fellow countrymen.



The Prince of Wales is introduced to members of the Community at Thetford. balanced analysis of the circumstances which initially took him away from Sikhism, and indeed those which saw him re-embrace Sikhism in the face of unimaginable hostility.

Primarily they overlook the words of Dalhousie :

The task before me is the utter destruction and prostration of the Sikh power. The subversion of its dynasty and the subjection of its people. This must be done promptly fully and finally.

There is no doubt that Duleep Singh was the prime individual victim of this barbarism which conspired to deprive him of his kingdom and his faith. Indeed those who so eagerly criticise him for his conversion to Christianity fail to grasp the circumstances which led to that conspiratorial event. In the words of one English scholar:



Prince Charles unveiling the statue of Maharaja Duleep Singh

Those nations which forget the lessons of history are condemned to repeat the very mistakes which so often reduce great sovereign powers to the status of downtrodden subjects. Sikhs would do well to remember this simple but evocative fact. The reign of Maharajah Ranjit Singh was full of imponderable paradoxes. It was the unparalleled valour of the Sikhs, derived directly and copiously from the fountain of their faith, which resulted in the Khalsa Raj. It was the dilution of those same spiritual paradigms and the resulting infusion of non Sikh practices which acted as the catalyst to its demise. Where Ranjit Singh's achievement in forging together the Sikh *misls* into a single confederacy was an act of great statesmanship, based on foresight and shrewd tactics, it was the inevitable vacuum left by his death that became host to such anti-Sikh forces as were fuelled

by the greed of the Dogras.

The rise and fall of the Sikh Empire encompasses many lessons for the Sikhs today. Duleep Singh's tragic life is a permanent reminder of the reality of Sikh sovereignty. It is a reminder of the wealth, power and prestige, which can flow from a secular state based on principles of equality and tolerance. It is a reminder of the glorious era of his father which conferred so much stability to a part of the subcontinent which had become reduced to the status of a regular "door-mat" for invaders. It is a reminder of the valour and courage of the Sikh soldiers who derive their martial qualities from the seminal events at Anandpur Sahib in 1699. It is a reminder of how the flame of freedom glowed brightly in the recesses of Duleep's conscience leading him to take *amrit pahul* despite the fact that his captors had left no stone unturned in their attempts to



This statue of Maharaja Duleep Singh, on horse, is now a permanent land mark at the town of Thetford in Norfolk

throughout the Khalsa Empire in 1838 when little Duleep was born. The Lion of the Punjab was at the zenith of his fame and power and he celebrated the occasion in a befitting manner. When the Sircar sat, surrounded by his warriors and nobles, in the Hazoori Bagh Baradri, when the court yards were chanting appropriate shabads, guns were booming, bands were playing, the ladies in the palace joyously singing wadhais and the Royal noabat filled the capital city with glad strains — could anyone have so told the dark and mournful end of the new born prince ?

It is most be-fitting that the veil of anonymity hitherto surrounding Duleep Singh has literally been lifted in the year of the Khalsa's tercentenary. Had fate not conspired so cruelly against him, it is not

inconceivable that he would have become "the lawful sovereign of the Sikh nation" and restored the glory of the Khalsa Raj.



Members of the M.D.S.C.T. at the Theftford ceremony

erase every last grain of Sikhism from his being. Perhaps above all, it is a reminder to the present day youth who are prone to shun their faith and their regal and rich heritage, which inspires pride and not a misplaced sense of "awkwardness".

The entire glory and tragedy of Maharajah Duleep Singh's birth and death is most evocatively illustrated by the following excerpt from the Tribune of October 25th 1893. Reporting, two days after his death it stated "As we are going to press, we heard the sorrowful news of the death of Maharajah Duleep Singh. When he- the son and heir of Maharajah Ranjit Singh - died there was no one with him to close his eyes. ... There are many old men living who remember the festivities that took place in Lahore, nay,



Inscriptions on faces of the granite plaque below the statue



Unveiling of the Maharajah Duleep Singh memorial statue by the future King of Britain promises to be a milestone in contemporary Anglo-Sikh relations. As we stand on the threshold of a new millennium and restore Duleep Singh to his rightful place in history, it is ironic that the Maharajah's greatest contribution to his Nation promises to come about over a century after his death.

Harbinder Singh Rana

The Anglo-Sikh Festival

"A Special Relationship"

Excerpts from the address by HRH the Duke of York at the M.D.S.C.T Annual Dinner & Lecture on 19 September 1997

I have been struck by the fascinating story of Prince Duleep Singh's life of his closeness to Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, and his connection with the crown-jewels and the Koh-I-Noor diamond. His own life encompassed sovereign power in the Sikh state of Punjab and as a country squire in Elveden where he lived for much of his life.

Queen Victoria was godmother to his younger children who were baptised at Windsor. His sons Frederick and Victor attended Eton and Cambridge, enlisted in the Norfolk Yeomanry and saw active service in Flanders during World War I. His eldest son Frederick, bestowed upon the town of Thetford the Ancient House Museum and in doing so immortalised his father's love for East Anglia.

His life represents an enchanting chapter in Anglo-Sikh history.

It is said that history presents us with quibbles of a somewhat determinate nature. How was it that the Sikhs, a people removed from Britain by some five thousand miles, should settle here and become the largest overseas Sikh community outside their homeland?

The answer lies within the special relationship which was forged between the British and the Sikhs during the Raj. Amongst all the communities of the Indian sub-continent, it were the Sikhs who became a fascinating subject for the British people.

Anglo-Sikh relations unfold a fascinating chapter in the by-lanes of history. Prince Duleep Singh was the earliest Sikh to settle in this country and there are many descriptions of him as an English squire. Yet despite his isolating and unique circumstances in his later life he reverted to his Sikh roots. It was the

annexation of his kingdom that marked the commencement of an association between the two nations.

Major Robert Henderson has spoken of the role of Sikh troops within the British army. It is worthy of reflection that the Commonwealth countries, whilst not obliged to participate in the wars, nevertheless chose to volunteer their forces.

The wartime Indian Army was the largest volunteer force ever assembled comprising not a single conscript. It grew from 150,000 in 1939 to 2.5 million in 1945 with a further 13 million individuals engaged in auxiliary and munitions work.

24,338 Indian troops were killed in action and 64,354 were wounded. 11,754 were reported missing and 79,489 became

prisoners of war.

These figures are impressive enough in themselves but upon closer investigation we find that the Sikhs are represented in numbers wholly disproportionate with their status as a minority, forming only 3% of the Indian population.

Thousands of Sikh soldiers died with valour and dignity with several winning the coveted Victoria Cross. Many of these VCs were awarded for action in Burma and it is a matter of record that Lord Louis Mountbatten spoke most affectionately of the role of Sikh troops deployed in that particular theatre.

In this the 50th year of Indian independence the United Kingdom has been proud to make a contribution to the commemorations. We have been friends with the peoples of the sub-continent for centuries and our present relationships have never been better or more productive. It is said they are



Harbinder Singh Rana of the Maharaja Duleep Singh Centenary Trust, speaking at the festival.



Major Robert Henderson, President of the Sikh Brigade Association, speaking at the annual lecture.



At the dinner hosted by the M.D.S.C.T., with HRH The Duke of York at the centre.

based on a shared history and shared traditions, and as we have heard today no more so than in the case of the Sikh's.

In Britain today we see a thriving and responsible Sikh community integrating and fulfilling its obligations whilst retaining its distinct and proud identity. We see Sikhs as businessmen, doctors, dentists, architects, lawyers and in many other professions.

Young Sikhs born in the U.K. are not only proud of their own historical and religious heritage but also proud of their place in Britain today. It is therefore anomalous that this finest fighting nation is vastly under-represented in the British armed forces and it is imperative that all the responsible organisations review policies in order to encourage young Sikhs to fulfil their ambition of serving for their adopted country.

When we look around the world today we see so many conflicts between people who fail to learn to live with each other in peace. Why have communities such as those in Bosnia or Ulster failed to live together? Why does tolerance between different communities break down?

I believe that the root of many of these



Keertan by young Sikhs of the West Midlands.



Dr. Deborah Swallow of the V&A Museum speaking at the Festival.

conflicts lies within fear. A fear of those who are different. A fear borne out of ignorance and a lack of understanding of people in different faiths, languages, appearances and cultures from ourselves.

As a father of two young daughters it is my desire that they grow up in a plural multicultural society where they are able to enjoy the richness of cultural diversity, and not to be witnesses of a xenophobic society based on fears, suspicions, prejudice and intolerance.

It is most encouraging to see representation here today not only from the Sikhs, but institutions such as the V & A Museum, National Army Museum, Breckland District Council and Thetford Town Council and The Sacred Land Project amongst others.

In this context I endorse the work of the Centenary Trust in promoting an increased awareness of the shared history which underpins Anglo-Sikh relations. Such work is invaluable in constructing a society for the future which is varied in composition, yet united in purpose divergent in values, and yet united in its resolve to live together.

Maharaja Duleep Singh Centenary Trust

The Maharajah Duleep Singh Centenary Trust was originally established in 1992 by a group of British Sikhs to commemorate the centenary of Maharajah Duleep Singh's death and to promote a wider appreciation of Sikh heritage and culture.

As the programme of activities and initiatives launched in 1993 continues, the unique work of the Trust is acknowledged as being invaluable in highlighting the historical association between the communities. The Trust has also been privileged to collaborate extensively with the Victoria and Albert Museum, London on the *Arts of the Sikh Kingdom* exhibition, which is a landmark event in the series of global celebrations commemorating the Khalsa 300.

One of the highlights of the Anglo-Sikh festival held in August 1998 was the public unveiling of a life-size bronze statue of Maharajah Duleep Singh, now permanently located at Butten Island, Thetford, Norfolk, close to his original



*Bringing
History and
Culture
Together'*

estate of Elveden. As an enduring and fitting memorial, this statue immortalises Maharajah Duleep Singh's contribution to the locality and will be a place of interest to future Sikh generations.

Through its ongoing work, the Trust endeavours to promote the unique association between both communities and encourages a wider recognition of the rich cultural heritage of the Sikh nation.

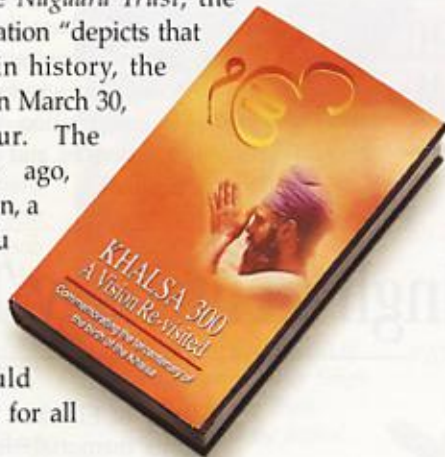
Another highlight in the Trust's activities was the 1997 annual lecture, delivered by Major Robert Henderson (formerly of the Sikh Regiment) in the presence of HRH Prince Andrew. In this, he recognised the invaluable contribution of Sikh soldiers in both World Wars of the Twentieth Century and called for greater Sikh recruitment into the British Army of today.

The Trust is committed to achieving a wider recognition of the Sikh military tradition.

The Nishaan Journal, The Khalsa

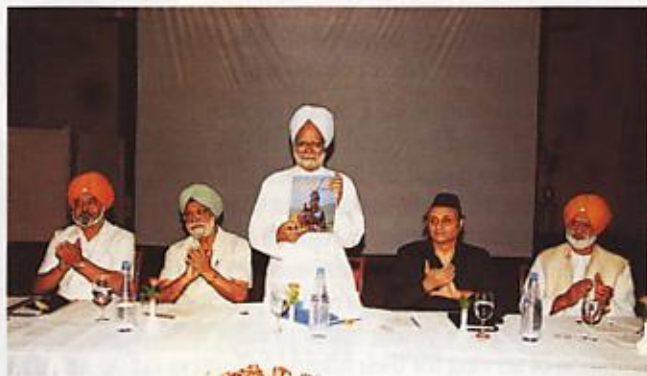
The NAGAARA TRUST celebrated the Tercentenary of the Birth of the Khalsa with a special event at the "Hotel Imperial" in New Delhi on 22nd April 1999. Dr. Manmohan Singh, the world-renowned economist was the Chief Guest, Mr. Jaswant Singh Neki gave the key-note address while Dr. Karan Singh of Jammu & Kashmir also spoke on the occasion. Some three hundred guests, many of them senior members of the International and Diplomatic Community in New Delhi, were present and witnessed the launch of the Premiere Issue of the *Nishaan* as also watched the screening of the half-hour programme *Khalsa 300 : A Vision Re-visited*.

Produced by the Nagaara Trust, the audio-visual presentation "depicts that dramatic moment in history, the birth of the Khalsa on March 30, 1699 at Anandpur. The Vaisakhi 300 years ago, was the culmination, a fruition of Guru Nanak's mission which was as radiant as the sun so dazzling it would transform the world for all time"



The transformation of a negativist and dejected nation by Guru Gobind Singh into one of pragmatism and steel, "with the soul of humanism, with resolution in their hearts and prayer on their lips", is that miracle of 1699.

This half-hour audio-visual has been produced for world-wide distribution (on both VHS-PAL and NTSC systems), and has been continuously screened at the Victoria & Albert Museum in London during and after the Arts of Sikh Kingdoms exhibition there.

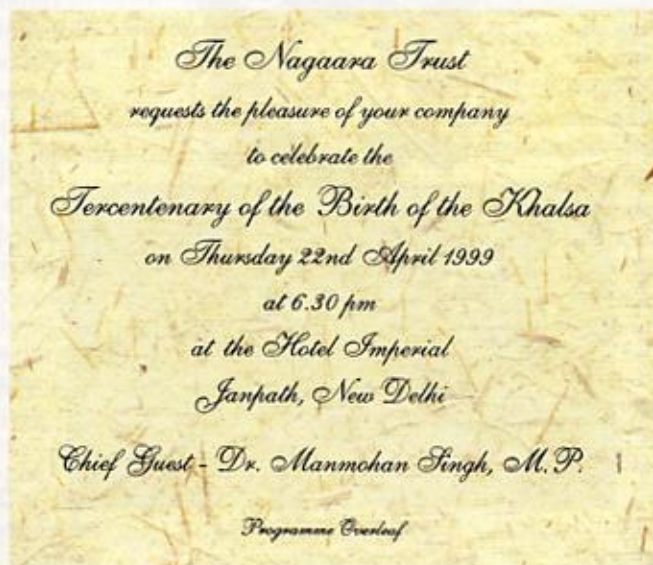


The Premiere Issue of the *Nishaan*, the new illustrated quarterly journal of the Sikhs, was formally released by Dr. Manmohan Singh at the function in New Delhi.

As introduced by S. Harcharan Singh Dugal, the *Nishaan* "will be produced to the highest standards extant, with specially researched articles, supported by informative data and rare illustrations; there are to be four issues a year. The aim of *Nishaan* is to portray Sikhism in its pristine form, on an objective and apolitical plane. The Journal will project true Sikh values to the world community who need to be informed of these." "The *Nishaan* is not just another magazine, but is intended as the standard bearer for the community in India and all over the world."

As Dr. Manmohan Singh exclaimed, "The *Nishaan* is to carry the universal message of Sikhism and in laying emphasis on the freshness of Sikh thought and philosophy which will enable us to lead a life of dignity and self respect and which, will be of immense help in moulding our destinies in the 21st Century".

As the *Tribune* of Chandigarh put it, "The tercentenary of the birth of the Khalsa has been marked by religious ceremonies, congregations, seminars, exhibitions, conferences, baptism programmes, processions and much more.



300 Video, The Gurmat Sangeet Tapes



It is this occasion to which *The Nagaara Trust* too owes its birth and also its first publication, named the *Nishaan*. It is a classic magazine, printed on glossy art paper with beautiful pictures. The cover itself with a *Nihang* astride his horse is attractive. The Trust, as explained by S.Sikander Singh, is a coming together of like-minded individuals who thought it prudent to "preserve, project and propagate" the uniqueness and glories of the *Khalsa Panth*.

The Premiere Issue of *The Nishaan*, running into 80-pages, is studded with beautiful photographs and maps depicting different facets and aspects of the Sikh way of life, religion, culture, ethos, emotions and much more. The chapter on the *Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms*, depicted in an exhibition at the *Victoria & Albert Museum* in London, brings home vivid memories of the rich collection displayed there.

The magazine, as Dr. Anup Singh, former Vice-Chancellor of the Punjab Technical University, Jalandhar, says has been distributed selectively. It will be a quarterly to begin with. The idea is to present to the english-speaking readership a quality product. The inaugural issue has several stimulating articles such as *Sikhs in the South Pacific*, *The Saint of Pingatwara — Bhagat Puran Singh*, *High Flight—the Sikh Pioneers of Aviation*, *Chillianwala 1849—150 years after the Battle*, *Abode of Bliss — Historiography of Anandpur Sahib*, *The Moment of the Khalsa*, and *The Coming Renaissance*.

The article *The Gift of Truth* is evocatively written as are several others. Contributors include Maj. Gen. Himmat Singh, Dr. Darshan Singh Maini, Susan Stronge and Lt. Gen. Kirpal Singh Randhawa.... photos by Deidi Von Schaewin are breathtaking. The first issue makes one eagerly wait for the next".

Key note address by Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki

This is a very special occasion. We are celebrating the third centenary of the *Khalsa*, which has assumed tremendous significance because the *Khalsa* could not, owing to historical recessitude, celebrate the first two centenaries. The *Khalsa* came into being in 1699. In 1799, we were engaged in repulsing the last of the attacks by *Shahs* from Afghanistan. At that time, *Shah Zamaan* had invaded India for the fourth time but before that, for nearly half a century, there had been recurrent attacks by these *Shahs*. Following this last aggression, there was peace and emergence of the Sikh kingdom of *Ranjit Singh*.

However, the year 1899 was really a year of great turmoil for the Sikhs and the bi-centenary not celebrated. In 1899 the Sikhs were still smarting from the disintegration of the kingdom that they had wrought and brought into being. Not just that, there was a country-wide famine and celebrations of any kind were really not in tune with the times. Therefore this, in 1999, is the first occasion that the *Khalsa* has been able to celebrate the centenary of its birth in a befitting manner. Such is not only an occasion for celebration, but also for re-dedication to the ideals for which the *Khalsa* was founded.



Sikhism, as all of you know, is a very young religion, barely 500 years old — I should say, almost exactly 500 years old. Although *Guru Nanak*, the founder was born in 1469, the crucial mystic experience that made him take up the role of the *Guru* occurred when he was nearly 30 years of age, in 1499. And that was the Revelation. Everyday, he would go to the river that flowed by the town, take his bath, come back and meditate. And on this particular date, he went there into the river, but did not emerge. For three days nobody knew where he was and believed that he had drowned. Three days later he emerged. And for a whole day was absolutely silent because he had had an experience, which he himself records: drafted to the presence of God who asked him, who commissioned him to take up the task of reminding people of their Creator whom they had forgotten. And He asked whether he had

understood? And then, Guru Nanak recited a series of syllables describing the Lord in whose presence he had been. Perhaps one of the finest descriptions of the Almighty is in The *Mool Mantra*. Guru Nanak, silent for a whole day then stated "There is no Hindu, there is no Musalmaan". And this startled people because they were then either Hindus or Musalmaans. What did this mean? There were several layers of meanings, one of them being that it is primarily *mankind*, that religions are only colours of that mankind, born under geographical or historical aspects. The second, that whether they were Hindus or they were

Musalmaans, they were acting according to the core tenets of their faiths. "There are no Hindus or Musalmaans" meant that when a religion becomes crystalised and over-organised, the spirit that must pervade becomes fossilised.

Then Guru Nanak went away, he travelled far and wide, to the north into Tibet. To the south, to Sri Lanka. To the east, upto Assam. To the west, to Arabia. And everywhere that he went, he met religious leaders but would not preach: He would sing ! He was an exquisite singer and had a companion who used to play on the *rabab*: the two together were exquisite. When they sang, even the birds stopped to listen. Guru Nanak did not preach. He went to Mecca and people asked him who was better — the Hindus or the Musalmaans. And Guru Nanak said that without good actions, both would repent. He had put his faith beyond ordinary denominations. Faith is in the Timeless, the all pervasive and in good actions in this world. This transcended morality, which was the creed with him. Wherever he went, he was distressed by the things that were happening. He was distressed by the tussles between communities — each intolerant of the other. The God in whom he believed, was a Universal God. He was not like the God of the Jews or the God of the Christians or the God of the Muslims (who are generally seen

as "parochial" Gods) but there is a Universal God who looks after not only those who do believe in Him as well as those who do not believe in Him. When it rains, it does not fall in the lands of only those who believe in Him but also in the lands of those who do not. This is the kind of God that he envisioned. And so if this was God, then all faiths must unite unto Him. They must converge on Him which means that there was unity of God and plurality of His face. Today, we have just started talking of pluralism. Guru Nanak was, in fact, was not only talking of pluralism but he practised pluralism to the extent that when he passed away, nobody knew what his religion really was. The Hindus claimed him to be their religious leader, the Muslims claimed him to be theirs and they wanted to divide his physical remains.

Over the next century, the Sikh scriptures came into being. The scriptures contained not just compositions of the works of the six Sikh Gurus till then but like-minded, like-spirited Hindu and Muslim holy men whose work is universal. The Guru Granth Sahib is the only pluralist script in the world. And when I bow before it, I am not bowing only before my Sikh Gurus, I am bowing before the Hindu and the Muslim fakirs who have contributed to the Granth Sahib. And, the Hindus among them were not just Brahmins, far from it, they were all castes, the "lowest" of the castes being included. And therefore, when I bow before our scripture, I cannot rise without throwing away all caste egos. When the fifth Guru wanted to build the Golden Temple (it was not the Golden Temple then, it became thus after Ranjit Singh), it was a temple of God, the *Harimandir*. When he wanted to build that, whom did he invite to lay the foundation ground? A Muslim saint, Mian Mir. Such was the spirit of pluralism that Guru Nanak had infused into his successors. When the Guru went to the Himalayas, he found that religious leaders, who were essentially yogis, had deserted their homes and were abiding in the Himalayas, seeking their own personal salvation. He thought this was highly selfish, leaving the people to suffer, not aware of their suffering and merely concerned with their own salvation, their own liberation. He said, "Look, the best way to reach God is to live an everyday life, as a householder the householder's way of life is the best because every thing blessed by the householder — even a mendicant begs from the householder." Nanak said "not only be a householder, but attain salvation while meeting, laughing and dressing in all your everyday activities, always be aware of God and dedicate all your actions to Him. That is the way to salvation".

Nanak was distressed that the people of India had been slaves for so many centuries that they had become imbibed with the slavish mentality of the worst kind, to the extent that even a slave dynasty had ruled them. They were, slaves of the slaves, a terrible slavish mentality had percolated and there was no conception of libertyno concept of a nation at that time. This is what the Guru wanted to generate. Treacherous priests had enslaved the people's intellect. They had "knowledge", which they reserved for themselves. All were dependent upon these priests who were, in reality, treacherous. When India was invaded by Babar, these priests exclaimed "Do not worry — we will chant mantras and every Mughal will become blind". Guru Nanak observed that no Mughal ever became blind, Babar instead conquered and devastated the country. Guru Nanak himself, along with the faithful Mardana, was taken into custody by the Mughals and put to work in the camps. Everyone started work because they were afraid. Guru Nanak said "Mardana, play your *rabab*. I want to sing. I want to sing the praises of God". That was an early lesson

in civil disobedience. "I am not going to obey wrong orders, the unrighteous orders of this invader. I am going to get into harmony with the Infinite".

During the travels of Guru Nanak, wherever he went, he was thoughtful. Multan was famous for the thousands of mendicants who lived there. And when Guru Nanak arrived they said, "This town is already saturated with mendicants. Here is one more". So they offered him a bowl of milk which was brimming to the top. Not one more drop of milk could it contain. In a symbolic gesture, the Guru picked a flower and put it on the surface symbolising that "I have not come to disturb you. I have come only to percolate fragrance into your assembly", and that is what he did wherever he went. Wherever he went, he was making an agenda for India, for Indians and for the future generations. The agenda that Nanak had in mind, started with the unity of God, and the plurality of faith. Nanak felt that faiths should not be aggressive, and much less, tyrannous. The dictum should be that all faiths are good. "Mine is best to me. But I must not shatter another person's faith because all faiths are convergent on the same Universal God. And if that is the fact, then everyone that God has created is His child and we are all His children".

Nanak felt that he must not just make people aware of the Universal God, he must also make them aware that they are brothers and sisters, as one fraternity. Fraternity within the community, fraternity between the communities, fraternity of the entire mankind — that was the agenda that developed in his mind. Nanak wanted to infuse into people an awareness of liberty. Liberty from tyrannous potentates, liberty from treacherous priests, liberty from wrong ways of the world. When a child is born, he does not know the ways of the world, the world teaches him, tutors him, also in false ways. He needs to be de-conditioned and when that happens, there is liberation from the ways of the world which ensnare us, enslave us. That is liberation or *moksha*. Liberation from the potentates, liberation from the priests and liberation from the wrong ways that have been imbibed. That was Nanak's concept of liberation.

What also distressed him was the attitude towards "service". Those who served were considered inferior, those who were served were considered superior. Guru Nanak thought that this was absolutely wrong and he strove to inculcate the dignity of labour. One of the methods he evolved was that he made service and labour compulsory for the followers of the faith. They must earn from the sweat of their brow and with the might of their hands: that is the reason why we do not find any Sikh begging even today. We do not find anyone who steals because everyone gains by work with his hands. We are all workers, is what he told us to do. Nanak thought that service, in itself, can lead

to salvation and his successor, the second Guru, who served Nanak whole-heartedly became one with him by service and, eventually, Nanak's successor. People questioned that when Nanak had two noble and able children, why were they ignored and instead this outsider made his successor. The Guru said that he had a vision which the sons did not. He picked up a coin put it in his hand, closed it and addressed his elder son, "tell me, what is in my hand"? And he said, "I have seen what is in your hand. It is a coin". When he asked his younger son, "the elder one is absolutely correct. You have a coin in your hand". And then he asked his successor, "what do you think is in my hand" and he says, "I just cannot describe what is in your hand. You have the powers of all the world in your hand. You can make and mar, whatever you choose, the whole world is indebted to you and that is in your hand". And the Guru said, "Look, my children cannot see beyond the material world and here this man has this vision beyond.....".

Service, therefore, became the means of rising from the human level to that approaching the Creator. Thus the Guru established the dignity of labour.

Nanak strove to teach people the joys of sharing: "What I have is not that what I have but what I have been gifted by God. And since everything is gifted by God, if I am more fortunate to have more than others, then others have a claim on this grace of God that has graced upon me. I must share my wherewithal with others".

Now this was a tremendously massive socio-spiritual agenda and was not possible to complete the mission in any one life-time. Thus there were ten Sikh Gurus and not one. And 200 years, two centuries elapsed from Guru Nanak's revelation in 1499 to the culmination — completion of this agenda.

This unique moment occurred on that Vaisakhi day, the festival of harvest. In 1999 it has fallen on the 14th April but in that particular year, in 1699, it was on the 30th March. The Tenth Guru chose this date for three reasons: one was that after harvesting, people are relatively free to assemble in large numbers. Also because in the spring season everything is re-generating and so too re-generation of the mind would be easier. Thirdly, Lord Buddha got his enlightenment on this day.

This day was very significant. Now on this Vaisakhi day, the Guru invited people, his faithful followers, from all over the country. When an assembly of many thousands had gathered, he stood with a wondrous mystic glow in his eyes and an unshielded sword in his hand and declared, "I want someone to come forward and offer his head for the



sake of righteousness". An electrification of the congregation took place. People were surprised at the demand but yet one man sprang up, offered himself. The Guru took him to a tent nearby, came back with the sword dripping with blood and demanded another one, yet another one, yet another one, yet another one. Five times he made the demand. Five times volunteers offered themselves. Soon he went back to the tent, and led out all those five chosen ones, attired in resplendent clothes, and declared, "These are my five beloved ones". And then he prepared them for initiation, he prepared *amrit* (holy water).

He took a steel bowl, poured some water in it plus some *patas* and started chanting the holy word upon it while stirring with a double-edged sword. Each one had a symbolic significance. Pure steel is how the Guru describes the Creator; the container is God Almighty Himself. Water sustains all Life Water was the first life-giving element in the world. So, life is in the hands of the Almighty and sweetened because we must have sweetness in our lives. The double-edged sword is symbolic in order to shatter falsehood.

The Guru then proclaimed that "your old *sanskaars*, your old taboos have gone, your old castes have gone, your old *dharma* has gone. You are now reborn". That was an act of what is called the second birth, the twice-born people (the Brahmins also call themselves twice-born but no low caste person can be so) but here at Anandpur on the Vaisakhi of 1699, these five chosen ones were from different castes according to the Hindu tradition and yet they became the Khalsa, the pure. They had been elevated to levels which none could till then even imagine. Then the Guru fell on their feet and requested that he too be initiated in the way he had initiated them.

And that was the miracle. The Guru initiates his followers, but here is a Guru who is requesting his followers to initiate him. The levels between the Guru and the followers vanished. "They are to me like God Almighty and I bow before them. That is what the Khalsa is. They are God's own knights in arms, Always prepared to lay down their lives to defend the defenceless and struggle for the survival of righteousness".

That was the order promulgated on the day that fell on 30th March 1699, the tercentenary of which we are now celebrating. It is an occasion for us to bask in the sunshine of the glory of the Khalsa, but at the same time, to re-dedicate ourselves to the tasks that befront us: among them are that we shall never be slaves, that we shall carry all the people of the world with us as our brethren, that we shall rejoice in the unity of God, that we shall receive all people with love and affection. I do think and hope that all

communities will join us in this dedication so that all of us together can create a new world, with a new vision and a great new future.

Dr. Karan Singh's address

Sacrifices are the altar of patriotism and become infinite. What greater sacrifice can a man make in the fight against bigotries and for democracy, keeping as the constant prayer "*De Shiva Var More, Shubh Karman Se Kabhi Na Daroon*". From the very beginning, from the inception of the Khalsa, the Sikhs have been the sword arm of India, have been the shield against the rapacious invasions from the North and West. It has been so for 300 years, the saviour of India in so many ways, and even today, in our own times, whether it is the soldier, whether it is the farmer, whether it is bearing the first impact of an aggression, it is the Sikh community (and if I may say so, the Dogra community), which live at the very frontiers of the country and represent the first sinews of our defence.

I would also like to add here some personal touches: as you know, the Kashmiri Pandits came in great distress to Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji because of the bigoted and fanatic policies which were being implemented by the Mughal Emperor, and begged to be saved. And Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji said that some great person had to sacrifice his life in order to save the Pandits. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who was then a young boy, addressed his father "Who is greater than you"? Guru Tegh Bahadur thus came here to Delhi, and courted arrest and was tortured and beheaded here, in this very city in order to save the Kashmiri Pandits. And even closer, my own ancestor, Raja Gulab Singh, was given a *raj-tilak* personally by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the *Shere-e-Punjab*. The Maharaja gave him the tilak on a rock next to the river Chenab in Akhnoor, and when he gave the *raj-tilak*, he put it down to which the Pandit said, "Nai Maharaj Ji, you should not put a tilak downwards, you must put it upwards". Maharaja Ranjit Singh said, "No, I want the roots of this family to go deep into the ground and to exist here forever". And look at destiny; Maharaja Ranjit Singh's family has disappeared but my family, by His blessings and with his *aashirwad*, continues to flourish.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj did not belong only to the Sikhs. He was a national treasure. He is a treasure for all humanity. I led an inter-faith delegation to Shri Anandpur Sahib on the 14th April. *Us vele te mein kesri safaa baneya si vese, hun aj nai lagaya. Main kaya in the ajeeb lagega, Delhi wick log kainge ek nai roop wick Dr. Karan Singh sade samne aayen hain. Lekin uthe mein Anandpur Sahib gaya, te apna Dogra saafa ban ke gaya si mein, kesri saafa.*

I was very happy to have that opportunity of leading a delegation of the Muslims, of Bahais, of Parsis, of Jains, of all the religions that flourish in India. All of us paid our

homage there to Guru Gobind Singh Ji who is a treasure for all humanity.

Therefore, personally, on my own behalf, and on behalf of the entire Dogra community, I would like to express my deep homage on this occasion to Guru Gobind Singh Ji, Maharaj Kalgidhar. His wonderful *Chandi di Var*, has a poem to the great Goddess who fights against unrighteousness and therefore it is with a *shlok* in praise of that Goddess Chandi that I would like to pay my homage and to congratulate all of you again, *The Nagaara Trust* and everyone connected with this great undertaking. I hope you will flourish in the years to come.



Some weeks later, on May 14th, the four-cassette tape-set and CD pack of *Gurmat Sangeet* by Bhai Avtar Singh Ragi was released by Dr. Karan Singh, at a special function organised by *Music Today* at New Delhi. This was compiled by *The Nagaara Trust* and produced by *Music Today* and has since been distributed extensively, in India and in many countries abroad.

As part of the well-known media group, *Living Media India Limited*, which publishes India's leading newsmagazine, *India Today*, and also produces programmes for the Indian television networks, *Music Today* enshrines the corporate philosophy of 'excellence'.

The Sikh tenets prescribe singing of the *Shabad* (the word) as the sole form of worship. "The Divine word is the *Shabad*, which is the right speech; listen to it,

recite this always and the Lord shall abide with you".

Celebrating 300 years of the formation of the Khalsa, the *Gurmat Sangeet* by Bhai Avtar Singh Ragi, was released in association with *Golden Melodies* and compiled by the *Nagaara Trust*. "Gurmat Sangeet is a unique form of devotional music, central to the Sikh ethos of prayer and worship. It is a rare amalgamation of theology, classical music and the folk lores of northern India, especially the Punjab, which evolved during the 15th to 18th centuries and has a unique style of its own."

This is a special rendering of *Shabad Keertan* by the Bhai Sahib, who is the 11th generation of an illustrious family of Ragis dating back to Guru Amar Das (1479-1574), perhaps the sole repository and exponent of the original *Reets* and *Parhtaals* (musical compositions) dating back to the sixteenth century.

A selection of some of the compositions of this tradition in pristine form are presented in this series. Reverently wrapped within a beautifully crafted presentation set, this selection of verses from the *Guru Granth Sahib* fills one with the sweetness of the Truth ☪



In celebration of the Tricentenary of the Khalsa



requests the pleasure of the company of

Dr. Karan Singh, P. S. Chhina

to the launch and introduction to

Gurmat Sangeet

by Bhai Avtar Singh Ragi

in association with Music Today

To honour the occasion

we have the pleasure of having with us

Dr. Karan Singh

as the Chief Guest.

On Friday, May 14, 1999, at 6:30 p.m.

At

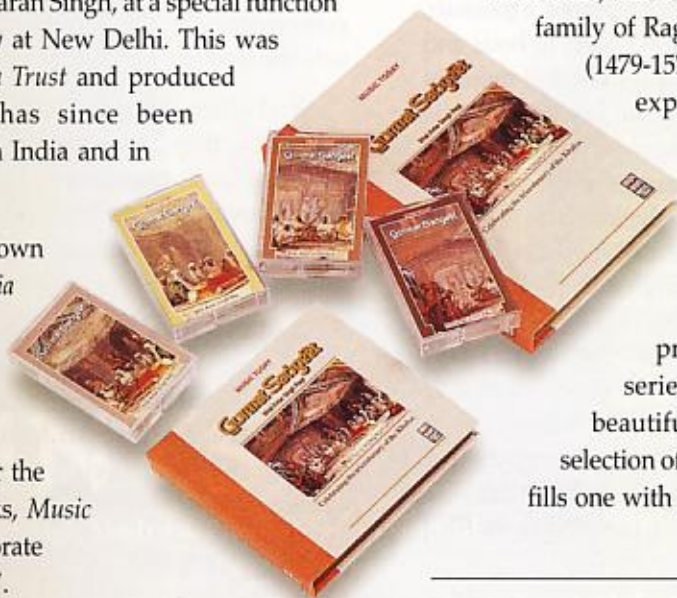
Art Today

A-4, Hamilton House

Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001.

© 1999 Music Today. All Rights Reserved.

INVITATION



The Nagaara Trust

16-A Palam Marg, Vasant Vihar, New Delhi 110 057, INDIA

Tel : +91-11-6146023 Fax : +91-11-6149445 e-mail: nishaan@mailcity.com

The Mystic Year 1999

From time to time various kinds of occult, pseudo scientific and odd "systems" such as palmistry, astrology, tarot cards, crystal-gazing, numerology etc. have managed to remain in business, and at times shown an uncanny degree of truth, if not precision, according to claims made in their behalf. And such persons inclined to rationalism, in certain extreme situations tend to follow these arcane, inexplicable traits. I have, I confess, fallen for some of these for short periods even when my perceptions remained unconnected to those grids of star-gazing, and I was, in the end, seen out of the impasse. Of all these "systems" that came closest to my own case-history, numerology had an unusual impression on my mind. The number "8", for instance, has been prominent in my life—from the date of birth to the houses I have occupied, though in a couple of crucial tests, it too came a cropper. So, what, indeed is the upshot?

And now long after I had lost interest in this "system", I suddenly discovered a remarkable pattern when I was commissioned to write a few articles on the aspects and values and world-view of the Khalsa in connection with the tercentenary celebrations now in progress. We know, of course, that certain dates in history turn out to be dates with destiny for nations, races, communities and countries. But really all such dates—the birth of a prophet, a messiah, a liberator, a charismatic leader—are bound to hour and contingency, though the faithful always see that moment as the moment of truth chosen by the Lord. And it is difficult to argue where the dialectic of faith is concerned. And yet as I pondered the problematics of the year 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Sikh Master, annunciated, sanctified and commissioned the Khalsa Commonwealth on the Baisakhi day in the town of Anandpur, it dawned upon me that there were at least four other years—1499, 1599, 1799 and 1899—which had played a most remarkable role in the progression and deification of the Khalsa as *panth*, complete with a church, a theological set of doctrines, observances, symbols and institutions. The year 99, heralding the birth of the new century, had assumed a kind of *mystic* meaning in the Sikh Calender.

As reported, the Founder of the Faith, Guru Nanak Dev born in 1469 AD, set out in 1499-1500 on his famous travels across the country and beyond to spread the word of God, to redress the societal wrongs and rejuvenate a moribund

Hindu society fallen into a stale of obscurantism, ritualism and fatalism. That year, then, marked the initiation of a great dream which, in the first place, gave the Sikh religion that impetus and dynamics which were needed to put a great idea on the road.

The year 1599 has again a unique place in Sikh life, lore and moral culture. It was in that year that reportedly the Fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, began to compile the *Adi Granth*, and in 1604 presented a scripture of prodigious proportions and catholicity carrying songs and hymns and compositions of unparalleled magnificence, power and reach. The vision and the values and the world-view of the emerging community go back homing till this day to the bani which has a timeless force and splendour. The shaping of the Sikh sensibility, of its mindset, is thus directly related to the making of the word as perceptor and guide.

And, of course, then comes the Great Day of the Baisakhi, 1699, and the Creation of the Khalsa as a unified body of the faithful in the flash of the sun and the sword by Guru Gobind Singh. The mystic year is once again a beckoning star for the navigation of the newly-oriented community through the rapids and deeps of the times ahead. The tercentenary year thus commemorates the ceremony of consummation, and sets the agenda for the century about to be born.

And when the year 1799 is nostalgically recalled by the Sikhs, they are inevitably reminded of the *Khalsa Raj* or of the sovereignty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and whose sway during the next 40 years or so, became the song of Sikh ascendancy in India as a great political and military power.

And though in the year 1899, the sun had set on the Sikh empire, the birth of the Singh Sabha Movement—a revolutionary event—around that time created the first renaissance in Sikh history and infused a fallen community with a visionary sense of purpose and design.

Thus, the mystic figure of 99 in some undivined way continues to be a fateful year in Sikh history, and continues to entice the corporate imagination of the Khalsa.

Darshan Singh Maini