

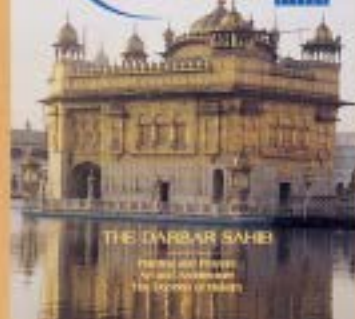
NISHAAN

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THE DARBAR SAHIB

Painting and Prayers
Art and Architecture
The Doctrine of Hukam



Cover: The Darbar Sahib, the Golden Temple at Amritsar
(Picture by Deidi von Schaewen)

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, Suján Singh Park

New Delhi 110 003, India

Tel: (91-11) 4617234

Fax: (91-11) 4628615

e-mail : nishaan@lycos.com

website : www.nishaan.com

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The Dialectic of Power

A Psychological Scrutiny

"Wherever I found the living, I found the will to power" - Nietzsche

The German philosopher's observation is profoundly true – and profoundly disquieting. Disquieting, because Nietzsche belonging to that category of thinkers who regard race, war and amoral politics as marks of power and sway. That was to be the Nazi creed altar, a fiendish deviation. The history of man, his evolutionary progress and his destiny, in the end, constitute an ambiguous commentary on the nature of power per se. For if power has been abused universally, and in all types of conceivable human relationships, the gender factor being an important aspect, power in the hands of an insightful ruler or statesman has also been the engine of energies that produce moral values. In fact, it may be true to say that bread and power are the needs of man and that without a judicious, guiding hand, there would be chaos. The Darwinian man would have regressed into the jungles of his mind if civilisations and cultures and higher intelligence's operating as rulers had not materialised. Thus, to understand power as an "aphrodisiac" (Henry Kissinger's expression) and power as a catalyst in the creation of a civic society, it is important to reach down into "the lower depths", to recall Freud.

The theme of power, no wonder, forms the fulcrum of novels, plays and other forms of art and letters. Man and society, man and family, man as lover or husband, man as master commanding slaves, man as father, as brother, as son etc. – all these relationships are sweetened or poisoned as power operates in response to situations and contingencies. Thus the right or wrong use of power determines the fate of nations, races and countries.

Power has been examined in varying ways by historians, philosophers, theologians, writers and thinkers. Power, for instance, has been described as the ability of a person to curb the freedom of others. Power is based on money, property, fear or on the respect that can be wielded by a person, or by a group. No race or nation is free of biases and inequalities and power ensues as a consequence of differences – in terms of wealth, position, sex, colour etc. Thus, hierarchies of power are set up when there is a symbiosis of the throne, the church and the elites (the Brahmins, for instance) and so power becomes patrician, patriarchal and paternal.

Again, the sheer force of personality breaks through the barriers erected by society and the elites to keep out the lower orders, the outcastes (as in India), but certain persons are so gifted in body and mind and, above all, in the potentials of the spirit as to push their way through to the top. The Italian philosopher Pareto's theory of the elites envisions "a rotation", so that over a period of time certain elite classes (such as the Indian *nawabs* and *rajās*) become effete through their own weaknesses – philandering, orgiastic, tantrik, sex, the ruthless misuse of state money and resources, among other vices and they are weeded out, or overthrown, or die a kind of natural death. So, for the wielders of power, it is important to keep their moral, material and spiritual reserves in order to meet all manner of occasions and contingencies. The story of Lincoln is not a *suigeneris* U.S. phenomenon. Many a great ruler, President or leader has, as history affirms, through both wisdom and humanist vision in some cases,

through Machiavellian means in the case of several others, succeeded in capturing power.

Power is also a genetic phenomenon and families wield it as such. The genetic pressure is a residue of the primitive self in our consciousness. The British biologist Richard Dawkins stipulated the concept of *memes*. The meme "is a unit of cultural information comparable in its effects on society to those of the chemically coded instructions in the gene of the human organism. Actually the word harks back to the Greek word *mimesis*. Memes require only minds to feed on".

There is also the symbology of power. A Brahmin's *tilak* or *sacred thread*, clerical collar of the Christian priest or padre, the House symbol of royalty and of the aristocracy etched on a gate – all these are assertive of power and tend to overawe the layman. Power here is indirect, a silent force on the mind of the beholder. It has been converted into a *mystique* so much so it begins to colonise the victim-consciousness and thus become a factor in the subservience of the opposing self. The imperialism of the powerful comes to stay and, indeed, destroys the true self and creates an order of false consciousness, to use a Marxian phrase.

The theme of power has attracted the profoundest writers eternally, since it is, at one end, related ineluctably to evil in its primeval, bestial form. No wonder, Shakespeare who has been regarded as the bard of "the royal soul of England" still had the insight to see through the façade of ceremonies and 'divinity' claimed by the royal historians and find a deep hollowness in the crown as also in the mystique hoisted around it. His *History* and *Roman plays* are perhaps the best places to look for the corruption of the heart that goes with power. But even in his tragedies like *Hamlet*, *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, the Shakespeare "God's Spy" lifts the veil to show the ugly face of power divorced from vision and compassion.

The concept of power combined with a deep humanitarian concern which, finally, is subsumed in the divinity of rightful action, could best be illustrated in the life and vision and poetry of the tenth Sikh Master, Guru Gobind Singh. Thus, the doctrine of the consecrated sword – *Shakti* plus a great cause – should be seen as a sign of command from Above. In his letter, written in Persian, Guru Gobind Singh admonishes the Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb – a bigoted tyrant. Why the Guru felt compelled to take up arms against the massed might of the Moghul army is thus justified in a well-known couplet:

When all means of a peaceful solution
are exhausted
It's one's rightful duty to lift
the sword.

Even with all his existential constraints and with the burden of one's *karma*, there is still enough freedom given to man by the Creator to make moral choices. And this enfranchisement becomes mandatory when the question concerns the kings and princes and all those invested with power. They must not forfeit the trust placed in them.

Both secular and priestly power are initially given to the elect of the Lord, though the wrath of God is visited upon them even more severely when they go astray. That is the law of *karma* in action here in this life, on this fair earth. Transgression and Punishment then go hand in hand. Everything may not be visible to other eyes, but the transgressor's inner erosion and dehumanisation becomes his "cross".

Why I have elected to write this editorial on the theme of power is concerned partly with the messy and dirty business of Assembly elections in various states including the Punjab in February. Nearly all the ills our electoral politics are afflicted with – from Machiavellianism and patrimony and muscle and money power and *gundo-gardi* to voting terrorism and sheer skulduggery etc. – may be seen in action, or read in the media hired by those in the fray.

We in the *Nishaan* are deeply worried about the state of Punjab's politics, what with corrupt ways, horse-trading, mutual mud-slinging, factionalism, castism etc. If only the Khalsa Panth could present a united front and be true to the salt of Sikhism – that is our abiding hope and prayer. The canal-water issue has been a God-send for the Akalis right now, though the Badal Sarkar never raised the issue earlier in Parliament or elsewhere. As for the issue of Chandigarh, it has already been quietly dropped, making nonsense of the history of the struggle for the Punjabi Suba.

Such such, then are our politics and such such are our leaders.

Darshan Singh Maini



The Golden Temple



It's Theo-Political Status



*T*he world-famous Golden Temple of the Sikhs, situated at Amritsar in India, bears *Harimandir*, 'the Temple of God' as its original name. It forms an island in a lake to which the name of Amritsar was given by the Nanak V, Guru Arjan (1563-1606) in the year 1589, when he laid the foundations of what is now known as the Golden Temple and the town which grew around this "Mecca of the Sikhs" has subsequently acquired the name of Amritsar.

The Nanak V requested his great contemporary mystic and Muslim savant, Mir Mohammed Muayyinu'l Islam, popularly known as Mian Mir, to lay the foundation stone of the temple and this fact, as well as the name bestowed on the lake, bears a basic significance in relation to the Sikh doctrines.

The impact of Islam on North Western India in the 11th century had been through military conquest and sword and this had naturally slated reactions in the proud and sensitive Hindu mind, that resulted in impassable barriers of hatred and prejudice between the two world-culture currents and their mutual contacts have, therefore, left irritating and unfortunate monuments of bigotry and misunderstanding, spiritual and physical, that still mark the Indian scene.

The Sikh prophets, the Nanaks, desired to level down these barriers with a view to discover and provide a common spiritual ground for the two, Hinduism and Islam, where Hinduism gets over its injured superiority and sense of exclusiveness and Islam, its arrogance, born out of military superiority. The Nanak V declared :

Musalmanū mōmūl hōvāi antār kī

Mal dīl tē dhōvāi,

Dunīyā rang na āvāi nede jio

Kusūm pat ghio pūk harā

Guru Granth, Maruy-V. 13 iii. 12

"Let muslims rediscover the truth that the essence of religious practice is compassion and its goal, the purification of soul; political utilitarianism is foreign to Islam as such; and let the Hindus concede that Islam, thus understood, is as respectable and ceremoniously pure as the flowers, the silk, the deerskin and the butter-fat".

Sikhism –

A Meeting Ground of Hinduism and Islam

And since Sikhism was to be this common meeting ground between these two world-culture streams, that is why a prominent Muslim divine was asked to lay the foundation of the Golden Temple. The name Amritsar was given to the lake encircling this temple, as *amrita* means the enduring principle of all that is in Hindu metaphysical thought and water is the symbol of the first impulse of manifestation, the Unmanifest in Aryan thought-idiom and the



Golden Temple in the embrace of the waters of Immortality, thus, was intended to be a profound symbol of future confluence of the world-cultures into a universal culture for mankind.

In this temple, the proposed centre of a world-culture and world religion, the Nanak V installed the Sikh scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib* and ever since, the presiding place, even when the Sikh Gurus were personally present, has remained reserved for the Book and the religious ceremonial and services have exclusively and always consisted of prayers to the singing praises of and meditation upon God in this *sanctum-sanctorum* of Sikhism.

It was in 1609 that the Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind (1595-1644) erected the Akal Takht edifice opposite the entrance bridge-head of the Golden Temple, upon which the Guru sat in state, wearing two swords of dominion over the two worlds, the seen and the unseen and the peculiar Sikh doctrine of Double Sovereignty took birth, the essence of which is that a man of religion must always owe his primary allegiance to Truth and mortality and he must never submit to the exclusive claim of the secular state to govern the bodies and minds of men. The whole of subsequent Sikh history must be seen as an unfoldment of this Sikh attitude, if it is to be properly understood. The NanakX, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708) explained this doctrine to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in a written communication, the *Zafarnamēh* (1707), in the following words :



*Cunkār az hamēh hiltē darguzusht
Halāl ast burdan b-shamshir dast.*

"When all means of peaceful persuasion fail, it is legitimate (for a man of religion) to move his hand to the hilt of the sword".

The Sikh doctrine of Double Sovereignty promulgated in the beginning of the 17th century, has curiously modern ring and flavour as from 19th century onwards, a growing school of writers in Europe have tended to think on the lines in which it is grounded. The main substance of this doctrine is that any sovereign state which includes Sikh population and groups as citizens, must never make the paranoid pretensions of almighty absolutism entailing the concept of total power, entitled to rule over the bodies and minds of men, in utter exclusiveness. Any state which lays such claims *qua* the Sikhs, shall automatically forfeit its moral right to demand the allegiance of the Sikhs and there is thus an internal antagonism between such a state and the collective community of the Sikhs, represented by order of the Khalsa and in this deadly duel the State shall never emerge out as finally victorious, for self-destruction and prerogatives and the Khalsa are imprescriptible.

The 19th century German writer, Schulse supports the basic premise of this doctrine by asserting the view that the State is absolutely supreme and incapable of doing wrong, is misconceived and dangerous (*Deutsches Staatsrecht Vol I Sec. 16*). The entire Sikh history is a relentless *jehad* against this dangerous misconception, and the Sikhs have always insisted that any State fit and entitled to demand their allegiance must *ab initio* recognise and concede its own self-limited character, arising out of the principles of morality, the teachings of religion, the principles of abstract justice, the principles of the Sikhs metalegal constitution which lays down that (1) they must be approached

and dealt with at State level as a collective group and entity and (2) they must be governed impersonally, that is, through the rule of law and not by arbitrary will, and this self-limitation must further be circumscribed by the immemorial customs, long-established traditions and the facts of the history of the Sikhs. This Sikh doctrine is, in essence, the same which today finds explicit expression in the modern concept of the pluralistic State, which recognises that the State, in practice is the government and the government is no more than a group in control of the governmental machinery, and that the aims and objects of this group, may at any time clash with those of other groups, not in power. The Government may be the temporary principal of all such groups, but it is only *primus inter pares*, the elder amongst equals; it is not the sole repository of power or focal of loyalty. This is, indeed, the sole essence of the Sikh doctrine of Double Sovereignty, which finds powerful support in the writings of Professor Harold J. Laski, Mr. G.D.H. Cole and the French Jurist, Duguit, as also Dr. J.N. Figgis.

The Sikh revolt during the 17th and 18th centuries against the Mughal State was, in reality, an attempt to assert their doctrine of Double Sovereignty against the Muslim's absolute theomonic theory of State, as a result of which the Sikhs had to pass through the valley of death, as the narrative that follows would show, before they emerged with the sceptre of political sovereignty in their hands and it would be well to understand that the present bitterness and misunderstanding that clouds relations between the Sikhs and the State is also grounded in the same doctrinal conflict.

In 1708 Guru Gobind Singh, after protracted discussions and parleys with the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, the son and successor of Aurangzeb, came to the firm conclusion that "all means of peaceful persuasion" had failed and it had, therefore, become the right and duty of Sikhs to "move the hand to the hilt of the sword" and in the same year (February 1708) the Guru initiated a Hindu *yogi* and occultist, Madho Das *bairagi*, as a Sikh and renamed him Banda Singh, and then appointed him the Generalissimo of the Sikhs, after conferring upon him the military title *Bahadur*. Banda Singh Bahadur, was then ordered to proceed to Punjab with the assignment of "due chastisement of the Mughal rulers, who have usurped the power that belongs to the people, condign punishment of

those guilty of atrocities, destruction of their military bases and reestablishment of the freedom of the people."

Turken te nij levan bair pathio Gur ne mujh ko kar banda, mai kar khuar bajide ko mar Sarhind uja d karehon suchhanda,
Giani Gian Singh Panth-prakash, Kavita (1880), III, 752.

Banda Singh Bahadur carried out his assignment with admirable fidelity and in 1710 declared the freedom of the province of Sirhind, made as its capital the fortified Mukhalispur, in the hills near Ambala, and the Sikhs adopted the legend on their State Seal, which began:

"We hereby place our impress of sovereignty upon both the worlds, the seen and the unseen".

"Sikkeh zail bar har du alam."

And thus they reiterated the basic doctrine of Sikhism, that of Double Sovereignty.

After the collapse of political power of the Sikhs under Generalissimo Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716, there follows a complete blackout till 1721, when the Sikhs shifted their

centre of activities, their spiritual and political capital and their acropolis to the Golden Temple, the lake that surrounds it and the complex of buildings including the Akal Takht, that are attached to it.

Ever since 1721, the Golden Temple with the complex of attached structures, has remained the centre of the Sikh world, the Sikh history, the Sikh politics and the Sikh theophany. Throughout the last 250 years, whether the Sikhs were declared as outlaw by the State, whether the Golden Temple and its adjuncts were reduced to mass of ruins or they were forcibly occupied by the State, whether the Sikhs were a sovereign people or politically subjugated, they have never abandoned or compromised the position that (1) the Golden Temple and its adjuncts are the hub of the Sikh world, not as a matter of concession by any worldly power, but as the inherent right of the Sikh people, *sui generis* and inalienable and (2) there is no ultimate dichotomy in the true Sikh doctrine between this world and the next, the secular and the religious, the political and the spiritual.

Status and Position of the Golden Temple

This position and this status of the Golden Temple is unique in the religious or political centres of world history.

It is the Mecca of the Sikhs, because it is the religious centre of the Sikhs, but it is vastly more.

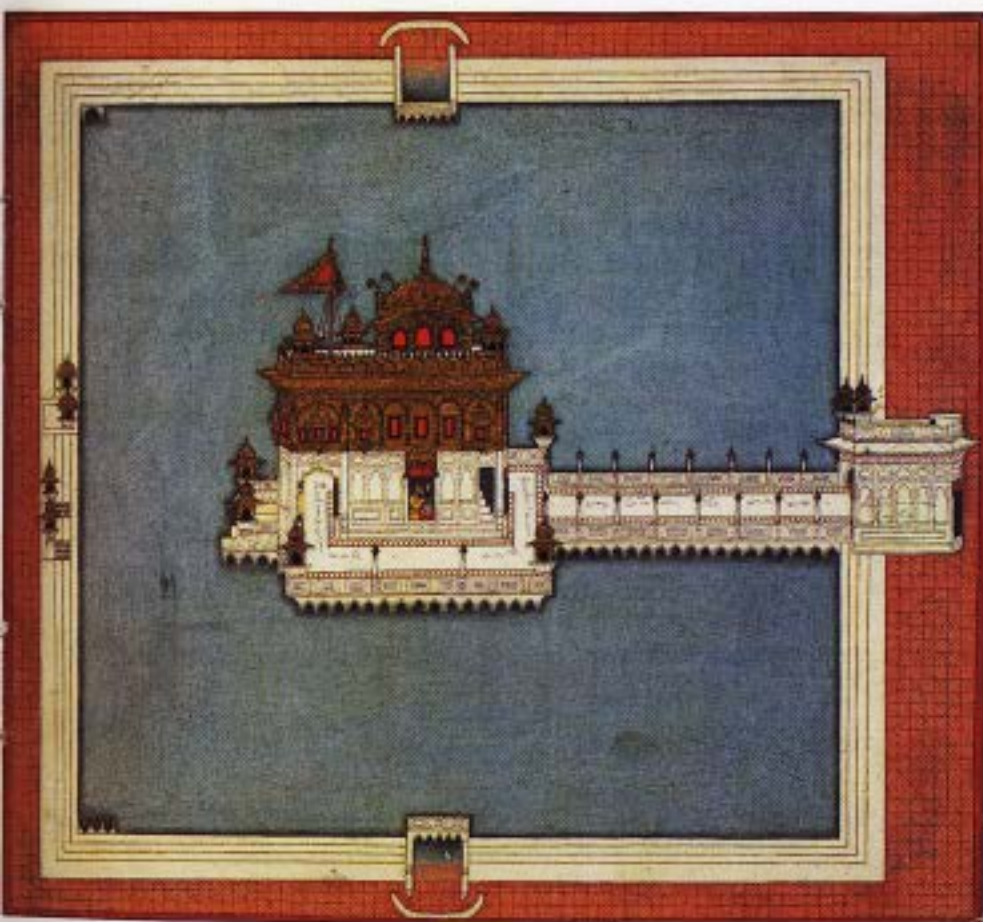
It is the St. Peter's of the Sikhs, for it is the capital of Sikh theocracy, but it is very much more and also something less and different. Sikhism has no ordained priestly class and, therefore, there can be no theocratic political state of the Sikhs in which the priests rule in the name of an invisible God. They have no corpus of civil law of divine origin and sanction and they, therefore, must have a state based on secular non-theocratic laws. It is more, because it remains the real capital of ultimate Sikh allegiance, whatever the political set up for the time being.

It is the Varnasi of Sikhism, because it is the holiest of the holies of the faith, but it is not precisely that because the true Sikh doctrine does not approve of any tradition or belief which seeks to tie up theophany with geography.

It is the Jerusalem of Sikhism because it is the historical centre of the epiphany of Sikhism but it is not precisely that because Sikhism, as a religion, is not history-grounded, that is, its validity is not tied up with or dependent upon any historical event.

It is not precisely the political capital of the Sikhs, because political capital pre-supposes a state under the control of the Sikhs, and when the Sikhs do have such a





[From the Dr. Narinder S. Kapany Collection]

state, it is not imperative that its administrative centre must be at Amritsar and even when it is, the Golden Temple and its precincts shall still retain their peculiar independent character apart from this administrative centre. When the Sikhs do not have a sovereign state of their own, the Golden Temple, with its surrounding complex, continuously retains its theo-political status, which may be suppressed by political power, compromised by individuals or questioned by politicians, but which remains and never can be extinguished, for it is *sui generis* and inalienable and imprescriptible.

It is owing to this unique status, grounded in certain misunderstandings that continuously arise concerning the use of the Golden Temple with its surrounding complex, for "political purposes", for allowing ingress into it and housing of those whom the political state may deem as "offenders" and for pursuing "extra religious activities" from inside its precincts. The Sikhs, themselves, have never viewed any of these activities, started or controlled from inside the precincts of the Golden Temple, as either improper, or repugnant to the Sikh doctrine, or contrary to the Sikh historical tradition. The reasons for this Sikh attitude are three, in the main, not singly, but collectively.

One reason is that this geographical site itself is charged with theopathic influences such as no other known and still accepted site on earth, including the old site of Solomon's Temple, revered by three great religions of the world, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, can claim to be.

Prehistoric antiquity of Amritsar

Ever since the man on this earth became civilised in any comprehensive sense, about four or five millennia ago, imagination seems to find some foothold to countenance the belief that the lake engirdling the Golden Temple represents the most extensive pre-classical civilization of the most basic activity of man, his religion. The most extensive pre-classical civilization of the world, the Indus Valley civilization, stretched, in the third millennium B.C. from Ropar at the foot of the Simla hills to Suthagendor near the shores of the Arabian Sea, a stretch of one thousand miles, and the site of the Golden Temple lies in the heart of this great river-system. The prominently situated "Bath" or *sarovar* in the newly dug up ancient mound of Mohenjodaro, as readily suggests to mind the central significance of water reservoirs in the metaphysical thought, idiom and religious practices of these ancient people as it springs before the mind's eye, the Golden Temple, lake-surrounded.

Our proto-historical records, the *Pauranas* and the pre-Christian era Buddhist traditions definitely assert that, from ancient times, there has existed a natural and whole lake of water,*

* In *Vaivasvatapurana*, a genre of ancient Sanskrit text reduced into literary form in about the first century of Christian era, but of much greater antiquity of contents there is mention of Amarkunda (synonym for Amritsar, Punjab, Amritsar), 'a holy lake situated betwixt the rivers Vipasa (Modern Bias) and Airavati (Modern Ravi)', for the possession of which, in the pre-history epoch of creation, a fierce struggle took place between the gods and anti-gods, for, the out come of this struggle would decide as to whether the forces of religion will triumph in the current world age or those of irreligion. The gods came out victorious and Amritsar is now the centre of oecumenical religion.

where the Golden Temple is now situated and the geo-physical layout of the site amply confirms the probability of these assertions. A bird's eye view of the area, from an aeroplane even today would confirm the conclusion that this site must have been a natural water reservoir for thousands of years past. The Vedic and Buddhist traditions of holiness attached to this site and the lake suggest an earlier and more ancient origin of this attachment, extending back to the third and second millennia of the Indus Valley civilization, on the basis of the historical trend that once a holy place, always so and that, a new holiness must be grounded in some older one.

The creative imagination, therefore, is justified in discerning grounds for the belief, not altogether fanciful, that the holy lake and the site of the Golden Temple, was an ancient centre of theophanic human activity at the dawn of human civilization, around about 5,000 years ago, peopled by the Mohenjodaro race and further, that it was equally well revered spot for the theomatic *rishis* of the *Vedas*.

It is interesting to recall here that when Guru Arjan was having the ancient alluvium of this lake cleared, a sealed masonry subterranean dome was sounded and exposed, which being opened up revealed a macerated *yogi* in lotus-posture, immersed in seedless *nirbija* trance. When the Guru reanimated him, he disclosed that he went into his trance "thousands of years ago", with the object of experiencing the somatic touch of the Nanak, before entering into the utter Void.

This spot was commemorated by the Guru by the subsidiary lake, Santokhsar, which exists till today. Were some of the Vedic hymns actually revealed to the Aryans at the banks of this ancient holy lake, just as the major portions of the *Guru Granth* in the 17th century were? Intuitive imagination guesses so and there is no good reason to think otherwise. In the early centuries of the Christian era, when the ecumenical religion of the Mahayan took birth in North West India in the form of the original *Prajnaparmitta* and the *Sadharmapundrika sutras*, the Golden Temple site and the holy lake were already an active centre of beehive Buddhist monk-communities, of which the great Nagarjun and Aryadeva themselves might have been the Abbots, during the periods of their creative activity and if herein the intuitive imagination hovers near the truth, then it emerges that the site of the Golden Temple and the banks of its surrounding waters are the scenes of earliest spiritual activity of the civilised man, the highest watermark of the theomancy of the Vedic Aryans, the greatest achievement of the Buddhist mind and the most glorious efflorescence

of the *genius loci* of the Punjab.

Coming to near modern history and times, the founder of the Lamaist Buddhism in Tibet, Padamsambhava, a professor at Nalanda university who was invited to Tibet by the great king, Khri-sron-lde-btsan (745-797) in 747 A.D. is the patron-saint of Tibet and one of the greatest figures of Buddhism and he is called 'Lotus-born', to signify his theomorphic status, while his biographies unanimously agree that the 'Lotus' out of which he took his non-human birth, floated on the limpid waters of a sacred lake, which is identified as now surrounding the Golden Temple. To this day, devout Tibetans make long and hazardous journeys to visit and pay homage to this sacred spot of the marvellous origination of the *Guru Rimpoche*, the Previous Master.

If many of these surmises lack palpable root and material evidence, the fact does not render the intangible pull of this picture on the racial subconscious mind, any the less potent and, indeed, the circumstances multiplies this potency manifold, as keen students of religious psychology well know.

At such a site, surcharged with such ancient and potent spiritual influences it was that the Sikh Gurus chose as the centre of the new world religion and world culture, which they inaugurated and instinctively sensing its high spiritual potency in relation to the future of mankind, the Sikhs, during the last 250 years, that the secular state powers, in utter discard and blind ignorance of the implications of the Sikh doctrines have tended to regard this geographical spot as just another area subject to their political domain, have paid the highest price demanded of them, in vindication of the true theo-political status of the Golden Temple.

The second reason, therefore, which fortifies the basic Sikh attitude concerning the theo-political status of the Golden Temple is grounded in the nimbus of the Sikh history that hangs over it and provides guiding precedents to the Sikh mind.

Till the demise of Guru Gobind Singh, the Nanaks, the Sikh Gurus, were centres of the Sikh movement and afterwards, Banda Singh Bahadur took over the command of their political affairs. It was after the execution of Banda Singh Bahadur and the collapse of the Sikh sovereignty which he had established on the political plane, that the Sikhs collectively assumed the rights and duties of their doctrine of Double Sovereignty and in 1721, Bhai Mani Singh was installed as the head-priest of the Golden Temple, who immediately took steps to revive the true theo-political

status of this place. A free community kitchen for the visitors and the disabled was started and politico-civic activities of the Sikh people were gathered afresh to be rooted around the Golden Temple. Khushwant Rai, the author of the manuscript, *Tarikh-i Sikhani* (1811) says that at this period, the Sikhs "lived in caves and thorny bushes and subsisted on roots and blades of grass and Zakariya Khan, the military governor of the Punjab, wondered that the grass-eaters should be so bold as to lay claim to sovereignty" (Folio 44.b).

Mughals Concede the Status of Sunation to Sikhs

In 1733, when the Mughal Government found that extreme measures of persecution had failed to persuade the Sikhs to compromise their basic doctrines and attitudes, they conceded to the Sikhs the status of a sub-nation, an autonomous political status, analogous to that offered to the Sikhs in early 1947 by Mr. Jinnah of the Muslim League. A revenue grant of a hundred thousand rupees and the Letters Patent of the Nawab were conferred upon the Sikhs, which they accepted with the reservation that, "the Khalsa meant to rule freely, cannot accept permanently, a subordinate position". (Teja Singh, Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Orient Longmans, p. I, 121). All these developments took place and were finalised within the precincts of the Golden Temple, in front of the *Akal Takht* and further, these arrangements show that the Government of the day, even during those early days of Sikh history, fully appreciated that the Sikh doctrines envisage that the state must deal with them as one people and not by admonishing them into individual citizens. Immediately, at the conclusion of these arrangements, the Sikhs proceeded to establish five military cantonments, one at the lake of the Golden Temple and the other four, at the remaining four sacred tanks that constitute the adjuncts of the Golden Temple, the Ramsar, the Bibeksar, the Lachhmansar and the Kaulsar. These arrangements, by their very nature, were doomed to failure and consequently, in 1736, the Mughal Government authorities occupied the Golden Temple and Bhai Mani Singh approached the authorities for permission to celebrate the Sikh consortium of *dipali* in November 1738 and he undertook to pay a sum of Rs. five thousand to the state for police arrangements, on the explicit condition that the Government would not interfere, directly or indirectly, in the right of the Sikhs to collect at the Golden Temple, in complete freedom. Since the Government authorities deliberately broke the terms of the agreement and as is the invariable custom of Government, accused Bhai Mani Singh of having done it

instead, Bhai Mani Singh accepted the penalty of death, inflicted by hacking his body into bits, limb by limb, rather than agree to pay the stipulated amount of Rs. five thousand, or earning a reprieve otherwise.

The next year, 1739, saw the invasion of India by the terrible Nadir Shah who sacked Delhi, put its inhabitants to sword and took away the peacock throne and the *Koh-i-noor* diamond, as loot in his wake. It was the "grass-eaters", the Sikhs alone, out of all the peoples of India, who then came out of their caves and thorny bushes to attack the rear of the returning invader, till he reached Lahore, exhausted by this harassment and the following conversation is recorded by a contemporary, between Nadir Shah and Zakariya Khan, the Military Governor of the Punjab:

Nadir Shah:

Who are these mischief-makers, anyway?

Zakarariya Khan:

They are a group of vagabond mendicants who visit their Guru's tank twice a year and then disappear.

Nadir Shah:

Where do they live?

Zakarariya Khan:

Their homes are their horse-saddles.

Nadir Shah:

Take care, my son, the day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of thy country.

The Sikhs Avenge Profanity of the Golden Temple

Here again, it was recognised by all concerned that the Golden Temple is the hub of the Sikh universe. After its occupation by Government in 1736, the Temple and its adjuncts were put to profane secular use and were converted into central offices of the district officer, Mussalim-ul-din, popularly known as *Massa Ranghar*. When the news of this profane secular use of the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Golden Temple reached a group of Sikh refugees in far off Jaipur, two of them travelled all the way to Amritsar, after taking a solemn vow that they would either cut off and bring back to Jaipur the head of this arrogant Government official or never return alive at all. In early August, 1740, this presumptuous Government functionary was beheaded on the spot, during the early office hours and his head carried to the assembled Sikhs at Jaipur, in vindication of the Sikh doctrine of Double

Sovereignty, with the Golden Temple as its acropolis.

The Sikh people thus lived a precarious existence, as stateless outlaws and aliens in their own homeland, when in 1746, Lakhpatrai, a Hindu Dewan or chief minister of the military governor of the Punjab, took it into his head to out-Herod Herod, to display greater zeal even than the Mughals to destroy the Sikhs and Sikhism and besides ordering a genocide of the Sikhs, caused it to be, "announced with the beat of drum that no one should read the Sikh scriptures, anyone taking the name of the Guru should be arrested and his belly ripped open". Even the word *gur* (molasses), which sounded like *Guru* was not to be uttered, but the word, *rori* was to be instead. The word, *granth* was also to be replaced with *pothi*. Many volumes of the holy *Granth* were collected and thrown into rivers and wells. The tank of the Amritsar was filled with earth". (*A Short History of the Sikhs*, op.cit. page 1, 132).

It is not to be supposed that a man of the keen intelligence of his race and an energy peculiar to that by a subordinate position inspired, the chief minister Lakhpatrai would have missed the central significance of the Golden Temple and its adjuncts in the Sikh scheme of things and therefore, whereas he strove to destroy the cultural roots of the Sikhs, he did not neglect the Golden Temple in view of its theo-political status.

In March 1748, the Sikhs emerged from their hideouts and drove away the occupation forces from the Golden Temple, built a mud-fort to defend it, and reiterated that the Sikh people were an indivisible entity and sovereign *sulgeneris* (Giani Gian Singh, *Panthprakash*, Vartak. Delhi, 1892, p. 907).

In full realisation that, in the plains of Amritsar, neither their fighting strength nor the flimsy protection of mud-walls could save them from sure destruction by the Mughals, they resolved that "no better death is conceivable for a Sikh than that which overtakes him while defending the great cause of Sikhism at this centre of Sikhism" (Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Prachin Panthprakash* (1837), Amritsar, 1914, p.325). It must always be borne in mind that this "Great Cause" is essentially theo-political in content and not merely soriteriological, in the scheme of peculiar Sikh values, a position which is not correctly appreciated by those who honestly castigate Sikhs for mixing up politics with religion.



In 1749, the Sikhs cleared the holy lake of Amritsar of the debris with which it was gutted by the chief minister Lakhpatrai and in 1757, the Afghan conqueror, Ahmed Shah Abdali, invaded India for the fourth time, when he found, as before, that the Sikhs, of all peoples of India, resented his incursions into their country the most and made no secret of this resentment. Well understanding the theo-political status of the Golden Temple and its adjuncts, the redoubtable Abdali had the temple demolished, its

adjuncts destroyed and its lakes filled up and ploughed over, a strange precursor of the Second World War Morgenthau plan of the Allies, calculated to ellivate culturally and industrially the German people. The Sikhs, however, refused to be cowed down, and in April 1758, when the combined forces of the Marathas and the Sikhs had succeeded in driving the Afghan occupation forces out of the country, the Golden Temple was rebuilt and its holy lake cleared up, through the labour of the enemy prisoners-of-war and under the direct supervision of the famous Maratha chiefs, Raghunath Rao and Malhar Rao

Holkar, who then humbly made an offering of Rs. one hundred twenty-five thousand at the Golden Temple and received ceremonial robes of honour from its head priest. These Maratha chiefs well understood that the restoration of the true theo-political status of the Golden Temple was an integral part of their grand national project of regaining liberty of the people and the freedom of India.

In November 1760, the Sikhs again assembled before the *Akal Takht*, at the Golden Temple and declaring themselves as the *Sarbat Khalsa*, a Sikh theo-political doctrine, by which the Sikhs assume the powers and status of the centralised conscience and will of the people, resolved to take possession of Lahore, the seat of the Punjab Government, a project delayed somewhat by the fifth invasion of the Abdali, in the same year.

Sikhs rescue Hindu women from hordes of Abdali

Abdali crushed the Marathas as an all-India power in the historic battle of Panipat, fought on January 14, 1761, but when the victorious invader was returning to Afghanistan, the Sikh chiefs again assembled at the Golden Temple and resolved to take all possible measures to rescue the Hindu and Maratha young women being carried away as war "booty" by the Afghans. In pursuance of this resolution, the Sikhs made a determined attack on the rear of the foreigners at the Goindwal ferry crossings of River Beas and rescued over two thousand young women from the clutches of the Abdali and made arrangements to return them to their original homes (James Browne, *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sikhs*, London, 1778, p.11,22).

This process of rescuing young women the Sikhs followed till the invader crossed the River Jhelum and this whole campaign was considered, resolved upon and sustained from the Golden Temple and its precincts.

Abdali's vengeance on Sikhs

In 1762, Abdali returned to India on his sixth invasion, with the specific object of liquidating the Sikhs completely and finally of destroying their cultural and spiritual roots and of extirpating their very memory from the minds of the people, so that there remained thereafter, no power in India cherishing the temerity of exposing him. In a lightning attack, this greatest of generals that Asia had produced, the Abdali put to sword a large portion of the unarmed Sikh people, men, women and children, over thirty thousand of them, near Ludhiana, took possession of the two original volumes of the holy *Granth*s, prepared by Nanak V and Nanak X, and then proceeded to complete his task by blowing up the Golden Temple with gun

powder, destroyed its other adjuncts, and filled the holy lake, after desecrating it "with the blood of cows". (*A Short History of the Sikhs. Op.cit.p.1, 171*). The Abdali, knowing full well the theo-political significance of the Golden Temple, had these operations carried out under his personal supervision, as a consequence of which he was wounded on the nose by a flying brick-piece on April 10, 1762, which wound remained a festering incurable sore till he died of it, on October 16, 1772, at Toba Maruf in the Suleiman hills of Afghanistan.

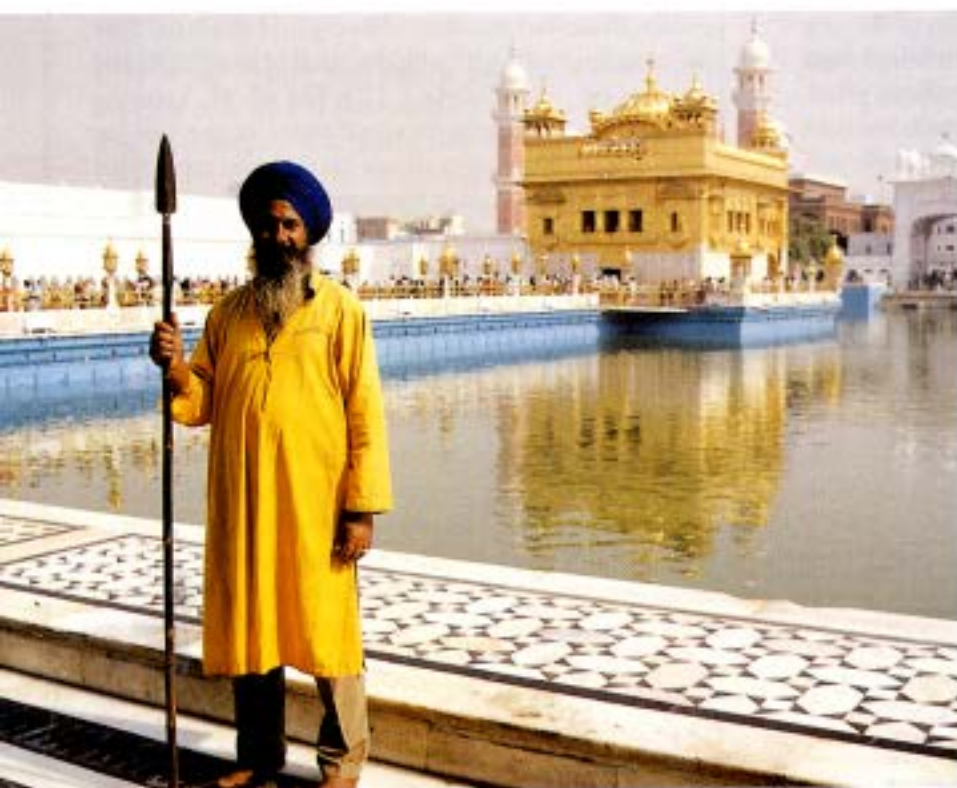
The Abdali, however, had stayed in the Punjab throughout the year, 1762. On October 17, 1762, more than sixty thousand Sikhs assembled at the ruins of the Golden Temple to challenge and chastise the Abdali for the arrogant sacrilege he had committed. Offers of peace and negotiations made by the Abdali were contemptuously and summarily rejected by the Sikhs after which they inflicted a signal defeat on him and forced him to retire towards Lahore; thus the Sikhs sought to vindicate theo-political status of the Golden Temple. Charat Singh, the grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, was then placed in charge of restoring and rebuilding the Golden Temple and its holy lake.

It was on April 10, 1763, when the Sikhs as usual, had assembled at the Golden Temple in their bi-annual concourse that,

"Some brahmins of Kasur came and complained against the Afghan inhabitants of their city, especially against the grandee Uthman Khan, who had forcibly carried away the wife of one of them and converted her to Islam. Hari Singh Bhangi volunteered to help the aggrieved brahmins, and being supported by Charat Singh, after making a theo-political resolution, gurmata, led an expedition against Kasur. Uthman Khan with five hundred of his men were killed and the brahmin lady was restored to her husband". (Ghulam Mohayudin, *Twarikhi Punjab*, Persian Ms. (1848); also a *Short History of the Sikhs, op. cit.p. 1, 174*).

In October 1764 Ahmad Shah Abdali, invaded India for the seventh time, and on December 1, 1764, he paid a military visit to the Golden Temple to satisfy himself that the Sikhs no longer used this spot for "political activities". He found thirty Sikhs standing guard at the entrance gate of the Golden Temple, under the captaincy of *Jathedar* Gurbakhsh Singh, whose mausoleum still stands behind the *Akal Takht*, "They were only thirty in number, but they had not a grain of fear about them They were resolved to sacrifice their lives for the Guru", tells us the Muslim eye-witness, the author of *Jangnameh*, (1766) (page 100).

On April 10, 1765, after the return of the Afghan



invader, the Sikhs again assembled at the Golden Temple and took the political decision to occupy Lahore, as the seat of the Government of the Punjab and from that day till 1850, the Golden Temple and the Government of the Punjab with its other territories, remained under the sovereign dominion of the Sikhs. The Golden Temple and its adjuncts, even during the Sikh Raj, retained their theo-political autonomy and the writ of the Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not run within its precincts.

British device of managing the Golden Temple

In 1850, the British, now masters of the Punjab took over the Golden Temple and its adjuncts under their direct administrative control and till the conclusion of the First World War, its theo-political status was maintained and superficially respected through a fiction and a device, into which the Sikhs willy nilly acquiesced, after their failure to dislodge the British in more than one attempt. The approach, assiduously cultivated, was that the British were the allies of the Khalsa, having come to Asia in fulfilment of a prophecy of the Guru, to prepare ground for the eventual victory of the great cause of Sikhism, that of fostering a world-culture and establishing a universal society. The device was of managing the ceremonial and services of the Golden Temple and its adjuncts through a Government appointed Sikh manager, a kind of arrangement which the British rulers of India seemed to aim at but without the accompanying function. This arrangement broke down when at the time of Jallianwala massacre in 1919, the British made the mistake of seeking to use the theo-political status of the Golden Temple in approval of the action of General Dyer. The Sikhs rose as a body against this non Sikh-like subversion of the true status of the Golden Temple and the Akali movement into which this Sikh resentment took shape, eventually succeeded in wresting the possession and management of the Golden Temple

from out of the British hands, who by statute passed in 1927, handed over not only the Golden Temple, but also other Sikh historical shrines in the Punjab to a democratically elected body of the Sikhs, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), and this Committee still retains its rights and privileges, thus won.

Throughout the remaining British period, till 1947, the Sikhs zealously guarded the theo-political status of the Golden Temple and throughout, never hesitated to assert their right to use it and its precincts for the integrated Sikh activities of a theo-political character. Those into whose hands has now passed the power of running the Government of India, not only upheld this right of the Sikhs so to use the Golden Temple, but they have, on numerous occasions, themselves so-employed these precincts.

When in 1921 the British India Government, through their official representative, handed over the keys of the Golden Temple to Baba Kharak Singh, the veteran Sikh leader, Mahatma Gandhi sent him the following telegram:

"Congratulations. The first decisive battle of Indian freedom has been won".

Mahatma Gandhi well knew not only all about the theo-political status of the Golden Temple, but also knew and recognised that it was the centre of a world-movement for a universal culture and a united world-government, thus it was basically integrated to the *weltanschauung* of Indian freedom, however, which later he refused to consider as a mere national independence from foreign rule.

Indian Government's umbrage

It was only after 1947, that these politicians and men in power took umbrage at the Sikhs desire to continue in enjoyment of their basic and historic rights pertaining to the true status of the Golden Temple and as their repeated attempts to obtain control of the Golden Temple and other Sikh shrines, through their party men, the Congressite Sikhs, have been on every occasion, foiled by a wide-awake and resentful Sikh electorate, their anger and their objections against the Sikhs taking the true theo-political status of the Golden Temple seriously, having mounted. It is now asserted that the Sikhs, in some way, transgressed against the Holy Ghost and acted treasonably, by employing the Golden Temple and its precincts for the purpose, for which they have always been employed and for which they were intended from the very beginning. A grievance is loudly made out that the Sikhs, that is, such Sikhs who do not fall in line with the ruling party, mix up the profane with the sacred and thus injure the interests of the Sikh religion, about which their own solicitude is claimed to be greater than of the Sikhs themselves. Be that as it may, it must be granted that the claims that the Sikhs made and the practices in which they indulge have no element of novelty in them, for they are in accord with their past history and traditions, their beliefs and their doctrines, and therein, they are neither guilty of insubordination nor recalcitrance in relation to those who today yield the power of state and if they displease and irritate, the fault lies not in their present temper or understanding but in their spiritual constitution and historical psychomental makeup and that for which no individual is responsible, no individual can be blamed in fairness.

What is the third reason, the psychopethic and historical besides, which accounts for the present Sikh problem, which is again and again concretised around the theo-political status of the Golden Temple?

It has been said earlier that this arises out of the peculiar doctrinal position of the Sikhs, out of which this theo-political status of the Golden Temple stems. This doctrinal position must eventually be traced to their view of the ultimate reality and the way it has been interpreted in relation to the historical process through which the Sikh movement has passed. Sikhism does not recognise any ultimate dichotomy between the real and the unreal and hence between the sacred and the profane, through it recognises a distinction between them, difference of immaculation between them.

"God is real and all that He createth is likewise real,

and there is naught but that He createth it". (*Guru Granth, Gauri, Sukhmani, V.23.5*).

Sikhism, therefore, enjoins that a religious life must be lived and practised in the socio-political activity: "Know this through an understanding of the Word of the Guru" (*Ibid, kanre-ki-var, III*). It is from these premises that the validity of the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Golden Temple, where nothing but the praise of God and meditation upon Him may be made, conjoined to the *Akal Takht*, where the highest and the most hazardous political deliberations and decisions are frequently taken, arises. This ideological base then animates the peculiar metaligal constitution which Guru Gobind Singh finally gave to the Sikh society:

"Previously, the ultimate authority had rested with the Guru Guru Gobind Singh, however, had abolished the personal Guruship and had vested it in the holy *Granth* to be administered by the *Khalsa*.... The essential features of this central authority were that it was to be one and that it was to be exercised impersonally". (*A Short History of the Sikhs, co.cit., p1, 110-111*).

The Way We are

From this it follows that (1) the Sikhs, wherever they happen to be in any appreciable numbers, have a right to be dealt with as a civic group and any attempt to atomise this group for exercise of political power over them, constitutes an infringement of this right. The postulate behind this saw of Sikh social constitution is that on the socio-political level, the significant unit is the group rather than the individual, for, it is the group which lays down norms of conduct for the individual (2) Political subjugation or slavery is incompatible with the basic constitution of Sikh society (3) It is the implied right of the Sikhs to assemble freely, as such, to consider and deliberate upon any matters, that they may deem as vital to their interests, irrespective of whether these matters are of this world or of the other and (4) the Golden Temple, and by analogy, the other Sikh places of worship, have a theo-political status which is not a matter of concession by a political state, but is a right, *sui generis*.

These are the four socio-political doctrines which are implicit in the Sikh way of life and it is these doctrines which impel a Sikh and the Sikhs to abhor personal rule or group domination.

George Forester in his book, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, London, 1798, p. 294-95 writes: "From the observations that I have made of the Sicques they would appear to be a haughty and high-spirited people. Once I travelled in the company of a Sicque horseman for some



Sarbat Khalsa below the Akal Takht.

days, and though I made to him several tenders of my acquaintance, he treated them all with great reserve and a covert sort of disdain. There was no reason to be particularly offended by this hauteur towards me, for he regarded every other person in the same manner. His answer, when I asked him very respectfully, in whose service he was retained, seemed strikingly characteristic of what I conceive to be the disposition of the Sikh Nation. He said in a tone of voice and with a countenance which glowed with and was keenly animated by the Spirit of liberty and independence, that he disclaimed an earthly master, and that he was a servant of only the Guru on High".

In the Sikh attitudes and the Sikh temper, which apparently irritate and anger those who have now come into power, it is well to perceive that the Sikhs are doing nothing merely to obstruct somebody's enjoyment of power. They are made the way they are and they act the way they have always acted and whether they are to be understood and accommodated or mended and bent, their

position should be comprehended clearly, without obscuring prejudices. If the Sikh masses are used by individuals for ulterior purposes, the individuals do so by paying in service to the convictions that the Sikhs hold dear and if they resentfully and doggedly have refused to lend ear to others, it is because the others, through willfulness or ignorance, have failed to take note of these convictions.

In a democratic society, such as that of the India of today, the Sikhs need not encounter any contradictions between their own collective convictions and the requirements of the state to which they owe allegiance. If, therefore, there are frictions, the fault must be found somewhere in the sphere of implementation of true democratic processes and the persons who implement them. A satisfied and properly integrated-to-the-nation Sikh people can be invaluable and lasting asset to any state, more so to India in the soil and traditions of which they are rooted, just as a frustrated or suppressed Sikh people can be an obvious weakness in the strength of the nation.

Sirdar Kapur Singh

December 16, 2001 marked the birth centenary of a multi-faceted personality, Sardar Gian Singh Rarewala, the first Chief Minister of Punjab after the traumatic partition of August 1947. Soft spoken and suave, a gentleman and aristocrat, Sardar Gian Singh provided the key leadership at a time when millions of refugees had to be resettled, the State had lost its capital city as also the rich and flourishing canal colonies in Western Punjab.

The Nishaan is privileged to have been associated with the function in honour at "The Imperial" at New Delhi, an institution whose chief executive S. Jasdev Singh, is his grandson.

Born on December 16, 1901, in the Rara village, a descendant of Ratan Singh Bhangu, the author of Panth Prakash, Gian Singh had studied in Patiala, graduated from Mahindra College and joined the judicial service of the Patiala State and soon rose to become a judge of the Patiala State High Court. He also served as a Revenue Commissioner and Revenue Minister of the state and was Prime Minister of Patiala during the most crucial period (1946-47) and was both Prime Minister and Chief Minister of Pepsu (Patiala and East Punjab States Union) et al.

More than the positions he held, his most significant contribution was the crucial role he played in raising the key status of Punjabi as a major language.

During his tenure as Deputy Commissioner, Patiala, and President of the Singh Sabha in 1944, he invited Maharaja Yadavindra Singh to the Singh Sabha and requested him to adopt Punjabi as the official language of the state.

The Maharaja declared that he would do so and Gian Singh took a scant ten months preparation to make Punjabi a state language, to make it the medium of instruction, the administrative language, and the judicial language along with English, which proved to be the beginning that allowed more work to be done in promoting Punjabi.

Even as Prime Minister of Pepsu, Gian Singh kept the departments of Punjabi and Backward Classes under his charge. Being in-charge of Finance, he presented the Pepsu Budget of 1948-49 and 1949-50 in Punjabi. It was distributed on cyclostyled sheets because it could not be printed properly at that time. More than 600 new terms were coined



in Punjabi for the Budget.

As much as Rs.3 lakh were allocated to the Punjabi Department to develop and print textbooks and other necessary publications. An order of Rs. 1 lakh was placed with the Remington typewriter company to develop and deliver Punjabi typewriters. Special efforts were made to introduce Punjabi stenography for official use. Instructions were sent out to use Punjabi as the official language of communications in all state departments.

This zeal for developing and spreading Punjabi had become a passion of his life. Gian Singh came up with the principal of geographical contiguity for determining the language of the area rather than religion through a circular of the Education Department on August 24, 1949. This is what we call the Pepsu Formula, seen as a precursor of the Regional Formula adopted later.

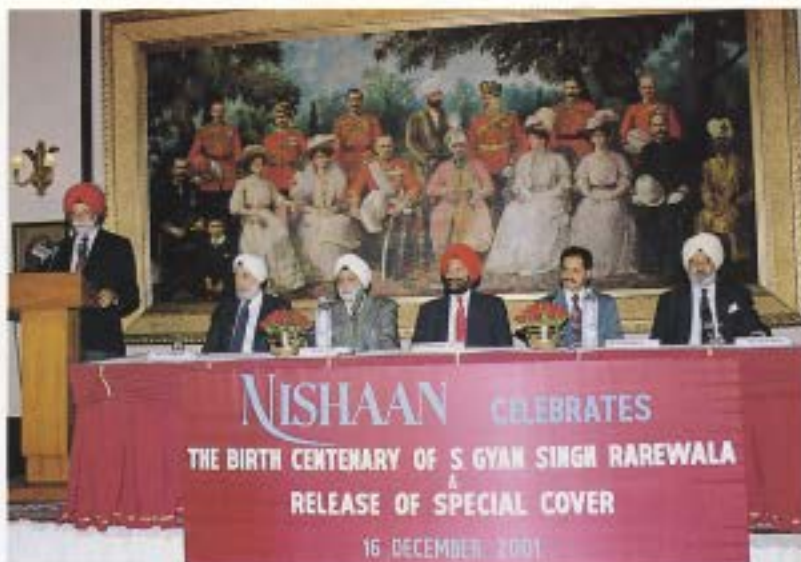
Gian Singh implemented the Pepsu Formula with the active support of the then Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel and Secretary of States, V.P. Menon, which precluded any kind of opposition or ill-conceived agitation that so bedevilled the implementation of Punjabi as the state language in Punjab.

On July 15, 1948, Pepsu was formed. It was headed by Maharaja Yadavindra Singh, who was the Rajpramukh and Maharaja Jagatjit Singh of Kapurthala, who was the Deputy Rajpramukh. Pepsu itself comprised the then princely states of Patiala, Nabha, Kapurthala, Faridkot, Jind, Malerkotla, Nalagarh and Kalsia plus the mountainous areas of Kasauli and the Simla Hills.

Kandaghat, Dharampur and Chail were also part of Pepsu. Gian Singh served as Pepsu's Premier from November 1949, to May 1951. This was while he was still in the service of Patiala state. Later, he joined active politics and contested in the 1951 polls. He was elected to the Pepsu Assembly from Payal constituency as an independent candidate. Heading the United Front Ministry, he became the first non-Congress Chief Minister of any state and also played a significant role in the successful experiment in coalition politics.

He was Chief Minister of Pepsu from April 1952 to March 1953, when President's rule was imposed and his Government was dismissed. During this period, he showed his mettle by providing leadership, political as well as administrative, to the people, though a non-Congress Government was obviously an irritant to the Centre. Following midterm polls, he could not form a Government and became Leader of the Opposition in 1954.

Gian Singh had been nominated member of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) for a long time and he became president of the SGPC in 1955. During the time, a morcha for Punjabi Suba was observed as a protest against the entry of police personnel into the Golden Temple complex and most of the Akali leaders had courted arrest. He, too, had gone to court arrest, though his presence acted as a catalyst and the Government gave in to the demands of the protesters and lifted the orders banning assembly of people and shouting of slogans. In 1956, he and five others, including Master Tara Singh, signed an agreement with Jawaharlal Nehru, giving birth to the Regional Formula (of giving weightage to the language spoken in a region).



At "The Imperial" on 16 December 2001.



S. Tarlochan Singh, Vice Chairman Minorities Commission releasing the special cover.



S. Jasdev Singh presenting lithographs to Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki, who gave the keynote address.



A range of rare photographs of the personalities of that era on display.

After the merger of Pepsu with Punjab, the man who had resisted various inducements to join the Congress became its member in 1956. He was elected to the Punjab Assembly in 1957 on a Congress ticket. He became Irrigation Minister in the Partap Singh Kairon Cabinet.

Gian Singh was elected to the state Assembly in 1962 but was not inducted in the Kairon Cabinet. He won the 1967 election as well. He left the Congress (reportedly because of differences with Morarji Desai) and joined the Akali Dal in 1969, an association which he continued till his passing on December 31, 1979.

Besides his contribution to the Punjabi language, Gian Singh is also remembered for the crucial role he played as Deputy Commissioner, Patiala in building a new complex for Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib in Patiala, which reportedly earned him the wrath of the powers that be who transferred him to Narnaul, then a back-of-beyond place, where too he proved to be an effective administrator.

He was also a representative of Patiala in the Constituent Assembly of India which he joined on April 28, 1947. It was during this time that a lot was happening in the region and Gian Singh was in the thick of it, especially in rehabilitating refugees in Patiala. In this he was ably assisted by his wife Manmohan Kaur as well as a band of dedicated volunteers from various aristocratic families and common people and the state machinery. Among the people he worked closely with were Giani Gurdit Singh, President Guru Granth Vidya Kendra, Raja Narinder Singh, Health Minister, Punjab, and S.Tarlochan Singh, Vice-Chairman, Minorities Commission. He made Patiala the host of many prominent migrants, especially educationists, whom he actively sought and helped. They included Principal Teja Singh, Prof. Ganda Singh historian, Baba Prem Singh Hotimardan, Dr. Benarsi Das, Pandit Kartar Singh Dakha and Kirpal Singh Bedar. All were given homes and honourable positions in Patiala.



The distinguished audience at "The Imperial".



For many the role that he played in planning a Punjabi University and setting up the Punjab Agriculture University, Ludhiana, is memorable. For others, it was building a team of eminent people including Justice Teja Singh, Chief Justice, Sardar Bahadur Mohan Singh Rawalpindi, Chairman, Public Service Commission; Mohan Singh, Managing Director, Bank of Patiala; and Baldev Singh, Deputy Commissioner, Patiala who all contributed to the development of the region.

Gian Singh Rarewala left an impact wherever he was. In fact, many contemporaries vividly recall his sartorial elegance and the handsomeness. He spent the first 26 years of his life in an aristocratic environment, enjoying life and studying. He was an administrator for 20 years, he spent 20 years in politics where he served as Chief Minister of Pepsu and Irrigation as well as Power Minister. The last 12 years of his life were spent in retirement. Most of this time he was in the company of his daughter, Nirlep Kaur, who had also been active in politics and was an MP. He was always the epitome of a gentleman-aristocrat, whose administrative skills and integrity are fondly recalled.

A Mesmerising



The world is a collage of different cultures, religions and faiths. In abundance in the East, these things become scarier as we go West.

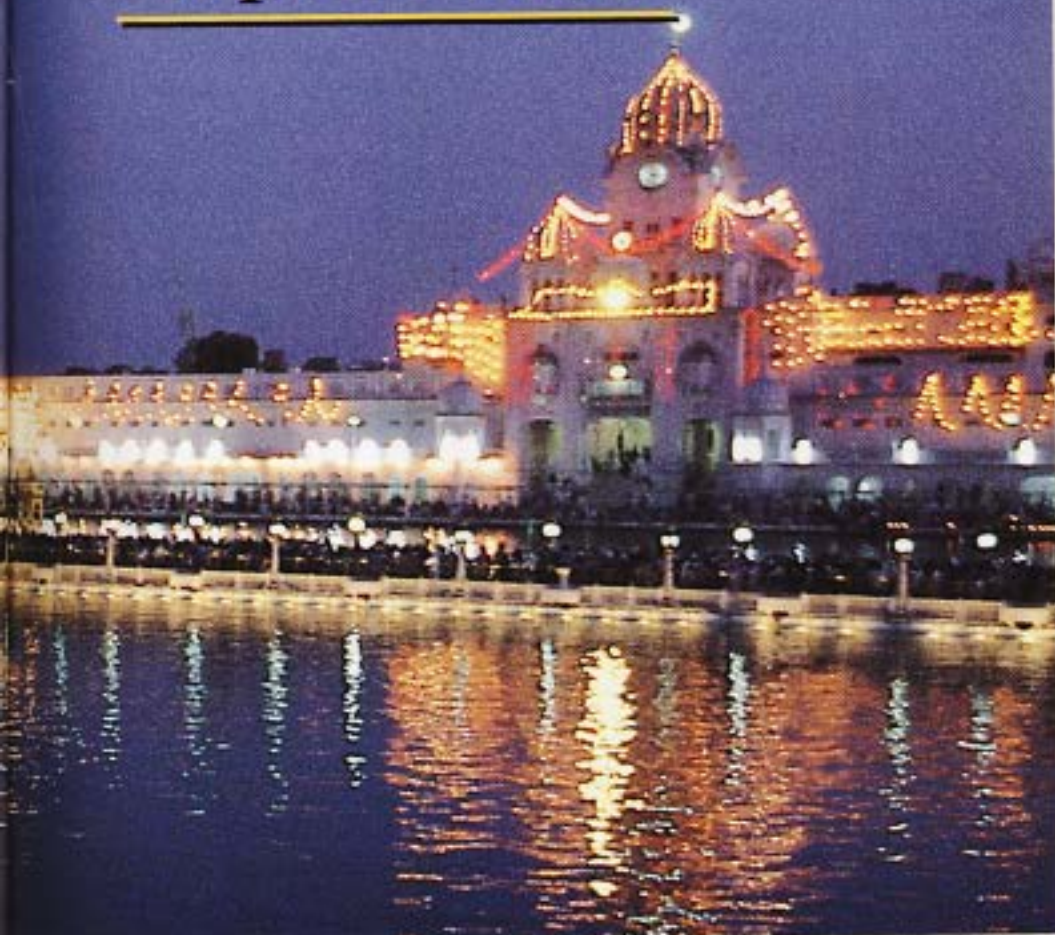
Dr. Sue, who has spent his life time in the West was on a visit to Ludhiana. His views were obviously westernised and, as a result, he saw a lot of cultural irregularities in India. "You Indians sleep more than you work, waste more time in prayers and seeking a god who does not exist. If you work more and pray less, you will accomplish more. If the same money is spent on the education and welfare of the people, it will be more fruitful", he would loftily pronounce.

Being a total Indian and completely Easternised, I saw nothing which he termed "irregular". I was frank enough to tell him that our every breath is devoted to God and our faith in Him is firm and He exists. He exists in our body – in each living thing. "As a doctor I have experienced God from very close quarters though I have not seen Him", I told him. He did not seem to understand.

We planned a visit to Amritsar to show him some historical places and, above all, the Golden Temple. I suggested that we should go to the Golden Temple early, before dawn, and see how the day began there. I told Dr Sue that we should be ready to leave at 3 a.m. He was flabbergasted: "Don't you Indians sleep"? asked my honourable guest.

As per our plan, we were at the gate of the Golden Temple at 3.15 a.m. He seemed a bit sleepy but nevertheless eager to see what it was all about. As we put our first step inside the Golden Temple, a very bright and golden flash dazzled our

Experience



Picture by Deidi von Schueven

the architectural beauty. I told him to hurry so that we did not miss the main event – the beginning of the dawn.

As we entered the *sanctum sanctorum*, I explained that “kirtan continues nonstop and prayers are for everybody’s well being. The sacred book is considered as our Guru and contains answers to all our problems.” I told him that I would not be able to explain things to him simultaneously as talking was not allowed inside. He should observe everything and discuss all later.

As we stepped into the main *sanctum sanctorum*, there was hardly any place to even stand. We wanted to come out but our host, a regular visitor, advised patience and made a small space, enough to stand on one foot. Both of us got a few inches space but our zeal and determination to see the proceedings gave us new strength.

Exactly at 4 a.m., the flower-bedecked Palki Sahib was brought out, and there were people singing religious hymns. Within minutes the sacred book was brought in, to be kept at the appointed place. The whole atmosphere was surcharged with a unique feeling, impossible to express. “*Hum avgun bhare – ek gun nahi*”, came from the hearts of the people standing there. There seemed no artificiality. We were in another world. I looked at my friend’s face. His face was red and tears were flowing from his eyes. I shook him and asked, “Are you O.K.?” He said, *Wahe Guru*.

“Thank you, doctor. You have shown me God”!

Iqbal Singh Ahuja

eyes; for a while I was also stunned and spellbound. Even I had never experienced such a sight before.

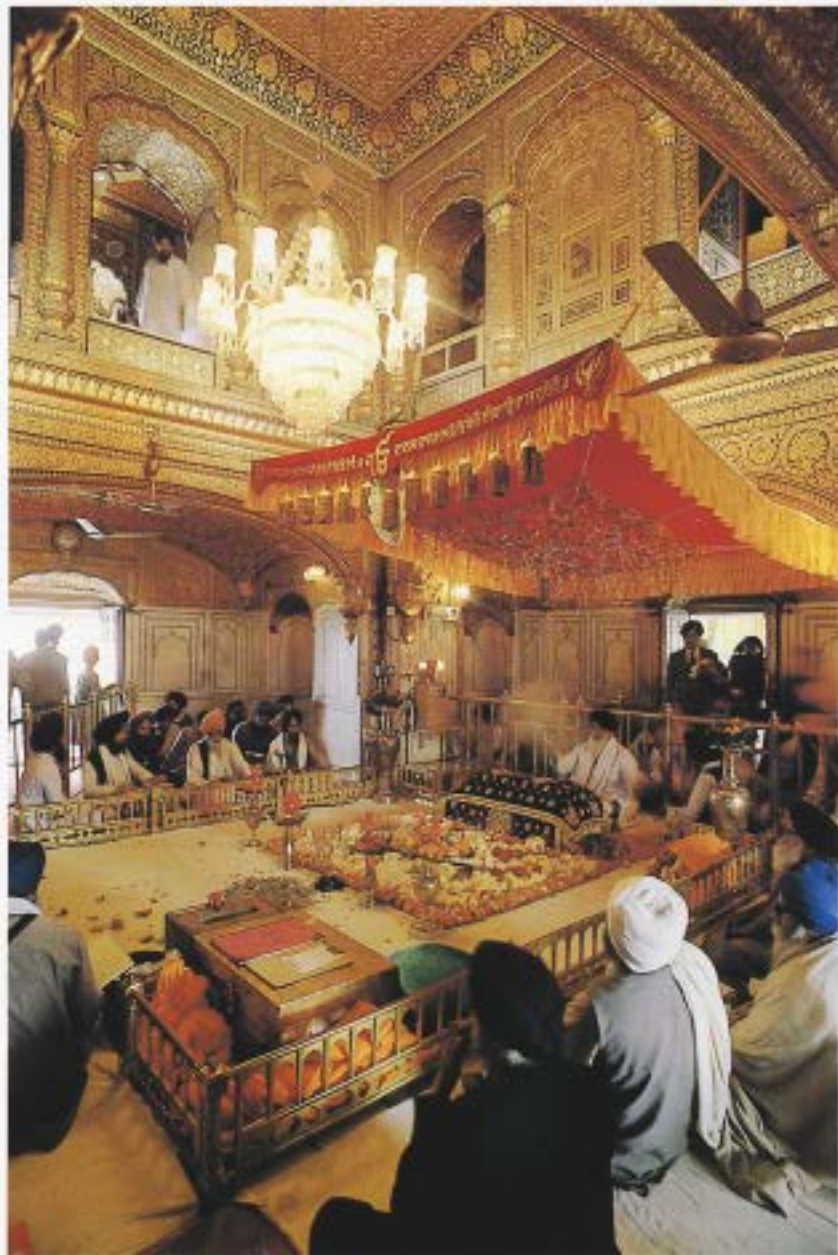
As we entered the parikarma and bowed our heads with respect, the Golden Temple – brilliantly lit, with lights splashing across the gold visage in the middle of a serene and pious sarovar – was in front of us. My friend, Dr. Sue, was not ready to move a step further. He stood still, like a statue and was staring without even a blink.

“I have never seen such a beautiful sight in my life”, said my guest.

As we walked around the the parikarma, he was taking in every observation: “This parikarma has got four gates, or entry points. This signifies that the Golden Temple belongs to all communities irrespective of caste or creed. Even the sacred book – our Holy Guru Granth Sahib – contains hymns from all the saints whether Hindu or Muslim”, I explained to my friend.

I could feel that my westernised friend was being remoulded. He muttered, “there is nothing more serene and heavenly in this world”. I wanted to take him to the central *sanctum sanctorum*. He was enjoying each step on the parikarma and loving

Painting and Prayer



A note on hieratic pictorial art under the Sikhs

One of the primary needs of man, in any civilisation, has been for shelter and its protection by magical symbols.

From very early times, the cave, the mud-hut, the house, was considered to be a tenancy at will given by God to a family for a life span. And it was lived in, subject to the blessings of the Gods, by appeasement of the demons, and by exalting it to the status of a shrine.

Thus the family ennobled the everyday life by chanting prayers, cleaning the house, redecorating it with symbols, and continuously reviving the circadian rhythm of the body-soul by the exercise of energies.

In fact, the existentialist idea of tenancy on earth within the Maya (the illusory) world, away from God, made for tensions which could only be resolved partly by a visit to the community temple and partly through acts which might uplift one from the torpor and ennui of dailiness, in the midst of a fragmented life, to some communion, however dimly realised, with the One.

In this sense, a painting on the top panel of the doorway, the threshold, or the wall, with the sacred swastika, the open hand, the tree of life, the flowers, the sun, the moon and stars, was an accepted part of the ritual through which people sustained their intimate personal relations with the cosmos.

It was not strange, therefore, that, when Amritsar grew from a village to a town and then a city and first, mud-huts, then brick houses, and later havelis for the rich were built, the inhabitants would either do the ritual paintings on the walls themselves, or get craftsmen to do the floral decorations, and the richer patrons involved skilled artisans to do wall paintings, after they had carved wooden doorways and windows or embossed them with brass, silver or gold.

The more primitivist drawings and paintings were those in which the females of the households outlined the symbols of nature, fertility and cosmic consciousness.

Floral, animal and human forms, painted by the craftsmen, embodied the traditional sense of the terrors of existence and the unravelling of the mystery of nature. The highly skilled artisans, patronised by the rich, rendered the traditional myths and legends of the gods, saints and heroes.

All these expressions remained undercurrents from which mundane life was often heightened, in bright colours, challenging forms or gracious visions, in the tradition of folk art ever surviving in the labyrinths of the racial unconscious.

Most foreign and Western educated critics base their appreciation of Indian art on the notion of the classical art of the great courts of Europe or the fine art of the middle sections. They do not believe that in every part of India wall paintings preceded, or were parallel with, miniature paintings on bark or palm-leaf or paper.

We must then trace the sources of the more subtle and free expressions of the court painters, say of the Pahari areas, to the swiftly executed bold and naive creations of ordinary men and women. As already suggested, the symbolic drawing was integral for the protection of the house, indispensable decor for the heightening of the

everyday life, to be brooded upon in odd moments, till it was recreated before the eyes of the beholder as a reminder of the need for a 'reversal' of one's being.

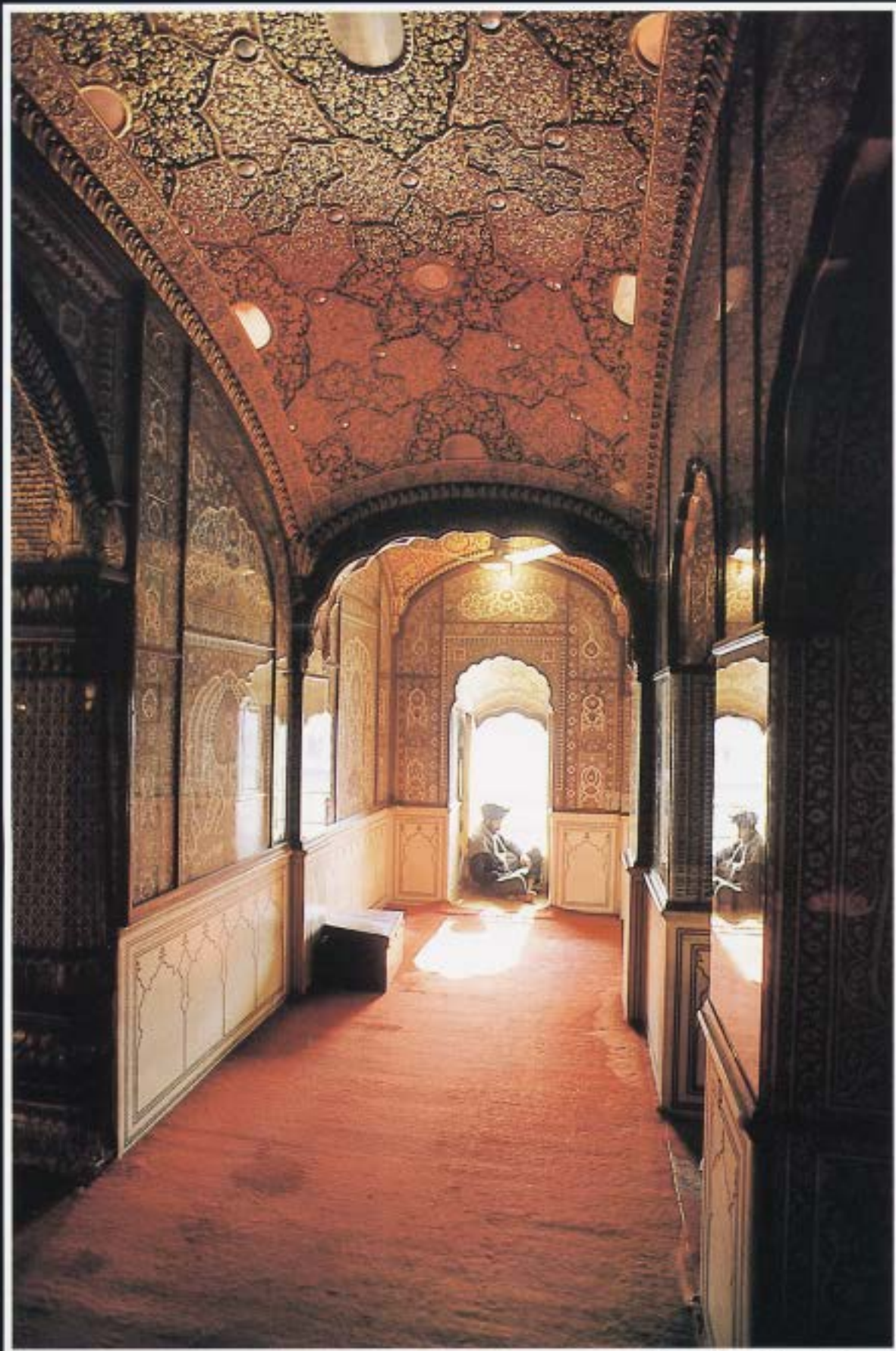
We can only speculate what creative arts flourished in Amritsar from the sixteenth century onwards. Ostensibly, a small village settlement had grown by the "pool of nectar", near the abode of Guru Amar Das.

The Sikh faith, as preached by Guru Nanak, had been against the worship of idols. Guru Nanak himself deprecated glorifications of his person. All the same, as the features of the saint, specially in old age, with a moon face and round white beard, a tight turban on his head, have continued to appear, in a stylised form, for four hundred years, it is likely that his features had been drawn by some devotee towards the end of his life, as also the figures of his two constant companions, Bhai Mardana and Bhai Bala. Later, the stories, fables and myths of Guru Nanak's wandering life became popular among the folk, because his teaching was by the example of his doings. And it is possible that some craftsmen among the lay followers began to illustrate these legends. The primitivist character of most of the Janam Sakhis which have come down from the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century, except for the finely drawn Pahari drawings in the Chandigarh Museum, is witness to the prevalence of a folk art in the service of the Sikh faith. The Hindu merchants, divines and priests, who built shrines for their own worship brought images of Rama, Sita, Hanuman, Krishna and Siva for their ritual.

The surviving decorations of the same period show that the floral designs of the Muslim craftsmen, already visible at the end of the sixteenth century on the walls of the caravanserai of Najm-ud-din, seem to have entered the repertory of artisans employed to carry out the wall paintings in the Hari Mandir.

There is not much evidence to prove anything more than this resemblance of the decorative art of the Mughals and the Sikhs. But it is likely that the taste for opulence in architecture and decor of Shah Jehan's time had become legendary among the peoples of northern India; and, though the Sikhs were resisting the inroads of Mughal authority on their lives, they emulated the example, in their own humble way, of the splendorous court of Agra and Delhi.

The impress of the Imperial style had certainly spread, specially after Aurangzeb, to the feudal states all over India, as the craftsmen drifted to minor courts through the Emperor's rigid anti-hedonism. In this way, the Mughal rhythms, based on geometrical proportions, the use of



(Picture by Deidi von Schaeven)

marble for purity of feeling, the light and shade effects, and abstract design, had come to be accepted for all palatial structures. The pigeon-houses of Rajasthan, the Bengali village tapering roof for chattris brought by Raja Man Singh, and the synthesis achieved by Sawai Jai Singh in the planned city of Jaipur were now part of the repertory of the craftsmen of northern India.

Culture as 'cultivation of the soil of life', through the builder-worshipper participation in the traditional communities, was already current from the time of the pujapath with flowers and lighting wick lamps and burning incense, through all periods. The highest reaches of artistic skill could not be attained without liberal donations beyond the cotton purses of the peasant pilgrims. But there is no doubt that the illiterate mass was educated in the psalms of god and could pay for certain holy images and forms in brass, wood, stone, plaster, clay or on cloth. Thus became possible the ritualistic embossings, drawings and paintings, which could concretise the 'Nam' and other holy images.

And when, after generations of bitter struggle, the muscular genius of Maharaja Ranjit Singh brought the various Sikh *misls* together, and he made Amritsar the spiritual capital of his hard won Empire, his largesse made it possible to patronise the accomplished craftsmen from various parts of his own kingdom, as well as Rajasthan and the Pahari courts. These artisans were to re-define the folk symbols, images and legends, into the 'mainstream' sustained by the hill chiefs.

This patronage lasted only for a generation and could not, for lack of time, achieve an important Sikh miniature painting style like that which the sons and grandsons of Pandit Seu had captured in Jammu, Guler, Kangra, Chamba, Sujampur Tira, Nadaun, Lumbargaon and elsewhere.

If we do not look into Amritsar for those finished court paintings, celebrating the loves of Krishna and Radha, but accept the kind of intimate ritual art, then we will find that the talents of the Sikh, Hindu and Muslim craftsmen were able to extend the consciousness of the people with the new dynamic culture of the ten Gurus, in certain chosen spaces on the wall of Sikh shrines, akharas and Hindu temples, silent colour areas which are part of the flow of Indian culture.

The parallel for the icons, the group images, the portraits, animals and flowers on the walls and the surviving embossed reliefs and other pictures, is rather with early Buddhist art in Bharhut and Sanchi or with the early Christian art of Europe, than with the works of the

near-secular tradition worked out by the Pahari painters from the hangovers of Vaishnava inspiration, worked into miniatures in the hills under the influence of the delicate lines and pastel colours and acute awareness of figurative forms of the Mughal kalam. It is the inspiration of 'loving kindness' in the face of Guru Nanak that we have to see. It is the burning light in the vibrant visage of Guru Gobind Singh that comes through, in spite of the corrosion of time. It is the innocence of children in the school scene in Baba Atal, where we can sense the beginning of evolution of 'awareness'. There is a scene of Vishnu in his incarnation as half horse-half man destroying the demon Hayagriva, which must have filled the eyes of devotees with terror. The scene in the Akhara Bala Nand, of Draupadi being unveiled by the Kurus, must have reminded the folk of the angers of the internecine wars of the clans. There is the vital drawing of Siva and Parvati on a wall in a temple near Bazar Machina, obviously an idyll of the creator won over by the goddess after long penances. There are the holy men in meditation to make the folk aware that too much attachment to the earth and its 'dailiness' is not the way. The sprouting of flowers and plants and trees are evidences to the distillation of Guru Nanak's teaching that everything in life moves. The suns, the moons and the stars in the paintings on the walls of havelis related the beholders from inside the big houses to the cosmos itself.

The noblemen had enacted scenes of battles, showing heroic Sikh warriors fighting against the *Ferungis*. And, after the visits of Emily Eden, sister of Governor-General Lord Auckland, to Amritsar, the rumours of the three dimensional perspective of the European pictures had spread among the craftsmen. So the bazar paintings, in bold contours, and crude lithographs in books, as well as woodcuts, began to be executed, according to the new 'fashun'. And the firm line of the drawings of craftsmen shows that there was no dearth of talent for absorbing the European sense of line and form into the indigenous idiom. The vitalities of the folk were perennial and have continued to refurbish the demands of the towns, even though the craftsmen lost their inherited perspectives.

Our empathy for these images has to come from absorbing Guru Nanak's emphasis on change and evolution in life, which he shared with the Sufi saints, and the insistence on cultivating depth through work as prayer.

The 'cultivation of the soil' in Sikh thought is intended to dispel ignorance. The face of holy men and saints and sages were worshipped, as expressive of understanding which may inspire mercy.

The images always emerge as simplified primitivist forms, where the intense passion of piety may be recognised.

ART AND ARCHITECTURE OF THE GOLDEN TEMPLE



An early engraving of the Darbar Sahib.

The study of the art and architecture of the Golden Temple has, unfortunately, remained a subject of unconcern for art historians and critics. Even scholars of Indian temple architecture have bypassed it and references, whenever made, were mere courtesies. Fergusson considered the Golden Temple an example of the forms which Hindu temple architecture assumed in the nineteenth century. According to the official list of buildings of interest, published by the Punjab Government in 1875, the design of the temple, as reconstructed by Ranjit Singh, was borrowed from the shrine of Saint Mian Mir, near Lahore. Louis Rousselet, writing in 1882, regarded it as a "handsome style of architecture". Major Cole described it as an adaptation of Mohammadan styles, flavoured with a good deal of Hindu tradition. Percy Brown considered it to be a product of the synthesis of Hindu and Muslim influences, combined with elaborations that imparted it an appearance of its own. In the opinion of Hermann Goetz, Kangra transformation of Oudh architecture was taken

over by the Sikhs and evolved into that wonderful, though occasionally gaudy, Indian 'rococo' art often seen in the gurdwaras of Punjab.

The architectural prototype of the Golden Temple came into being as an idea combining the dharamshala and the tank envisaged by Guru Arjan, the son and successor of Guru Ram Das. Instead of building the temple on a high plinth in the Hindu style, Guru Arjan had it built in a depression so that worshippers had to go down the steps in order to enter it. Also it had four entrances, symbolic of the new faith which made no distinction between the four Hindu castes. Although there is no written record or contemporary sketch giving the concept of the prototype, it appears to have been, more or less, similar to the present structure dating from 1764, with the greater part of its decoration added in the early years of the nineteenth century. The year 1764 has been ascribed by H. H. Cole in his monograph on the temple published in 1884. However,



The interior of the Darbar Sahib has brilliant mirror work surrounded by beautiful gold flower motifs. The decoration work was accomplished by Muslim artists.



in Tawarikh Sri Amritsar, published in 1889, Giani Gian Singh states that the tank, the Hari Mandir, the causeway and Darshani Deorhi were completed in 1776.

The main structure rises from the centre of the sacred pool, 150 metres square, approached by a causeway about 60 metres long. An archway on the western side of the pool opens on to the causeway, bordered with balustrades of fretted marble, and, at close intervals, there are standard lamps, their great lanterns set upon marble columns. The 52-metre square-based Hari Mandir, to which the causeway leads, stands on a 20-metre square platform. Its lower parts are of white marble, but the upper parts are covered with plates of gilded copper.

In the interior, on the ground floor, is the Guru Granth Sahib, placed under a gorgeous canopy, studded with jewels. On the second storey is a pavilion known as Shish Mahal or Mirror Room, so designed as to have a square opening in the centre to view from there the ground floor, with the further provision of a narrow circumambulatory around the square opening.

The interior of the Shish Mahal is ornamented with small pieces of mirror, of various sizes and shapes, skilfully inlaid in the ceiling, and walls richly embellished with designs, mostly floral in character.

Further above the Shish Mahal is again a small square pavilion, considerably small both at its base as well as in its elevation, surmounted by a low fluted golden dome, lined at its base with a number of smaller domes. The walls of the two lower storeys, forming parapets, terminate with several rounded pinnacles. There are four chhatris or kiosks at the corners. The combination of several dozens of large, medium and miniature domes of gilded copper create a unique and dazzling effect, enhanced by the reflection in the water below.

The typical art and architectural features of the Golden Temple can be summed up as (1) multiplicity of chhatris which ornament the parapets, angles at every prominence or projection; (2) the invariable use of fluted domes covered with gilded copper; (3) balconised windows thrown out on carved brackets or bay-windows with shallow elliptical cornices; and (4) enrichment of walls, arches and ceilings by various forms of mural art.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh repaired the principal building in 1802 A.D. This act is commemorated by an inscription over the entrance to the central shrine, which reads: *The Great Guru in His wisdom looked upon Maharaja Ranjit Singh as his chief servitor and Sikh and, in His benevolence, bestowed on him the privilege of serving the temple.*

To roof the temple with sheets of gilded copper, he donated Rs. 500,000 and the work was executed by Mistri Yar Mohammad Khan, under the supervision of Bhai Sand Singh. The first plate on the temple was fixed in 1803 A.D. The personages who donated for the embellishment of the ceiling on the ground floor included Tara Singh Gheba, Pratap Singh, Jodh Singh and Ganda Singh Peshawari, the last of whom made his contribution in 1823 A.D. The archway under the Darshani Deorhi was embellished with sheets of gilded copper by Sangat Singh, the Raja of Jind. Being the central shrine of the Sikhs, almost every sardar of any pretension contributed to its architectural and decorative additions from time to time. That is why it is not feasible, except for a few date-inscribed works, to make a chronological account of the decorations, murals or other work, in the Golden Temple.



The decorations which fall strictly in the category of mural painting are floral patterns interspersed with animal motifs. There are about 300 different patterns on the walls, which, from a distance, look like hung Persian carpets. The naqqashes, or painters, of these patterns had developed a terminology of their own to distinguish various designs. Among these the most prominent is known by the name of Dehin: a medium of expression of the imaginative study of the artist's own creation of idealised forms. Gharwanih is the base of Dehin. This is also a decorative device involving knotted grapples between animals. In the Golden Temple are seen Gharwanj showing cobras, lions and elephants clutching one another, carrying flower vases in which fruits and fairies have been depicted. Patta is a decorative border design used around the Dehin and often depicted through creepers. There are also compositions based on aquatic creatures.

The only mural depicting human figures is to be seen on the wall behind the northern narrow stairway leading to the top of the shrine, representing Guru Gobind Singh on horseback. According to the late Bhai Gian Singh Naqqash, it was painted by a Kangra artist specially commissioned by Ranjit Singh for this purpose. It is said to be a true copy of a miniature painting that originally was in the collection of Raja Sansar Chand of Kangra, which Ranjit Singh had intended to get copied in the form of a mural in the Golden Temple. Since the artist of the miniature in question had already died, the mural was executed by the painter's grandson. The name of the painter, however, is not known.

Paintings depicting mythological scenes referred to by H. H. Cole have entirely disappeared. Writing in 1878, W. Wakefield referred to erotic frescoes that covered the walls of the Golden Temple. However, in the absence of any other corroborative observation, his statement is of dubious value.





In addition to the work that falls strictly under the category of mural painting, a great volume of similar work in allied arts, loosely coming in the range of mural arts, has been done in the Golden Temple from time to time. This includes the work in embossed copper, gach, tukri, jaratkari and ivory inlay.

Most of the exterior upper portions of the walls of the Golden Temple are covered with beaten copper plates, heavily gilded. The raised decorations are mainly floral and abstract, but there are some panels representing the human figure. On the front side, for instance, are two embossed copper panels, the lower representing Guru Nanak flanked by Bala and Mardana, and the upper representing Guru Gobind Singh on horseback.

Gach, a sort of stone or gypsum, was treated to form a paste and was applied on the wall like lime. Then it was fashioned out in designs with steel cutters

and other implements. Gach work inlaid with coloured glass was known as tukri work and is to be seen in the second storey of the Shish Mahal. Jaratkari work involved the inlaying of coloured cut-stones in marble and is to be found on the lower portion of the exterior walls of the temple. In fact, the work is *pietre dure* and the inlay consists of semi-precious stones, such as lapis lazuli and onyx. The designs are Mughal in spirit, but the introduction of human figures, never shown in true Mughal decorations, reveals their Sikh origin.

The ivory inlay work is to be seen only on the doors of the Darshani Deorhi. The gate is made of shisham wood, the front overlaid with silver, the back inlaid with ivory. The silver-plated front is ornamented only with panels. At the back are square and rectangular panels with geometrical and floral designs, in which are introduced birds, lions, tigers and deer. Some of the ivory inlay is coloured green and red, the effect being, in the words of H. H. Cole, "extremely harmonious."

Most of the painters and craftsmen, who worked in various branches of mural arts and its appurtenances in the Golden Temple, remained unknown. Therefore, barring a very few works, it is almost impossible, in the present state of our knowledge, to attribute them to particular painters and craftsmen. The late Bhai Hari Singh, himself an artist, prepared a list consisting of twenty names of painters and craftsmen who worked in the Golden Temple. This list serially included the names of Baba Kishan Singh, Baba Bishan Singh, Kapur Singh, Bhai Kehar Singh, Mahant Ishar Singh, Bhai Sardul Singh, Bhai Jawahar Singh, Bhai Metab Singh, Mistri Jaimal Singh, Bhai Harnam Singh, Bhai Ishar Singh, Bhai Gian Singh, Lal Singh Tarn Taran, Bhai Mangal Singh, Mistri Narain Singh, Mistri Jit Singh, Bhai Atma Singh, Baba Darja Mal and Bhai Vir Singh.

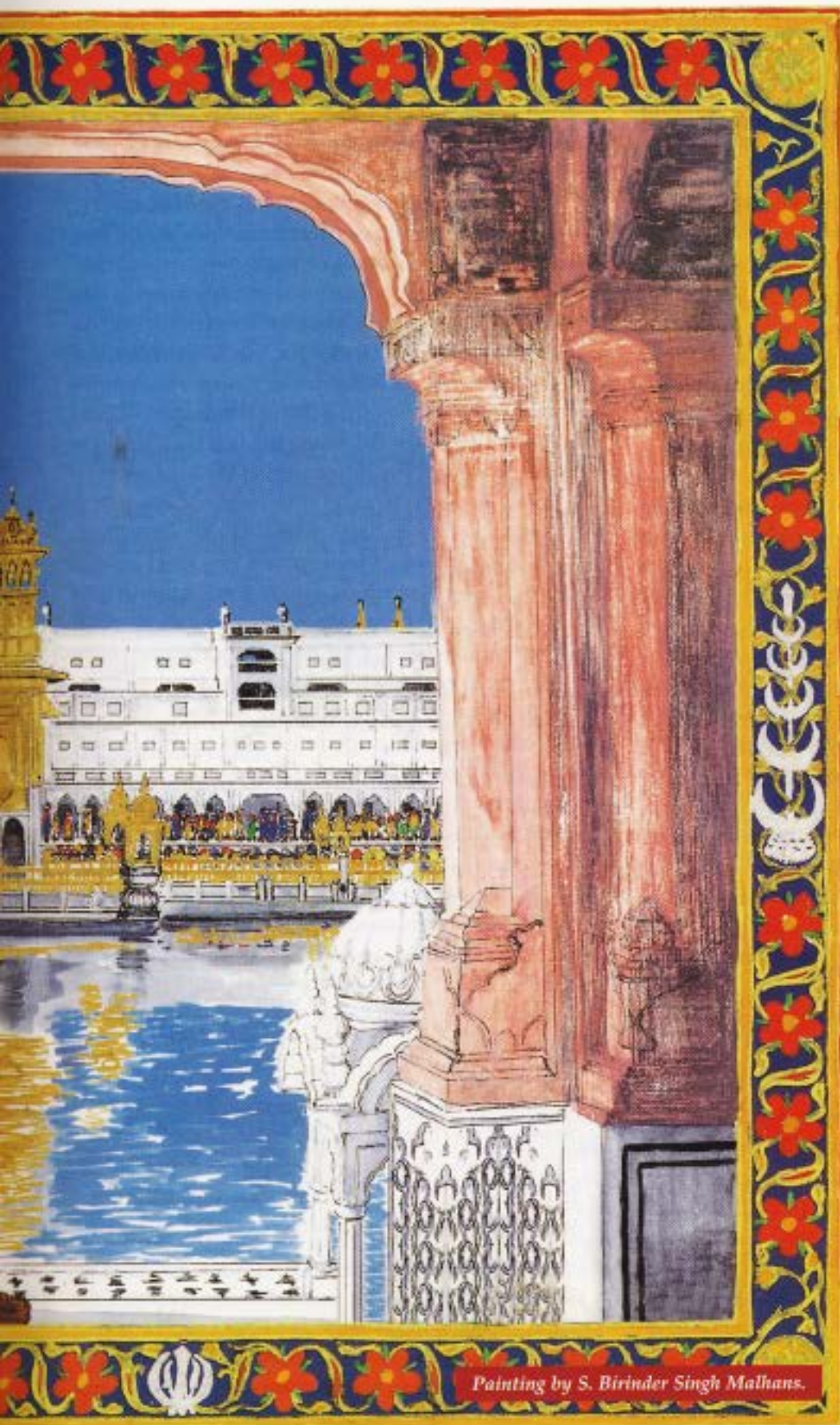
A good deal of the old work, particularly mural in character, has disappeared from the precincts of the Golden Temple. Initially, the disappearance of murals started at the close of the nineteenth century, when devotees were permitted to present contributions in the form of inlaid marble slabs, which were fixed on the walls painted with frescoes. The old Bungas of the Golden Temple, which have been demolished, were repositories of splendid paintings. Inside the main Darshani Deorhi, where marble slabs have been fixed, there were fine paintings by Mahant Ishar Singh.

Efforts have also been made to renovate the decaying paintings in the temple proper. But there appears not much reason to regret the loss, because, in the words of Michael Edwardes, the Golden Temple "is a symbol, glowing in richness and colour. That richness has, over the years, been constantly renewed, not always perhaps in the best of taste. But the Hari Mandir is not a museum. On the contrary, it is a shrine, part of the essential machinery of a living faith."

HISTORIC GURDWARAS OF THE SIKHS

DARBAR SAHIB





Painting by S. Birlinder Singh Malhans.

The holy city of Amritsar is the most important and the best known among several towns founded by the Gurus and may well be called the religious capital of the Sikhs by virtue of the location here of two sacred shrines which are not merely historical Gurdwaras but are institutions central to their religious and political fabric. They are the **Harimandir**, the fountain of Sikh faith and the **Akal Takht**, the source of secular inspiration and direction.

Amritsar, the city, is named after Amritsar, the *sarovar*, literally meaning "pool of nectar". The city was founded with digging of the *sarovar* by Guru Ram Das in 1577, on land which according to some sources was purchased while according to others was a gift from Emperor Akbar to Bibi Bhani. As the digging of the *sarovar* was carried out with voluntary labour of a large number of Sikhs and as the Guru himself had moved with his family to the site in order to plan, coordinate and supervise the work, shelters had to be provided for all of them. Thus a habitation grew around the *sarovar* which appropriated the latter's name for itself. The *sarovar* was completed by the founder's son and spiritual successor, Guru Arjan Dev, who

constructed the Harimandir in its midst and installed in it the Holy Book, compiled by himself. Guru Hargobind established opposite the divinely Harimandir (lit. The Temple of God") the divinely-inspired Akal Takht (lit. "Throne of the Timeless One") a throne to protect as well as to serve the temple. Amritsar was the seat of the Gurus for half-a-century, from 1577 to 1628, during which period several other spots in the town became holy places where Gurdwaras were later established. These are:

Sri Harimandir Sahib, also called *Darbar Sahib*, is known to the English-speaking world as the Golden Temple on account of its scenic beauty and the golden coating on its exterior above the first-floor level. It was built under the direction and direct supervision of Guru Arjan Dev, who according to current tradition, got its foundation laid by a well-known Muslim divine, Mir Muhammad, better known as Hazrat Mian Mir of Lahore, on the first of Magh 1645 Bikrami corresponding to 28th December 1588. On completion in about 10 years time, it became the venue for the daily religious services, *kirtan* and discourse. When Guru Arjan Dev had compiled the compositions of the Gurus including his own and of a number of Hindu and Muslim saints into a single volume, now known as the *Adi Granth* or *Guru Granth Sahib*, he installed it in the Harimandir on 16th August 1604. Baba Buddha was appointed the first officiant. The routine and liturgy set by Guru Arjan Dev himself is still operative with very little change. *Kirtan* commences in the Harimandir between 2.00 a.m. and 3.00 a.m. depending on the season and continues incessantly, with only *ardas* or supplicatory prayers intervening occasionally, upto 10.00 p.m. or 11.00 p.m. The Holy Book is then taken in procession to a room in the Akal Bunga for rest, and is brought back to the Harimandir again in a procession at about 5 a.m. The intermission is used for daily cleaning of the premises.

Religious service and significance apart, the architectural design and beauty of the Harimandir has its own attraction. Standing in the middle of the pool of Nectar on a plinth of hard stone reached from the bank over a bridge, it provides a rare atmosphere of coolness, calmness and serenity. Its square shape and appropriate dimensions give it perfect geometrical symmetry and compactness. Four doors opening, one on each side, signify free access from all sides to all irrespective of caste or creed. Of particular interest to common visitors as well as to connoisseurs of art is the beauty of its interior including

intricate floral designs embossed on metal or inset in stone and painting or filigree work on walls and the ceiling which are simply enchanting. But the present build and beauty are not wholly original. Harimandir has had its share of persecution suffered by the community as an entity. After Guru Hargobind had to leave the town subsequent to the first battle of Amritsar in 1629, no Guru graced the Harimandir with his presence. Only Guru Tegh Bahadur came on a visit in 1664, but he too was not allowed to enter the sanctum sanctorum. Massa Ranghar, the appointed *kotwal* of Amritsar after the execution of Bhai Mani Singh in 1737, befouled the *sarovar* and desecrated the Harimandir. In 1762, Ahmad Shah Abdali had the Harimandir blown up with gunpowder. It was reconstructed by the Dal Khalsa through Bhai Des Raj of Sursingh village. The reconstruction was completed by 1776. The present appearance of the Harimandir dates from the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1801-39), although the work of interior decoration continued long after his death. But the Sikh rulers left the religious management with *Udasi* and *Nirmala* priests who had been looking after Sikh shrines during the troubled period when baptised Sikhs suffered prosecution of the cruelest kind and were not permitted to serve their places of worship. Although Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed Giani Sant Singh and, after his death in 1832, his son Bhai Gurmukh Singh as managers yet their responsibility extended only to the beautification of the Darbar Sahib. After the annexation of the Punjab by the British in 1849, the practice continued. While the government appointed a *sarbarah*, the religious administration remained with the *mahants* and *pujaris*. Several malpractices and mismanagement had crept in, which even the Singh Sabha Movement failed to rectify. It was only at the beginning of the Gurdwara Reform (or Akali) Movement (on 15th October 1920) that the Harimandir was liberated from the malignant control of the priestly order and brought under *panthic* management. At present the Harimandir along with Sri Akal Takht Sahib and other holy shrines in Amritsar are managed directly by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee under section 85 of the Sikh Gurdwaras Act, 1925.

Sri Akal Takht Sahib (lit. "the Reverend Throne of the Timeless One") housed in Akal Bunga opposite the *Darshani Diorhi* (gateway to the Harimandir) across the marble-paved *parkarma* (circumambulatory terrace around the *sarovar*), is the secular counterpart of purely spiritual or religious Harimandir. It must be kept in mind, though,

that in Sikhism, the secular is not divorced from or in opposition to the religious and the spiritual. Sri Akal Takht Sahib, or Akal Takht for short, is the highest seat of religious authority for the Sikhs. Four other Takhts, situated respectively at Anandpur Sahib, Sabo ki Talwandi, Patna Sahib and Hazur Sahib Abchalnagar, Nanded, also have that honour and authority, but the Akal Takht is *primus inter pares* in that *hukamnamas* (religious fiats) issued by it hold precedence over similar fiats issued by other Takhts. It has been the convention that only Akal Takht has the authority to try and excommunicate a Sikh for religious offence(s). In any case this is the seniormost in age in that no other Takht came into existence till the birth of Guru Gobind Singh sixty years later.

The Akal Takht was founded and physically constructed by Guru Hargobind on 15th June 1606. According to *Gurhitas Chhevin Patshahi*, the Guru laid the foundation, and Bhai Buddha and Bhai Gurdas completed the construction, with no other person permitted to take part in the process. It was, of course, then only a platform of mud and masonry on which the installation ceremony of Guru Hargobind was performed on 24th June 1606. Guru Hargobind had decided to adopt a princely style. Even his father had approved of and arranged his training in martial sports. And the Gurus, at least from the time of Guru Ram Das, had been given the epithet *Sachcha Patshah* (The True Sovereign) by their devotees. Thus there must be a throne for a *Patshah*. Guru Hargobind was anointed the next *Sachcha Patshah* on this throne which he named Akal Takht, meaning both Throne of the Timeless and the Timeless Throne.

A building over the Akal Takht must have been raised during the time of Guru Hargobind himself. During the period of persecution following the martyrdom of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Sikhs looked to Sri Akal Takht Sahib, Sri Harimandir Sahib and the Amritsar pool of nectar for fresh inspiration and so revived courage. Occasionally, usually on Baisakhi and Divali, different *jatbas* (later *misls*) assembled at the Akal Takht and held *Sarbat Khalsa* (assembly representing the entire nation) and passed *gurmata*s (resolution in presence of the Guru Granth Sahib) related to general strategy, particular operations or other organisational or administrative matters. After the *Misls* had set up their different independent states, the significance of *Sarbat Khalsa* assemblies declined, but the supremacy of the Akal Takht as the final arbiter

in matters of religious and moral discipline continued to be acknowledged.

Like Sri Harimandir Sahib, Sri Akal Takht Sahib also suffered destruction at the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali during his invasion in 1764 because a small garrison of 30 Nihangs stationed here had the audacity to stand up to the invading hordes. But what was destroyed was the Akal Bunga, the building, and not Akal Takht, the institution. The Dal Khalsa continued to meet at the Akal Takht on the ruins of Akal Bunga of which, too, the ground floor was reconstructed by 1774. Another four storeys were raised above it during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. This was the building which was destroyed when India's army attacked the Darbar Sahib complex in June 1984. Alarmed at the strong reaction and indignation of the Sikhs, the government hastily reconstructed it, but simultaneously committed another *faux pas*—the holding of a fake *Sarbat Khalsa* at the site. This infuriated the Sikhs more than the destruction perpetrated earlier because this latter act meant an insulting assault on the Akal Takht as an institution. The Sikhs, therefore, held a real *Sarbat Khalsa* in which they, through a *gurmata*, decided to pull down that building raised by the government and to reconstruct the Akal Bunga through *karseva* (voluntary free service). The reconstruction was almost complete when further *karseva* was suspended due to intra-community factionalism and wrangling.

Gurdwara Lachi Ber, a small, domed shrine near Darshani Deorhi marks the site where Guru Arjan Dev used to sit under a *ber* tree which bore fruit of the size of *lachi* (cardamom). Hence the name Lachi Ber.

Ber Baba Buddha ji was another *ber* tree, still extant, on the northern bank of the *sarovar*. Here Baba Buddha sat supervising the digging of the sacred pool.

Gurdwara Dukh Bhanjani Beri is near yet another *ber* tree close to the eastern edge of the *sarovar*. The name Dukh Bhanjani means "eradicator of sorrow". This relates to a legend that a leper was cured of his ulcerations by taking a bath at this point of the pond that existed here before it was dug up into the present *sarovar*.

Gurdwara Thara Sahib north of Sri Akal Takht Sahib is where Guru Tegh Bahadur sat and prayed awhile when the priests had barred his entry into the Harimandir Sahib. *Thara* means a raised platform of masonry.

Gurdwara Manji Sahib is of more recent construction, east of the Darbar Sahib. The place was formerly known

as *Guru ka Bagh* (the Guru's garden). Before the construction of Sri Harimandir Sahib, Guru Arjan Dev used to hold daily congregations at this site. The vast hall of this Gurdwara is now used for special or large congregations.

Gurdwara Guru Ke Mabal is on the site of the residential house of the Gurus, west of the Akal Takht across a main street called Guru Bazar.

Gurdwara Baba Atal Sahib, about a furlong southeast of Sri Harimandir Sahib, is a nine-storey octagonal tower in memory of Guru Hargobind's nine-year-old son, Baba Atal Rai, who went to eternal sleep here on 9th Assu 1685 Bikrami (13th September 1628) because he had wrought a miracle which his Father, the Guru disapproved of.

Gurdwara Mai Kaulan da Asthan and its adjoining *sarovar*, Kaulsar commemorate, as the name suggests, Kaulan, daughter of Qazi Rustam Mian of Muzang, Lahore, who had become a devotee of Guru Hargobind. Persecuted by his father on this account, she left her home and found refuge under the protective wings of the Guru, who had this tank dug and a house built on its bank to accommodate her.

Gurdwara Ramsar Sahib, on the bank of the *sarovar* after which it is named, is in the south-eastern part of the city near Chatiwind Gate. This is where Guru Arjan Dev compiled the Holy Guru Granth Sahib, with Bhai Gurdas as his scribe, during 1603-1604. Its is a small, domed building constructed in 1855.

Gurdwara Bibeksar Sahib, attached to yet another *sarovar* of the same name got dug by Guru Hargobind in 1628, is north-east of Gurdwara Ramsar Sahib, between Chatiwind and Sultanwind Gates. Its building was constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1833.

Gurdwara Tahli Sahib near yet another *sarovar*, Santokhsar, is close to the Town Hall. It is named after a *tahli* or *shisham* tree under which Guru Ram Das and later Guru Arjan Dev used to watch the digging of Santokhsar tank. The digging of this *sarovar* was at first taken up by Guru Amar Das in 1568, but this was left half way when digging operations were shifted to Amritsar in 1577. Guru Arjan Dev completed it later during his own pontificate. The *sarovar* fell into neglect during the later part of the nineteenth century and was almost filled up when Sant Sham Singh and Sant Gurmukh Singh got it desilted and cleaned through *karseva* during 1919.

Gurdwara Chaurasti Atari is situated on the side of a cross-road at the end of Gur Bazar. *Chaurasti* means such a cross or square and *atari* means a tall building. The Gurdwara represents the house where Guru Hargobind used to repair sometimes for rest and which was demolished during the 1850s in order to widen the square.

Gurdwara Lohgarh Sahib marks the site of a fort, Lohgarh (lit. "fort of steel") constructed by Guru Hargobind to secure the western approach to the town. The fort was destroyed by Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Gurdwara was constructed on the ruined mound during the Sikh Rule. It is near the Lohgarh Gate of the walled city.

Gurdwara Pipli Sahib in Putlighar area outside the old city, marks the site where Guru Arjan Dev received a large *sangat* which had come from Kabul and the north-west Punjab to take part in the digging of the pool of Nectar. Its building was reconstructed during the 1930s.

Gurdwara Shahid Ganj Baba Dip Singh, near Chatiwind Gate, commemorates martyrdom of the intrepid Baba Dip Singh, who fell fighting for the liberation of Amritsar from the Afghan invaders in November 1757. A memorial to the martyr in the form of a platform was constructed here by Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. It was replaced by a Gurdwara by Akali Phula Singh (d.1823). It was enlarged and developed into the present complex after the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee took it over in 1924.

Gurdwara Shahid Ganj Baba Gurbakhsh Singh situated in a narrow street on the back of the Akal Bunga, commemorates the martyrdom of a small band of 30 Nihangs under their leader, Baba Gurbakhsh Singh, who dared and died fighting against Ahmad Shah Abdali in December 1764.

Gurdwara Darshani Diorhi, not to be mixed with *Darshani Diorhi* inside the Darbar Sahib complex which serves as a portal to Sri Harimandir Sahib, is near the junction of Guru Bazar and Bazar Mai Sevan. This was the place from where, in olden times, a visitor approaching from the north-west first got the glimpse (*darsan* in Punjabi) of the Harimandir.

Gurdwara Damdama Sahib, between the railway line and the national highway, is three kilometres east of the city centre and is dedicated to Guru Tegh Bahadur, who halted here briefly on his way from Amritsar to Walla in 1664.

JUNE 1984

THE TRAGEDY AND THE TRAUMA

This issue of the *Nishaan* memorialises an event of prodigious dimensions—the Golden Temple assault of June 1984—as a mark of respect for those brave Sikhs and others who sacrificed their lives in behalf of the cause of the creed, and in behalf of humanist values. My own article, “Guns Over the Golden Temple: Tragedy and Trauma” which saw the light of day around 5 weeks after the *Ghalughara Saka* on June 6-7 in the sacred precincts of the Golden Temple Complex, had had a very tortuous passage. And I tell that twisted tale in this brief introduction.

I wrote scores of anguished articles and a couple of poems to voice the grief, despair and helplessness of a great community whose sacrifices for the country had, in one fell swoop, been decimated by a political overreacher and Machiavellian Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, breaking thus the bonds between the two communities sealed with the blood of their ancestors. Even today, when I recall that moment, my imagination of indignation compulsively demands answers to questions that history has dumped into oblivion for the insensitive and uninvolved.

The eventual publication of the provocative article in itself has a moral story. It took three editors, a celebrated novelist and a celebrated political leader of international repute, amongst others, to see my story reach the point of destination, and be seen in print. The two poems published in India's leading poetry journal, Jayant Mahapatra's *Chandrabhaga* (and reproduced here) had no such trouble. For one thing, the art of poetry being indirect and metaphorical, poems which carry the deepest truths often get past even the eye of the vigilant censors.

Briefly, when the typescript was ready for despatch, there was no taker around. The *Tribune's* Editor-in-Chief (the Moghul as he was known) Prem Bhatia would not touch that “inflammatory” material with a smell of rebellion in it. “The Moghul” did not really have the nerve, for its publication could invite trouble and put him on the wrong side of the Establishment. So, I happened then to consult George Fernandes in New Delhi and despatched the first copy to M.J. Akbar of *Sunday*, Calcutta and a second to Uncle Mulk (Mulk Raj Anand) in Bombay for his perusal. He, it appears on his own, passed it on to Vinod Mehta, Editor of *The Sunday Observer* and before I could stop M.J. Akbar, lo and behold, the whole long dirge was in cold print. Vinod Mehta saw the moment and the opportunity. For me, it was the start of a journalistic career of a different nature. For I was signed up for a weekly signed article, which had to be telegraphed from Chandigarh to Bombay. It was, finally, a caller from New Delhi who told me about the prodigal's appearance in *The Sunday Observer*.

I thus saw how state-terrorism (there being severe curfew in Chandigarh and elsewhere) prevented me from voicing my anguish. Indeed I remember a security squad patrolling our area and asking me rudely to remain inside when I happened to just be standing in my verandah, facing the road. Such, then, are ironies of its publication and such, such its lacerating memories.

Ever since the horrendous happenings that marked the military action in the Golden Temple Complex, I have been trying to screw up courage to figure out the genesis, the rationale and the outcome of this terrible tragedy. And I find that in the beginning my reactions refused to fall into a coherent pattern, and that a kind of spiritual nausea seemed to have settled upon my imagination. It almost blanked out my perceptions, and left me in a state of sullen despair. When I tried to put pen to paper, all I could see was a white sepulchral space and a paralysed pencil stub in hand. All virtue and cunning seemed to have deserted me, and all my song. I was left to brood in anguish and rage, and wrestle with all manner of ghosts—guilt and shame, outrage and impotence. So, I allowed my anger to subside, and my despair to work itself out in thought and prayer. Even now, weeks after the tragedy, I feel a certain diffidence, if not a 'block', in coming to terms with an event whose dialectic is far from clear at the moment, and whose putative aspect is clouded by the smoke of guns on the one hand, by the fog of rhetoric on the other. Ideally, one's response on such apocalyptic occasions can find its truest expression only in verse, for a poem is not a statement of facts, but an evocation of the energies and airs that go to make those facts. There'll undoubtedly be time for that too; for the moment we may make do with this painful inquest. Even then, it'll be argued that my perceptions are rooted in sentiment (indeed, whose are not?), and I accept the charge. One may radically revise one's views, one cannot radically alter the structure of one's sentiments. But this is not to aver that reason must give way to unbridled emotion, or the truth to expediency. A sentiment has its moral lyricism only so long as it does not degenerate into hysteria.

How do, then, I see this tragedy in its larger historical and metaphysical perspective? It's to this aspect that I wish to address myself, above all, though in any such analysis or reckoning, the chief protagonists of this tragedy and their psychic compulsions will have to be taken note of if only to re-enact in some detail this drama of *hubris*, initial error and bloody *denouement*. There are indeed all the ingredients of a Greek tragedy here, except that it's not the tragedy of an individual overreacher only, but of a whole people. A corporate tragedy has different dimensions.

In terms of its historical significance, this *saka* (that's the word in Sikh lexicon for a traumatic episode on a communal scale) is going to be the single biggest event in Sikh history since the Moghul days when the Sikhs were a hunted and harassed minority, and had to face several such *sakas* in their struggle for identity, honour and survival. For this kind of massive bloodshed, there's yet another word: *ghalughara*, and there's little doubt, this word is going to become a part of the daily Sikh *arlas* or prayer. In the national context, it may well rival the Jalianwala Bagh tragedy, such being the scale of death and destruction. It adds to the poignancy of the scene when we realise that the two tragedies took place within yards of each other, cheek by jowl, as it were. The city of Amritsar ('the Pool of Nectar') appears to carry the mark of destiny in some strange, inscrutable way. The agony is further compounded when we realise that in one case, it's a foreign power that gunned down

a mass of defenceless people, and in the other, our own unhappy and pitiable rulers. Such an analogy can, of course, be easily faulted. It'll be argued that the Jalianwala massacre involved innocent and unarmed patriots, while the Golden Temple episode was a reluctant and limited military action against a set of terrorists and desperados armed to the teeth. But, I repeat, such distinctions get blurred where a tragedy slides into a communal trauma. History is not made up of facts, but of the truths felt on the pulse and in the blood. And it's there that the analogue will hold and compel. If we enlarge the argument, and begin to view the tragedy in religious and theological perspectives, the Golden Temple outrage may have for the future generations the same symbolic importance as the Bartholomew massacre in Christendom, or the *Karbala* in Islam. I am sure those who planned *Operation Bluestar* (what a fancy name for an unhappy exercise) never thought of such things. The political mind *per se* is generally impervious to the larger aspects of reality.

Let me repeat with all the emphasis at my command that I do not hold any brief whatsoever for the Sikh extremists or militants who brought about this ruin upon their own heads, and upon us all. And I mince no words when I say that the sanctity of the Golden Temple was, in the first instance, violated by the militant-extremists and their obliging, terrified Akali patrons. But all this notwithstanding, I cannot see the whole thing but as an avoidable tragedy. There were other options available—a dramatic announcement of the acceptance of one or two major Sikh demands such as the return of Chandigarh to its rightful owner, or a siege of the Golden Temple Complex by the troops to starve the extremists into submission, but evidently such things did not quite fit into the political plans of the ruling party. And, as a consequence, we now have on our hands a debris of dubious pleas and alibis, of violated sanctities and sentiments, of lacerated sensibilities and bruised consciences. We have on our hands thousands of desolated homes and families, inconsolable in grief, implacable in their black anger. We have on our hands a Sikh soldiery in sullen discontent, and a 18-million people nursing an unforgivable injury. And we have on our hands a ruined *Akal Takht*—the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs. It's their Vatican and has for centuries served as their command post from where *hukamnamas* or *diktats* have been issued in the manner of the *Papal bulls*. The priceless heirlooms, the relics of the Sikh Gurus and monarchs, offerings of diamond, gold and plate, the unique frescoes, portraits and paintings—all these and scores of other symbols and icons had invested the Akal Takht (literally, the Heavenly Throne) with a halo which it shared with the Golden Temple, the *sanctum sanctorum*, itself. And if the latter has escaped visible injuries or scars,* and the troops in their wisdom, and under instruction, did not turn the guns in that direction, its soul, nevertheless, lies violated within. For, right in front over a stretch of water, bridge and marble, it finds its collateral half, the noble edifice of the Akal Takht, almost in ruin and rubble—a patriarch brought down to its knees, to shambles and shame. 'After such knowledge, what forgiveness,' to call T.S. Eliot's phrase.

*When this article was written, it wasn't known at that time that the Golden Temple itself had over two hundred bullet marks.

In the haze of the smoke from smouldering tempers, and in the rhetoric of wrath and rationalisations most people, as I said earlier, are apt to lose sight of the genesis of this tragedy. There's hardly a Hindu who's not jubilant over the turn of events (and I make no bones about it), and there's scarcely a Sikh eye that's not wet. Here, then, is an opposed array of emotions: a misplaced euphoria on the one side, a massive trauma on the other. Make no mistake about it, wretched as such a vertical split is—a tragedy greater than the loss of life, limb and property—it has now become a fact of daily life. It's the *Great Divide* which eventually poses the greatest threat to India. All conflicts originate in the human heart, and it's there that the grimmest battles are fought. When the imagination of indignation and disaster takes over the proceedings, the situations tend to become irrational, intractable and almost uncontrollable. Ideas get invested with a mystique, and when a psychic split hardens into dogmas and orthodoxies, it acquires a metaphysical force.

Which brings me first to the chronological side of things in this drama of horror and shame and suffering. When the Akalis launched their *marcha* or agitation in 1982, it was no more than a massive political effort to assert their rights and credentials with a view to capturing power when the call for the next election came. This is what nearly all political parties do when they are out of office. But, as I have argued at some length elsewhere, their major demands—Chandigarh, Punjabi-speaking areas and river waters—though politically motivated and inspired were, nevertheless, based on wholly justifiable and juridical grounds, a fact acknowledged even by the Opposition parties in India. And the Prime Minister and her advisers, legal as well as administrative, knew this to their misery and wretchedness and confusion, knew also that if the demands were conceded, the states of Haryana and Rajasthan were as good as lost. And they also knew that all other demands were essentially of an incremental, peripheral and diversionary nature. With the humiliation of her rout in her Southern bastions, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Mrs. Gandhi's imagination of opportunity saw a glimmer of hope in the Punjab imbroglio. To win back the Hindu masses, she had to keep the Punjab situation on the boil. It was plainly both a political and psychological necessity. Hence those futile, protracted parleys which were always meant to exhaust the adversary, and to drive him either out of business, or to the point of no return. As the events have shown, that's exactly what happened.

Enter Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. An obscure, simple and devout acolyte at the Chowk Mehta *Taksal* from the back o' beyond. During a clash with a splinter religious group of Hindu and Sikh converts known as *Nirankaris* in Amritsar, the *Taksal* group is gunned down, and 13 men are slain. It's a gravely provocative act, and soon enough, the *Nirankaris* become the targets of the newly-risen Bhindranwale faction. In a matter of months Sant Bhindranwale finds himself elevated, wooed, canonised. Power of any kind is a heady wine, and it has its own inexorable *elan* and momentum. It must not, however, be forgotten that the Sant was, in the first instance, a creation of the Congress (I), a charge never openly and unambiguously repudiated, an embarrassing skeleton that keeps turning up in

odd ways to mock their days and dreams. He was created to destroy the moderate Akali leaders, and he remained to give his progenitors sleepless nights. So, when the Akali *marcha* seems to be running out of steam, the moderate Akalis realise the importance of being Sant Bhindranwale and they help build him up reluctantly into a figure of terror, charisma and destiny. In short, in the earlier stages he was being used both by the Congress (I) and the Akalis, and later he used them. It was a neat reversal of roles. In the course of barely a couple of years, a man destined for small priestly jobs is propelled onto the stage of history, and invested with a freak immortality. Such, such are the facts, and such, such is the truth.

As Mrs. Gandhi and her negotiators become more and more intractable in relation to the major Sikh demands, acts of murder, terrorism, loot become the language of the extremists, and life in Punjab soon becomes a nightmare. Add to it, the humiliation of the Sikhs as a community during the Asiad in Haryana at the prompting of the Centre, and you may see why the extremists begin to be seen by a section of the Sikhs as instruments of fate. "Revenge", said Bacon, "is a kind of wild justice", but it's always a self-destructive emotion, and unleashes a chain of events. Out of this kind of situation is terrorism born. It's important to understand the pathology of terrorism *qua* terrorism, a phenomenon so common in the West. Terrorists, as social analysts tell us, are not born; they are created by the Establishment first as allies, and then used as scapegoats. Their tragedy is the tragedy of delusion and deception. They move within a charged and 'charmed' circle where the inflamed imagination brooks no rival. And in their conceit, they begin to see themselves as *Messiahs* and men of destiny. Frantz Fanon, that black ideologue of great penetration and perception, argues passionately in his writings about "the purifying flame of violence". But, it should be understood, that a *revolutionary* is not a *terrorist*; he uses violence to end violence. Where violence degenerates into individual and indiscriminate acts of assassination, and the line between the innocent and the guilty gets blurred, we have a classic case of psychic regression. It's something very close to the Freudian *thanatos* or death-wish. I believe the Bhindranwale group fits into the frame.

Before I move on to Sant Bhindranwale's 'spiritual' mate and match, to wit: Indira Gandhi, the other chief protagonist of this tragedy, one thing remains to be cleared. And that's the question of *Khalistan*. It should be obvious to any unprejudiced mind that the *idea* never became a *movement*, and that it was meant purely as a political ploy, and a pressure tactic to gain political concessions from an obdurate adversary. It's what the DMK and such groups in the South did openly, and got away with it. No more, no less. This is not to deny the complicity of certain foreign powers, or the conspiracy of a few fanatical 'fundamentalists' on this side of the border—there's hardly a country which hasn't its own desperate and dangerous fringe—but the concept of *Khalistan*, I repeat, never had a wide, emotive base or a 'spiritual' dimension in the manner of the idea of Pakistan in 1947. It was simply a political extravagance and, at worst a symbol of defiance, if not despair. Few in their senses believed that it could ever materialise. And if it really did threaten to succeed, no Government worth the salt could sit

idle, and see that country disintegrate. The integrity of the country came over and above any other loyalty or consideration. So, I submit, Mrs. Gandhi allowed the Sikh extremists to gather power and stature with a view to destroying them eventually through their own monstrous excesses. All along, it was her resolute aim to drive the moderate Akali leaders—her real political rivals in Punjab—into a political *cul-de-sac*. Her scenario was carefully prepared, and she allowed neither consequence nor compassion to come in the way of the Grand Design. The army would be called when the flashpoint had reached.

I trust we'll never come to grips with this tragedy if we do not understand the psychological compulsions of Mrs. Gandhi. It's a subject for a detailed study, but for the moment it's enough that we confine ourselves to her immediate urges. The trauma of her defeat in 1977 and, more recently, her massive defeat in the South after a spectacular comeback have, it appears, driven her into a position where she finds herself vulnerable after a deep-seated belief in her destiny as a woman ruler cast in the heroic mould. Indeed, her dynastic politics are an aspect of this belief, and she wishes to perpetuate the line as far as she can. Naturally, the idiom employed is modern. By temperament and will, she is authoritarian, and has politically destroyed friends and foes alike. She is, in this respect, a classic example of the *pure politician* for whom the aim of all power is power. The Amritsar tragedy describes the distance between a visionary father and a hardboiled down-to-earth daughter.

As Freud and lately, the Harvard psychologists Erik Erikson, have shown in their studies of political leaders, oedipal impulses, childhood complexes and displaced sexuality have not a little to do with the pattern and structure of power sought by a political leader. The problem of "the pampered child" in Adler's view is linked to "the Oedipus complex", and of neurosis, in general, to "the imaginary masculine goal."

Returning, then, to the events of June 6—a day destined to enter the Sikh calendar as a day of mourning and expiation—the rationale of Mrs. Gandhi's massive blow becomes clear enough. She had to prove to the nation, and to the world outside, that she, Indira Gandhi, was the chosen instrument of history to set matters right. It was a moment of high destiny, and it was not to find her wanting. The Iron Lady (shades of Margaret Thatcher and 'the Falkland factor' in her coming General Election) was there to vindicate national honour. It was a political gamble of the highest pitch and reach, and she knew the cards were heavily stacked in her favour. A whole grateful nation, sans a "troublesome community," would be toasting her as the Great Saviour.

It's not beyond her even to imagine herself as a latter-day Joan of Arc, or an Abraham Lincoln whom Providence had created to save the country from disintegration. But all such grandiose notions and whimsies lack validity in our context. As I have argued earlier, there never was any real question of an independent Sikh state, and there never will be. *Khalistan* existed only in the heated imagination of some hotheads, and in the willed calculations of Mrs. Gandhi. And one of the tragic ironies of her situation now is that she has unwittingly invested the idea of *Khalistan* with an unwarranted mystique, given it a wry 'legitimacy' in the eyes of an alienated community. If such an idea is allowed to grow wild in Sikh breasts and become a sentiment, it can only mean more bloodshed, more suffering, more shame. The Sikhs in their own interest will do well to keep away from such destructive dreams. There is no future for them except in the Indian Union, and they belong there eternally and ineluctably. Their whole history, their heritage, their culture and their dream-life are umbilically tied to this great and hoary land. Uprooted, they'll wither away into nomadic tribes and, like the Jews of yore, remain in wilderness for centuries to come. There's no Israel, no 'promised land', in front of them to look forward to. They'll only have a past to ponder, and brood and weep over.

Let me in the end state that the Sikhs need no pity, only understanding.

Their religion is a religion of hope and sunshine and action. They'll have to depend on their native spiritual and moral reserves for the energies they need to recover their estate and their pristine place. The phoenix metaphor is already a part of the Sikh lore and 'mythology'. In a poem called *Sikhi* or "Sikhism", the late Mohan Singh sings thus:

*Sikhism verily's a flourishing tree,
The more you prune it,
The more it spreads in root and branch*

So, the Sikhs have to live authentically in the midst of this great harrowing tragedy. That's the meaning of *chardhi kala* or spiritual gaiety in the midst of ordeals and suffering. They do not have to look to Mrs. Gandhi who has never in her long political life shown a trace of *savoir faire* or the readiness to do the right thing. Instead, they should try sincerely to win over the Hindus in Punjab to their cause through love, humility and understanding.

If this article has been a painful inquest, it's also at the same time a requiem for all those dead. Hindus and Sikhs alike, soldiers and others. In the democracy of deaths they are all made equal, friends and foes. It's the hour, dear countrymen, for prayer and for thought, the hour to remember Gandhiji. 'Dear Bapu, thou shouldst be living at this hour!'

Darshan Singh Maini

A Requiem for the Fallen

I weep for all those dead,
The killers and the killed alike;
All, all are quits,

When God's game is done,
Only the agony abides!

Here, on this consecrated ground,*
They meet, a saint of sorts,
And a dubious Durga of our day,
To conclude the argument of guns;
One seeks martyrdom in fire and flame,
The other a name in stone and bronze,
Each a libertine of faith,
Each a voluptuary of fame:
Brother and sister
In this incestuous war of wits!

Weep not only for our dead,
Weep, weep, for all those who live
To eat the bread of shame,
And work diurnally
The fever of this horrendous day!

Darshan Singh Maini

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Back Home in *Amritsar*

"Sitting in the *parikrama* at the Harimandir Sahib Amritsar, close to the *sarovar* with strains of the *Gurbani* reaching my ears, I felt transformed. The openness of the people and their spirit of service converted me at once. The other rituals came later," says Cornelius Heule, a successful Dutch travel agent, who has given up worldly ambition and is now in the service of the Sikh faith. His new name is Harjinder Singh Khalsa.

Harjinder is not a lone case. Move through the Punjab and you come across people of different nationalities who have chosen the path of Sikhism. There is Darshan Singh Rudel, a Frenchman baptised as Michel Rudel, who's all set to buy twelve acres at Anandpur Sahib to grow vegetables and rear poultry. There's the comely Gursimaran Kaur, who belongs to the clan of American Sikhs brought into the fold of Sikhism by Harbhajan Singh Yogi, managing the computer section of the Anandpur

Sahib Foundation, then preparing for the 300th anniversary of the Khalsa. At the Babeke Gurdwara in Mohali, near Chandigarh, Australian Chris Mooney Singh is immersed in *kirtan* strumming the *rabab*. And also Sumit Kaur, the Danish girl who came to Chandigarh for holidays some twenty years ago and fell in love with a local boy. She's a practising Sikh; her husband is not.

What is it that makes many people from the West turn eastwards to the fold of Sikhism? No, it is not a passing fad which came to a sad pass with the drift of the flower children into the dizzy world of hallucinogens. The factors that seem to drive these people away from their own religion to alien shores needs some understanding. The hippies of the Sixties were full of love, tired of war and materialism, so they were seeking solace in the spirituality of the East. The converts of the Nineties were tired of the institutionalisation of their own religion, excessive

consumerism and alienation that has become a part of the Western way of life.

"Go to the churches in the West, and it is like visiting a museum", says Harjinder, relaxing in a room at a gurdwara at Chandigarh. "Everything is in place, yet nothing touches the heart. But at the Harimandir Sahib what one finds is a living, breathing and throbbing religion that welcomes all into its fold." In India since 1996, Harjinder is now trying to go deeper into the scriptures. "I will do some work at Chandigarh, but one week a month will be spent back home in Amritsar," he says.

Does he plan to stay on in India? To this question the reply of this Amritdhari Sikh is, "I like it here, but I would like to go to the West like a good *Granthi* and spread the message of the Gurus." Harjinder, interestingly, had first visited India as a young man of 19 or 20 in 1967-68. "Then, the mood was different. I was looking for a Shangri-la beyond Kathmandu. But this time I am getting nearer and nearer to God."

Though the Punjabis seem to welcome this entry of the white men and women from the First World, many feel it is the novelty of the religion and unfamiliarity that is attracting these new converts. So there is a hesitation in accepting them. And in the countries of their origin, they find many not willing to accept them either. Chris and Harjinder both say the garb of the Sikh is most useful for it will repel the undesirables, while attracting the true ones.

Sumit has the frankness of a Dane when she lists her reasons for rejecting Christianity. "I never quite believed in it," she says. "And the way Christmas was celebrated, disturbed me. It has been turned into a consumer event. My transition to a practising Sikh was gradual. There was no pressure from the family I was married into. But I just fitted in." It was the death of a young child in the family that led her to read the *Japji Sahib* and then there was no going from it. "Every line of the *Gurbani* made sense to me. And I understood death for this is one religion that says to be ready for it every day." Sikhism helped her find God "I now have a direct line to God," claims the 41-year old.

She also laughs and adds that it was not difficult for her to become a Sikh as she always liked to wear her hair long and never liked men without beards. But would she like to be an Amritdhari Sikh? "I am preparing for it, but I am not yet ready for it. The original sin concept of Christianity still haunts me and in Sikhism one has to go without guilt and without fear," she says.

Chris, who traces his ancestry to Ned Kelly, the

Australian Robin Hood of Irish descent, says he would like to take Amrit, but for him the real nectar is to be found in the *Gurbani*. "I came to Sikhism after fifteen years of meditation to have direct contact with the scriptures. This is a perfect religion for a poet musician that I am. It is the inter-faith nature of the religion that drew me to it. It acknowledges difference and finds a common oneness for all," he says.

A free thinker who followed his own way of thought, Chris says his journey has been one of search for the lost *rabab*. And what is his dream? "I don't know when it will come true," he confides. "But I dream of thousands of Westerners sitting together and doing the *kirtan* in English."

Explains Rudel, son of a policeman brought up in the south of France: "It seems, I had a call. My heart has always been in India. "He exasperated his parents when he was still an adolescent by refusing to cut his hair or eat meat. "I just did not feel like it," he says, very much at home in the Punjabi language. Although Rudel visited India several times, yet it was in 1981 that he joined the Sikh fold. He's now married to a Amritdhari, Punjabi Sikh and Anandpur Sahib will soon be his home.

He was most unhappy when the authorities turned down his request for the change of his name to Darshan Singh. He subsequently changed his name in Britain, where he lived as paying guest with an elderly Punjabi Sikh couple in Southall. "I was more like their son," he adds. Rudel was most drawn by the Sikh religion for it granted equality to all, and did not discriminate on the basis of caste and gender.

"In practice, though, I find that caste is still very much prevalent and the women are discriminated against with practices like dowry", says Rudel. His own journey to Sikhism has been purely spiritual. Marriage followed after an article on him in a Sikh studies journal. "The editor happened to know my wife and he brought us together," he remembers, "We were both Gursikhs and spiritually compatible. My wife, however, wishes to remain away from publicity which comes the way of Sikhs from places other than the Punjab."

If one doesn't know he's French, Rudel is as Punjabi as they come, preparing a good desi cup of tea and welcoming visitors with the typical Punjabi greeting of *jee anyean nue*. And when time comes to leave, it is not *au revoir*, but

Wahe Guruji ka Khalsa, Wahe Guruji ki Fateh!

Nirupama Dutt

THE DOCTRINE OF HUKAM

Lecture Series by Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki as introduced in the *Nishaan IV*/2001.

In Jap(u)ji Sahib the foremost spiritual practice prescribed for the seeker is *hukam bujhna* (realising and conforming to the Will of God). It is important therefore that an attempt be made to understand what *hukam* signifies in Gurbani.

Defining the concept and considering the synonyms

Along with *Naam* (Logos) and *Nadar* (Grace), *Hukam* is one of the most fundamental metaphysical terms in Sikh theology. The term, *Hukam*, comes from the Arabic language, in which it means 'command' or 'order'. However, in the Sikh parlance, it has come to signify 'the divinely instituted creative and maintaining principle that governs the existence and movement of the universe'. It connotes the dynamism of the Divine Mystery—creative as well as directive. It spells the spontaneous and self-impelled revelation of Divine Will. It stands for the divine regulation that pervades all time and space. These are a few of the common metaphorical expressions that have been employed to make this indescribable mystery somewhat intelligible.

Hukam has been variously translated as 'Law', 'Order', 'Ordinance', 'Command' and 'Will' of God. However, none of these terms provides a satisfactory translation. *Hukam* is not 'Law', for it involves no compulsion. It is more descriptive than prescriptive. It is not even 'Order' in the sense of an authoritarian injunction. It is not proclaimed but simply pervades. It is not 'Ordinance', because it wasn't founded on any formal or informal enactment. It is not 'Command' in the sense of being the bidding of an authority. Nor is it 'Will' signifying a faculty that decides upon and initiates action. All these terms that have variously been employed as English synonyms for *Hukam*, only partially represent its full import. At best, these are anthropomorphic metaphors employed to understand *Hukam*. However, that way, even *Hukam* is but an anthropomorphic metaphor introduced by man to imagine what lies behind divine acts.

Even within *Gurbani*, there are quite a few other terms that have been employed synonymously for *Hukam*. These include *Amar* (Arabic: *Amr*), *Kudrat* (Arabic: *Qudrat*), *Farman* (Persian: *Farman*), and *Agya* (that comes as such from Sanskrit). A brief consideration of these may not be out of place.

Amar

'Al-Amr, (lit. 'The command'), in mystic Islamic theology stands for the command given by God: *Kun* "Be!" which creates by translating possibilities from the un-manifest to the manifest. As 'the Word of God' it corresponds to an aspect of the idea of the *logos*. Al-Amr has been one of the terms used for the active pole (in Aristotle *eidos*) of the polarisation within Being into act and potency that corresponds to the Chinese 'Yang and Yin' polarisation from which creation takes place. The polar opposition of Al-Amr is potentiality, the passive-pole that is also called universal nature, *al-tabi'ah*, or primordial substance.

In the Sikh thought, *Amar* has been used as a synonym for *Hukam*:

True is Your *Amar*, true Your *Diban*,
True is Your *Hukam*, true Your *Farman*.

- SGGS p. 463

ਸਚਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਅਮਰੁ ਸਚਾ ਦੀਬਾਨੁ ॥
ਸਚਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਸਚਾ ਫਰਮਾਨੁ ॥

Here *Amar*, *Diban* (justice) *Hukam* and *Farman* have been juxtaposed and seem to have identical connotation, as Truth.

Amar, in *Gurbani*, also signifies the great disciplining force to which the phenomenal world is subject:

The earth, the heavens and the stars abide in the Fear of God,
The mighty Order of the Lord subsumes them all.

- SGGS p. 998

ਫਰਪੈ ਧਰਤਿ ਅਕਾਸੁ ਨਪਤ੍ਰੁ ਸਿਰ ਧ੍ਰਿਪਰ ਅਮਰ ਕਰਾਰਾ ॥

Kudrat

Like its source term (Arabic *Qudrat*), *Kudrat* in *Gurbani* means the Divine Power of Creation:

True is Your Kudrat, O True King!

- SGGS p 463

ਸਚੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਚੇ ਪਤਿਸਾਹ ॥

Having exercised Your Kudrat, You pervade Your
Creation.

- SGGS p 83

ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਕੈ ਵਸਿਆ ਸੋਇ ॥

Furman

Its source-term in Persian signifies 'Royal Order'. Since God is designated as 'True King' in *Gurbani*, His pleasure spontaneously becomes His 'Royal Order'.

He makes things happen as pleases His Will,
And directed by His Furman.

- SGGS p 7

ਜਿਵ ਤਿਗੁ ਤਾਵੈ ਤਿਵੈ ਚਲਾਵੈ ਜਿਵ ਹੋਵੈ ਫੁਰਮਾਣ ॥

True is the Amar He send forth,
And True the Furman He issues

- SGGS p789

ਸਚਾ ਅਮਰੁ ਚਲਾਇਉਨ ਕਰ ਸਚਾ ਫੁਰਮਾਣ ॥

Agya

Agya is the Sanskrit synonym for *Hukam*.

By His *Agya* we come, by His *Agya*, depart.
Says Nanak, whenever it pleases Him,
He absorbs us back into Himself

- SGGS p 294

ਆਗਿਆ ਆਵੈ ਆਗਿਆ ਜਾਇ ॥

ਨਲਕ ਜਾ ਭਾਵੈ ਤਾ ਲਏ ਸਮਾਇ ॥

Among Orders Your *Agya* (Order) stands supreme,
Among Commands too, Your Command

- SGGS p 507

ਆਗਿਆ ਮਹਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਪ੍ਰਤ ਆਗਿਆ ਹੁਕਮਨ ਸਿਰ ਹੁਕਮਾ ॥

There are two other terms that also require consideration in this context. These are *Rajae* and *Bhana*.

Rajae is derived from an Arabic term, *Raza* that means (Divine) Pleasure. In Sufi thought, three stages of submission to the Divine Will are recognised: *Sabr* (patience), *Raza* (recognising His Pleasure), and *Tasleem* (submission). In the Sikh parlance, all the three stages are subsumed in the term *Rajae*.

Bhana, in Punjabi means that which pleases (Him), and so, signifies the same as *Rajae*.

Whatever pleases Him instantly gets carried out in action. *Ipsa facto*, it signifies His *Hukam*. Let it be understood that *Rajae* and *Bhana* are terms from the viewpoint of the Creator, while *Hukam*, *Amar*, *Furman*, and *Agya* are terms from the viewpoint of the creatures.

The preceding discussion would have provided some

idea of what *Hukam* signifies. We therefore would prefer to use the term *hukam* as such and not employ any of its oft-employed English translations - such as 'Will', 'Order', 'Ordinance', etc - that only partially convey what *Hukam* signifies.

The following verse from the *Japji* provides a fuller understanding of this Sikh metaphysical term:

Forms are all by *Hukam* created,
But His *Hukam* is beyond account
Life also through *Hukam* generated
Eminence too through *Hukam* is found.
'High' and 'low' are by *Hukam* decreed,
So is pleasure, so is pain.

Some, through the *Hukam*, receive benediction,
Others in birth-rebirth remain.
All are within the gamut of *Hukam*,
No one is beyond its domain.
If one would but comprehend *Hukam*,
'Haumai' he would never declaim.

- SGGS p 1

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਆਕਾਰ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਿਹਿਆ ਜਾਈ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੋਵਨਿ ਜੀਅ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਉਤਮੁ ਤੀਚੁ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਲਿਖ ਦੁਖ ਮੁਖ ਪਾਈ ਅਹਿ ॥

ਇਕਨਾ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਬਖਸੀਸ ਇਕਿ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਦਾ ਭਵਾਈ ਅਹਿ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੇ ਅੰਕਰ ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਨਾ ਕੋਇ ॥

ਨਲਕ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਜੇ ਬੁਝੈ ਤ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਹੈ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

The above verse underlines the following major characteristics of *Hukam*:

- Like God Himself, *Hukam* cannot be comprehended by human intellect.
- It is the generative cause of all Creation - living as well as non-living.
- It is the determiner of differences in human destiny, variously distributing pleasure and pain, bondage and freedom, salvation and transition.
- Understanding *Hukam* causes *Haumai* to disappear.

Some features of Hukam

Hukam, is not merely a signal for Creation to take place. It is also the divine purpose behind it and man is considered accountable to it. In *Gurbani*, it also has several other characteristic features:

Universality

Hukam prevails universally and unexceptionally. It is constantly and uninterruptedly pervasive:

His One *Hukam* pervades everywhere
Duty to the One Lord is upon every head.

- SGGS p 425.

ਏਕੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਵਰਤਦਾ ਏਕਾ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਰਾ ॥

Your almighty Hukam prevails all through the nether worlds, realms and forms

- SGGS p 1060

ਸਭੈ ਵਰਤੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕਿਆ ਕਰਹਿ ਵਿਚਾਰਿਆ ॥

Hukam is the sum total of all the divinely instituted principles:

Himself He created Shiva (consciousness) and Shakti (matter),

The Creator made them subject to His Hukam

- SGGS p 920

ਸਿਵ ਸਕਤਿ ਆਪਿ ਉਪਾਇ ਕੈ ਕਰਤਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਵਰਤਾਏ ॥

Air and water and fire under His *Hukam* worship Him

- SGGS p 948

ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਬੈਰੰਤਰੇ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਭਗਤੀ ॥

It prevails over filthy as well as clean, virtuous as well as sinful. Good and evil are both created by it.

Over the filthy as over the clean reigns His Hukam, They alone are immaculate, who His pleasure attain.

- SGGS p 121

ਮੈਲੇ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਸਭਿ ਹੁਕਮ ਸਥਾਏ ॥

ਸੇ ਨਿਰਮਲ ਜੋ ਹਰਿ ਸਾਚੇ ਭਾਏ ॥

Even *haumai* (egoism), the source of all evil, has been created under His *Hukam*:

This *haumai* too is them by His *Hukam*, Making people wander in their deeds.

- SGGS p 466

ਹਉਮੈ ਏਹੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ ਪਇਐ ਕਿਰਤਿ ਫਿਰਾਹਿ ॥

Unique and unrivalled

His *Hukam* is the only *Hukam* - there is no other beside it.

The One *Hukam* prevails through all the worlds.

- SGGS p 223

ਏਕੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਵਰਤੇ ਸਭ ਕੋਈ ॥

No other *Hukam* prevails apart from His To its discipline, the entire world is bound.

- SGGS p432

ਬੰਧਨਿ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਸਭੁ ਜਗੁ ਬਾਧਿਆ

ਅਵਰੀ ਕਾ ਨਹੀ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਇਆ ॥

Sovereign

His *Hukam* is sovereign, subject to none. It prevails even over the mighty and the potentate:

Hukam prevails over kings and emperors.

- SGGS p1055

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਸਿਰਿ ਸਾਰਾ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਰਾ ਹੇ ॥

Your True *Hukam* sits ever enthroned

- SGGS p 562

ਸਚੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਤੁਮਾਰਾ ਤਖਤਿ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ॥

Constant and uniformly operative

His *Hukam* is immutable. Uniformly and constantly it is operative over one and all

His *Hukam* He creates and in it hold us all

- SGGS p145

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਸਾਜਿ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਰਖੈ, ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚਾ ਆਪਿ ॥

It rules even over gods:

Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva His creation are;

They too function under His *Hukam*.

- SGGS p 948

ਬ੍ਰਹਮਾ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਮਹੇਸੁ ਉਪਾਇਅਨੁ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਕਮਾਵਨਿ ਕਾਰਾ ॥

Infinite

Hukam is unfathomable. No one can describe it. No one can scan its extent.

Infinite is Your *Hukam*, none can its limits find.

- SGGS p396

ਤੇਰਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਪਾਰ ਹੈ ਕੋਈ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਏ ॥

Beyond measure is Your *Hukam* - how to write it, none else knows.

- SGGS p53

ਤੇਰਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਪੀ ਕੇਤੜਾ ਲਿਖਿ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਕੋਇ ॥

Omnipotent

God Almighty's *Hukam* is all-powerful.

Your *Hukam* is all-powerful a rare Gurmukh knows.

- SGGS p441

ਹੁਕਮਿ ਤੇਰਾ ਖਰਾ ਭਾਰਾ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਕਿਸੇ ਬੁਝਾਏ ॥

By His *Hukam* all are created,

By His *Hukam* their actions they perform,

By His *Hukam* all are subject to death

By His *Hukam* into Truth they merge,

Says Nanak, whatever pleases Him comes to pass,

Nothing is in the hands of the creatures.

- SGGS p 55

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਭੇ ਚੁਪਜਹਿ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਕਾਲੈ ਵਸ ਹੈ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਾਚਿ ਸਮਾਹਿ ॥

ਨਾਨਕ ਜੇ ਤਿਸ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੇ ਬੀਐ ਇਨਾ ਜੰਗਾ ਵਸਿ ਕਿਛੁ ਲਹਿ ॥

Omnipresent

The Divine *Hukam* prevails everywhere; there is no place where its sovereignty is not operative.

Your *Hukam* rules over all four directions,

Your Naam prevails in all four quadrants

and even netherland

- SGGS p 1275

ਚਹੁਦਿਸਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਵਰਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਤੇਰਾ ਚਹੁਦਿਸਿ ਨਾਮ ਪਤਾਲੀ ॥

In its forwardness and backwardness of Time does not prevail. All happens in the present. *Hukam* prevailed even

before the Creation:

For endless Ages there was utter darkness,
There was no earth, there was no sky,
only the infinite Hukam there was

-SGGS p1035

ਅਰਥਦ ਨਰਥਦ ਹੁੰਦੁਕਾਰਾ ॥ ਧਰਣ ਨ ਗਗਨ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਧਾਰਾ ॥

Eternal

His *Hukam* can never be cancelled. It cannot be destroyed. It is everlasting.

His *Hukam* no one can erase.

-SGGS p 118

ਤਿਸ ਕਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਮੇਟਿ ਨ ਸਕੈ ਕੋਈ ॥

The True Lord, whose *Hukam* cannot be
is above kings and emperors

-SGGS p 1144

ਜਾਕਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਮੇਟੈ ਕੋਈ ॥

ਸਿਰਿ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹਾ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ ॥

Irresistible

His *Hukam* is irresistible - none dare counter it. Everyone must submit to it.

As the Decree He issued, so is His *Hukam* obeyed
Sent by Him, we come; called back by Him, we depart

-SGGS p 1239

ਜੇਹਾ ਚੀਰੀ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਤੇਹਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕਮਾਹਿ ॥

ਘਲੇ ਆਵਹਿ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਸਦੇ ਚਿਤੀ ਜਾਹਿ ॥

It can neither be disobeyed nor circumvented. It is not only God's pleasure but also His power. Recognising it and following its dynamic dictates is the duty of everyone. Yet, there are the ignorant ones who would rather like to have their own way. The Guru admonishes them:

One who cognizes not His *Hukam* should be called blind

-SGGS p 954

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਬੁਝਈ ਅੰਧਾ ਕਹੀਐ ਸੋਇ ॥

To such an ignorant one who may try to counter *Hukam*, only grief and misery befalls.

The ignorant of *Hukam* come to great grief,
Filled with deceit, they sleep not in peace.

-SGGS p 85

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਣੈ ਬਹੁਤਾ ਰੋਵੈ ॥ ਅੰਦਰ ਧੋਖਾ ਠੀਦ ਨ ਸੋਵੈ ॥

Benevolent

His *Hukam* is benevolent and compassionate.

Now has the Lord issued His *Hukam*,
None shall make another grieve.

Let all abide in peace under the benevolent rule.

-SGGS p 74

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ ॥ ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕਿਸੇ ਰਵਾਣਦਾ ॥
ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਈ ਵੁਠੀਆ ਇਹੁ ਹੋਆ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜ ਜੀਏ ॥

Inscrutable

Although it spells our destiny, *Hukam* is not readily available to human apprehension. It seems to work in secrecy, away from the ordinary human sensibility.

The commander inscribes everyone's writ over his head,
But without a pen or ink.

-SGGS p 1280

ਹੁਕਮੀ ਲਿਖੈ ਸਿਰਿ ਲੇਖੁ ਵਿਣ ਕਲਮ ਮਸਵਣੀਐ ॥

Dynamic

Hukam is the great vehicle of Divine Dynamism. Every action is mandated by it.

As the *Hukam* decrees, so occurs the action.

-SGGS p1

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲ ॥

It operates not through compulsion, but through obligation; not through coercion, but by expecting fulfillment of duty.

Hukam and freedom of will

Hukam, in the Sikh parlance, is also the Will of God—but not in the Islamic sense. According to the Islamic concept of *Hukm*, the Divine Will is 'unpledged'. According to the Gurus' concept, *Hukam* is definitely pledged as well as dependable. Although it cannot be described, yet, its constancy, consistency, regularity and predictability can be seen. Even the human psychological sphere is attributable to the all-determining divine action.

Absolute freedom lies in being in accord with *Hukam*. Submission to it leads to realisation of Truth, wherein lies the highest freedom. However, relative freedom, to an extent, is also available to humans due to God's prior gift of wisdom (*bibek*) to them. It is by virtue of this gift that man becomes a small shareholder in Divine Freedom. Thus, in man is coexistence of voluntarism (due to *bibek*) and determinism (due to *Hukam*). That makes for proximate cause of human action to be within his psyche. God Himself has predetermined human nature to include deliberative choice. Man's accountability also relates to the exercise of the gifted deliberative choice. It is on that account that the Guru says:

Let us, with our own hands resolve our own affairs.

-SGGS p 474

ਆਪਣ ਹਥੀ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਕਾਜ ਸਵਾਰੀਐ ॥

And then inspires us by saying

Live making effort, by earning enjoy comfort,
Meet the Lord through meditation
Thus shall your anxieties vanish.

-SGGS p 522

ਉਕਮੁ ਕਰੇਦਿਆ ਜੀਉ ਤੂੰ ਕਮਾਵਦਿਆ ਸੁਖ ਭੂੰਚੁ ॥
ਇਆਇਦਿਆ ਤੂੰ ਪੁਛੁ ਮਿਲੁ ਲਨਕ ਉਰਗੀ ਚਿੰਤ ॥

Human freedom, thus, is of the nature of 'limited creativity'. By this relative freedom or limited creativity man responds or fails to respond to God. The distance between man and God is not spatial distance; it is epistemic. The ultimate divine determinism of the human character, however, remains the essential mystery.

The ideal of human life is not merely personal liberation, but union with God as well as the cosmos. This is possible only by shifting to the true centre through abandonment of self-centredness along with its defences and inhibitions. The 'determining self' cannot carry the 'determined self' above its own level. Self-determinism is different from true spiritual freedom which can be achieved only by transcending from self-determinism to determinism by divine *Hukam*. It can be attained by abandoning one's own pleasure (*aapan bhana*) to the divine pleasure (*Kartari bhana*).

He alone is a true Sikh, a true friend, relative and brother,
Who treads as per Guru's pleasure.

Whoever follows his own pleasure, suffers separation
and endures punishment

-SGGS p 601

ਸੇ ਸਿਖ ਸਖਾ ਥੰਧੁ ਹੈ ਭਾਈ ਜੇ ਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਭਾਣੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵੈ ॥
ਆਪਣੇ ਭਾਣੈ ਜੋ ਛਲੈ ਭਾਈ ਵਿਛੁੜਿ ਚੋਟਾ ਖਾਵੈ ॥

Cognizing Hukam

Bhai Nand Lal says:

Desire for obedience (to Hukam) brought me into being
Otherwise, I saw no profit in coming to this world. -
Zindagi Namah

Bringing one's life in accord with the principles of
Hukam is the highest spiritual wisdom.

There is no other wisdom besides realising the Master's
Hukam-SGGS p 991

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਭਾਣੈ ਖਸਮ ਕਾ ਦੂਜੀ ਅਵਰ ਸਿਆਣਪ ਕਾਇ ॥

Apprehension of the mystery of *Hukam* underlying all
existence is not a one-time affair, but a life long obligation.
However, the wretched self-centered individual does not
cognize His *Hukam*, and lives as his ego directs him.

The self-willed wretch cognizes not His *Hukam*,
And acts continually pushed by his ego.

-SGGS p 1423

ਮਨੁਖੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਬੁਝੈ ਥਪੜੀ ਨਿਭ ਹਉਮੈ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਇ ॥

They do not obey His *Hukam*, and pursue the way of
conflict.

O Brother! They who obey not His *Hukam*,
Wander in the pursuit of duality.

-SGGS p 1419

ਇਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਮੰਨਿ ਨ ਜਾਣਨੀ ਭਾਈ ਦੂਜੈ ਭਾਇ ਫਿਰਾਇ ॥

The way of duality, of seeing oneself apart from the
rest, is the way of *Haumai*. It is the way opposed to that of
seeing oneself as part of the great One Unity. The former
consists in following one's own personal pleasure; the
latter, in following God's pleasure. Although they are
mutually antithetical, both have been ordained by the same
Lord.

Know ye that the Master of both the ways is the Lord,
Through the Guru's Word, one cognizes His *Hukam*.

-SGGS p 223

ਗੁਰ ਦੇਵੈ ਖਸਮੁ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਣੁ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥

It is the Guru who turns his disciple towards God. The
God-oriented disciple cognizes Divine *Hukam*, and

Obeys the *Hukam*, he acceptable becomes,
And reaches the Mansion of the Lord

-SGGS p 471

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਹੋਵੈ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ਤਾ ਪਸਮੈ ਕਾ ਮਹਲੁ ਪਾਇਸੀ ॥

The God-centered man realises *Hukam*
And submitting to it merges with the Lord

-SGGS p 1037

ਮਨੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਸੁ ਦਰਗਹ ਧੋਏ ਸਾਚਿ ਮਿਲਾਇ ਸਮਾਇਦਾ ॥

Connection with other metaphysical concepts

Hukam and Vismad (Wonder)

Vismad (Wonder) is the primal emotive response by
creatures to the grandeur of *Hukam*. This is a sentiment
that arises when one is face to face with what is infinitely
inscrutable as well as infinitely powerful—and that *Hukam*
is.

Wondrous is the Lord's *Hukam* -
Realised by one who submits to it;
He alone knows the true way of life.

-SGGS p 940

ਹੁਕਮ ਬਿਸਮਾਦ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਪਛਾਣੈ ਜੀਅ ਜਗਤ ਸਚੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਸੋਈ ॥

Wonderful You are and wonder generative Your Power.

-SGGS p 563

ਤੂੰ ਅਚਰਜੁ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਿਸਮਾ ॥

Not only is His *Hukam* wonderful,
His *Rajae* (pleasure) is wonderful as well
Great You are! Wondrous is Your *Rajae*.

-SGGS p 1329

ਤੂੰ ਹੈ ਵਾਹੁ ਤੇਰੀ ਰਜਾਇ ॥

Hukam and Bhau (Awe)

There is another emotive response to the immensity,
extensity, omnipresence and omnipotence of *Hukam*,
which is twin to 'Wonder'. It is 'Awe', called *Bhau* or *Bhai*
in Punjabi. Every created being as well as thing performs
its assigned functions in an awe-struck state:

In the Awe of the Lord ever blows the wind with its breezes.

In His Awe roll a million rivers.

In His Awe is fire forced to labour.

In His Awe is the earth crushed under its burden.

In His Awe, heads down, do clouds roam around.

In His Awe does Dharmaraja mind the (Lord's) Door.

In His Awe blazes the sun; in Awe shines the moon

And they travel over endless miles.

The Siddhas, Buddhas and Nathas abide in His Awe,

In His Awe is stretched the vault of the sky.

In His Awe the warriors and heroes abide.

Boat loads of pilgrims in His Awe commute.

The writ of the Lord's Fear is on every head.

He, the Formless, True One alone, is Fearless

- SGGS p 464

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਪਵਣ ਵਹੇ ਸਦ ਵਾਹਿ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਚਲੈ ਲਖ ਦਰੀਅਰਹਿ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਅਗਨਿ ਕਦੇ ਵੇਗਾਰ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਧਰਤੀ ਦਬੀ ਭਾਰਿ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਟਿੰਦੂ ਫਿਰੈ ਸਿਰ ਭਾਰਿ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਰਾਜਾ ਧਰਮ ਦੁਆਰੁ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਚੰਦੁ ॥ ਕੋਹ ਕਰੋਤੀ ਚਲਤ ਨ ਅੰਤੁ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਸਿੰਧੁ ਬੁਧ ਸੁਰ ਨਥ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਛਾਣੈ ਆਕਾਸ ॥

ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਜੋਧ ਮਹਾਬਲ ਸੂਰ ॥ ਭੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਵਹਿ ਜਾਵੀ ਪੂਰ ॥

ਸਗਲਿਆ ਭਉ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਸਿਰਿ ਲੇਖਾ ॥

ਲਾਨਕ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਸਚੁ ਏਕ ॥

Hukam and Nadar (Grace)

Cognizance of *Hukam* is possible only through the Grace of God. Descent of Divine Grace makes *Hukam* perceptible.

They alone cognize the *Hukam* of the Creator

On whom His Grace descends.

- SGGS p 510

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਭੀ ਤਿਨਾ ਮਨਾਇਸੀ ਜਿਨ ਕਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇਇ ॥

Not just cognizance, even submission to *Hukam* is possible only through His Grace:

Them alone He makes submit to His *Hukam*

Upon whom He casts the looks of Grace.

- SGGS p 523

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਸਹਿ ਦਇਆਲ ਬੁਝਾਏ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਮਿਤ ॥

Hukam, Shabad and Naam

Obedying *Hukam* brings about revelation of *Shabad* (the divine Word):

Whom He causes to obey His *Hukam*,

His *Shabad* He establishes deep in their heart

- SGGS p 72

ਹੁਕਮੁ ਜਿਨਾ ਨੂੰ ਮਨਾਇਆ ॥ ਤਿਨ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਸਾਇਆ ॥

By His *Hukam* He dyes everyone in *Shabad*.

- SGGS p 109

ਸਬਦਿ ਰੰਗਾਏ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਸਥਾਏ ॥

The one principal *Hukam* for everyone is to let His

Naam abide in one's heart.

The One *Naam* is the Lord's *Hukam* -

This insight, says Nanak, the Guru has given me.

- SGGS p 72

ਏਕੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰਿ ਦੀਆ ਬੁਝਾਇ ਜੀਓ ॥

Hukam and Haumai

Haumai, the principle of individuation, working in every individual as ego, is also ordained by His *Hukam*:

This ego too is established by the Lord's *Hukam*,

Thus one follows the writ of one's deeds

- SGGS p 466

ਹਉਮੈ ਏਹੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ ਪਇਐ ਕਿਰਤਿ ਫਿਰਹਿ ॥

Recognising this, one lets one's ego be subsumed to His *Hukam*, and thus elevates himself spiritually:

Should man realise his egoism,

The doors of Enlightenment would open to him

- SGGS p 466

ਹਉਮੈ ਬੁਝੈ ਤਾ ਦਰ ਸੁਝੈ ॥

Conclusion

Although man has no option but to abide by the sovereign divine *Hukam*, he is ordinarily ignore-ant of it. However, by the Guru's grace, when he realises that his ego, even though vested in him by the divine *Hukam* itself, causes him to ignore it (the *Hukam*), he reorients his life and subsumes his own will to the divine Will. His consciousness then gets linked to Almighty God.

Then

Obedying the *Hukam*, one is blessed with virtues of spiritual wisdom.

- SGGS p 944

ਮਾਨੈ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਸਭੈ ਗੁਣ ਗਿਆਨ ॥

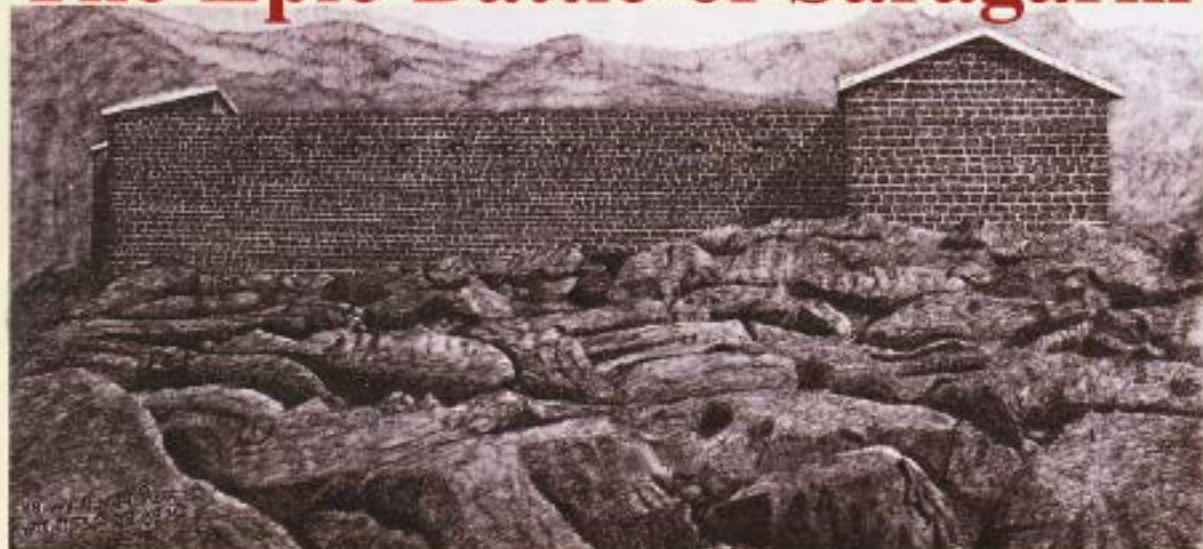
So long as he did not realise *Hukam*, he was afflicted with *mamta* (possessiveness). Now that spiritual wisdom sprouts in him, he renounces the counsel of his egoistic mind and practises the presence of God in all his endeavours. Realising *Hukam*, then, he rises spiritually step by step to supreme freedom.

He now realises that his will does not go into action without sufficient reason, but since he has identified with that *supreme reason*, he enjoys unprecedented freedom. He now knows that freedom is not random action or action without cause, but the possibility of responsible self-determinism when the cause is the Self and not the self. He comes to know that his egoistic pursuits were the cause of his bondage. When he rises above the vain strivings of his ego and moulds his life in accord with the divine *Hukam*, he finds himself basking in the sunshine of cosmic freedom.

Dr Jaswant Singh Neki

PORTRAITS OF COURAGE SERIES

The Epic Battle of Saragarhi



The blockhouse at Saragarhi before the attack : a recreation by Birinder Singh Malhi.

The second lecture at the Imperial War Museum

When the subject of the second in the *Portrait of Courage* Lecture Series was decided upon, no one could have realised the topicality of the proposed lecture. With the eyes of the world firmly watching Afghanistan and with the Sikh Community equally in the grips of a united stand against the hate crimes now visited upon them, the battle of Saragarhi - the heroic story 21 Sikh soldiers of the 36th Sikh Regiment, valiantly resisting the throes of tens of thousands of Afghani tribesmen—provided an opportunity to bring to light a gallant episode in Sikh military history and to address the Sikh response to the attacks on America.

Once again the venue for the *Portraits of Courage* annual lecture on Sikh military history was the grand lecture theatre at the Imperial War Museum on London's fashionable South Bank. The Imperial War Museum in London is of course the perfect setting. Set in peaceful gardens, the Museum welcomes visitors with a close up view of two 15 inch naval guns dating from the Great War. The Imperial War Museum's association with the Sikhs is a long-standing one—although not that well known by Sikhs themselves! Within the permanent display collection is one of the 5 V.C.s won by Sikh soldiers, that awarded to Parkash Singh. A

Sikh gunner mans a tank in the main display and the recent 'Together: The Commonwealth in War' exhibition reminded visitors of the often-unheralded role of Commonwealth soldiers to the allied war effort during both world wars.

A moody autumn day couldn't keep people away. Students rubbed shoulders with Sikh veterans who shared stories with British officers of the Sikh Regiments. Serving officers spoke to earnest young men as the expectation for an eventful evening began.

Unfortunately, the Sikh community in the UK has seen its involvement in the British Army, once a proud and honourable profession for the Sikhs in India, shrink to a mere passing interest. It was indeed even more interesting to note that many of the young British Sikhs were visiting the Museum for the very first time. As London's arts and cultural institutions have discovered, widening the appeal of their collections and reaching out to communities is best achieved through relevance and partnership. This was not lost on the Imperial War Museum when they were approached by the *Maharajah Duleep Singh Centenary Trust* (M.D.S.C.T.) to host a lecture series on the Sikh Military Experience.



The Rt Hon Viscount Lord Slim.



The distinguished audience.

The partnership has been a fruitful one. In November 2000, author and historian Pushpinder Singh delivered the first lecture in the series. To a rapt audience, he delivered a superbly researched and detailed account of the Sikh Regiments, in France and Flanders during the First World War. The lecture coincided with much press coverage of the Ministry of Defence's difficulties in recruiting sufficient ethnic minorities into the British Army and prompted one national newspaper to headline a piece with "Sikhs urge Army: Give us our own Regiment."

The second lecture was a departure for the Imperial War Museum—an institution that has been established to document, record and archive the war experience since the Great War of 1914-1918. While Saragarhi, an engagement that occurred in 1897, fell out of the Museum's remit, the spirit and importance of the message were far too compelling.

Against the backdrop of the events of September 11th, arguably the biggest news story of a generation, Daljit Singh, a trustee of the M.D.C.S.T. delivered the opening words. It was of course impossible not to mention the dramatic impact on race relations of the events in America, and no more illustrative of this was the backlash against Sikhs in the USA and the UK as a result of a passing resemblance to Afghani hardliners. The irony of this was of course not lost on any of the speakers. Daljit Singh delivered a powerful call for tolerance

and understanding underpinned by a war on ignorance. These words were echoed by Robert Crawford, the Director General of the Imperial War Museum. Echoing the strap line of the MDCST 'Bringing History and Cultures Together', Robert Crawford spoke glowingly of the role of the Sikh soldier in Britain's armed forces and the two wars. It was also an ideal opportunity to formally announce another initiative of the M.D.S.C.T., namely an exhibition titled 'Jawans to Generals' which will be launched at Wellington Arch, London in May 2002 and which promises to explore the largely unheralded role of Sikh soldiers during the two World Wars.

The 2001 lecture was long overdue; perhaps even 100 years overdue, but Viscount Slim in his powerful evocation of those events more than compensated for that oversight. A superb audio presentation giving a fictional dramatic reconstruction of a conversation between two of the Sikhs stationed at Saragarhi preceded the main lecture and was a touching precursor to the lecture itself. Viscount Slim, the main speaker, was born and raised in a united India and evoked memories of his early days as an Army child. His warm and often witty recollections of Sikhs that he served with gave a powerful insight into the sort of relationship that Ishar Singh, the Havildar in charge of securing the Saragarhi fort would have had with Captain Houghton his CO based at Fort Lockhart. Rather than merely recounting the military history of the Saragarhi episode, Slim chose to conjure up the sheer humanity of the event and remind the audience of the bravery of the 21 men who, stranded in the hostile environs of the North West Frontier Province, nevertheless fought gallantly to the last man against an impenetrable horde of Afridi tribesmen. They chose to fight where others would have run or surrendered. Slim talked of Sepoy Gurmukh Singh who continued to signal using a heliograph while his comrades were fighting hand to hand within the breached fortress. In a final and poignant signal Gurmukh Singh would request an order to cease signals in order to join his men in the fight and ultimately in death.

The story of Saragarhi is indeed one that continues to inspire, but



Daljit Singh Sidhu, Trustee M.D.S.C.T.



The Rt. Hon. Charles Clarke MP, Cabinet Minister and Chairman of the Labour Party.



Harbinder Singh Rana of the M.D.S.C.T.

one that is often unobserved. It is the opinion of some that this oversight comes from the fact that for the Indians this was a battle for Britain and it is forgotten by the British as the soldiers were Indian. Whatever the reason Viscount Lord Slim removed the veil of anonymity, which had surrounded these 21 lions for so long.

The valour of those 21 soldiers was indeed remarkable and emanated from the Sikh characteristic of 'chardi kala' or indomitable spirit in the face of all odds.

In the closing address Harbinder Singh Rana reminded the audience that Saragarhi is not as unique as it first seems in the annals of Sikh history. In 1703, 800 Sikhs fended off over 10000 invaders. In 1705 in the Garhi of Chamkaur a band of 40 devout soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh faced 100,000 moghuls. On each occasion what prevailed were their high spirits and infinite courage. Morale, as demonstrated by Saragarhi, is that characteristic which is such an important part of the soldier's arsenal.

A quotation delivered by Harbinder seemed to encapsulate the very essence of the Sikh soldier:

"Morale is a state of mind. It is that intangible force which will move a whole group of men to give their last ounce to achieve something. Morale if it is to endure must have certain foundations. These foundations are spiritual, intellectual and material. And that is the order of their importance. Spiritual first because only spiritual foundations can withstand strain."

That quote came not from the pen of a Sikh but from someone who many historians claim to be the greatest military commander of the last century - Field Marshal Lord Slim, the father of the guest speaker and the address merely served to highlight the relevance of his father's



Left to right: Lord Slim, Ian Henderson, Robert Crawford (Director-General of The Imperial War Museum).

vision whose epic "Defeat into Victory" is perhaps the most remarkable account of the Burma Campaign.

As we heard it was morale which prevailed in the bleakest of circumstances at Saragarhi and resulted in both houses of Parliament standing in silence the first time since Waterloo. Everyone of those 21 soldiers was a baptised Sikh recruited into the 36th Regiment because it was recognised it was that spiritual backbone which gave them supreme morale. In that regard Viscount Lord Slim was the most eminently suitable speaker for this lecture.

Returning to a contemporary theme and indeed the most pressing issues facing the Sikh community today, Harbinder Singh Rana reminded the audience of a critical distinction that one would do well to remember. In the clamour to dissociate the Sikh identity from that of the Taliban, the fundamental distinctions are easily lost. Harbinder clearly laid these out: "The Taliban see any one



Men of the XXXVI Sikhs in 1897.



Officers of the XXXVI Sikhs, Tirah 1897. Seated in the middle is the C.O., Colonel John Haughton.

who does not adhere to their ideology as infidels. Yet Sikhism declares that all religions and men are equal."

"The Taliban ruthlessly oppress women refusing them education and other Human Rights where Sikhism boldly proclaimed the emancipation of women elevating them to the rank of a princess to grant them dignity."

"The Taliban dared, in the face of worldwide protests to destroy Buddhist statues And yet our Gurus erected shrines and mosques for other faiths."

"They refuse to allow others into their places of worship yet the very Foundation stone of the fountainhead of our faith, the Golden Temple was laid by a Muslim saint."

"The Taliban contend that to die for their faith is the ultimate sacrifice. For us the ultimate sacrifice is that given not in defence of our own faith but for the defence of others. That is why in 1675 Guru Tegh Bahadur would agree to be publicly beheaded

so that the Brahmins of Kashmir could continue to practice Hinduism".

"Our condemnation of the Taliban is not born out of some opportunistic desire to join on the present bandwagon but from 3 centuries of opposition to intolerance, bigotry and oppression in the North West of India. The point I think is clear we could not be more different and indeed we did not lay down our lives over the centuries, in Flanders in Gallipoli in Mesopotamia, in Burma and of course in Saragarhi to be mistaken for those who shun the very values which we have defended".

A fitting end to fitting tribute was the finale in the two audio pieces - the roll call of the 21 names of the brave men of Saragarhi.



165 Havildar Ishar Singh
332 Naik Lal Singh
834 Sepoy Narayan Singh
546 Lance Naik Chanda
814 Sepoy Gurmukh Singh
1321 Sepoy Sundar Singh
871 Sepoy Jivan Singh
287 Sepoy Ram Singh
1733 Sepoy Gurmukh Singh
492 Sepoy Uttar Singh
163 Sepoy Ram Singh
182 Sepoy Sahib Singh
1257 Sepoy Bhagwan Singh
359 Sepoy Hira Singh
1265 Sepoy Bhagwan Singh
687 Sepoy Daya Singh
1556 Sepoy Buta Singh
760 Sepoy Jivan Singh
1651 Sepoy Jivan Singh
791 Sepoy Bhola Singh
1221 Sepoy Nand Singh



Amandeep Singh Madra

A beautiful evening with

Shabad Gurbani

RAMINDRA AJIT SINGH



An unusual happening occurred at the theatre of India Habitat Centre, New Delhi in early January 2002 when a large number of people from divergent backgrounds gathered to witness the release of two cassettes of Gurbani sung by Ramindra Ajit Singh. There was an atmosphere charged with emotion, of affection and admiration for this remarkable woman of 81 years, who had maintained the traditions of her family, of a culture of singing shabads from the Guru Granth Sahib. Besides her immediate circle of family friends, a number of people had come to know her at the Chinmaya Mission in New Delhi where she recited Japji Sahib when Swami Swaroopa Nanda dwelt on the Japji, in the context of life as lived today.

Ramindra had learnt music at a very young age because of the encouragement of her father, Sardar Manmohan Singh, who had retained a resident music teacher, Sardar Mohan Singh of Lucknow, to teach her. At the age of 16 years Ramindra sang at a music competition for amateur musicians in Lahore with well-known masters of that time as the judges. She was awarded first prize and praised for her melodious and well trained voice. This was in the early 1930s when girls did not sing in public and in fact people criticised her father for getting her trained in music.

Still, Ramindra continued with her music as she studied at the Kanaird College in Lahore. The shift to Abbotabad in the NWFP interrupted her music lessons but she, however, continued with her singing of the Gurbani in the home, at family functions and at the Gurdwara. She learnt from well-known and revered *rages* such as Bhai Sidh Singhji and added to her repertoire.

In 1939, M.K.Gandhi came to the family house and Ramindra sang every morning at the large prayer meetings. Gandhiji listened enraptured and his favourite shabad was *Ram Rahim Puran, Koran, Guru ek kaheo guru ek he manyo*.

In 1940, Ramindra's family moved to Delhi and she was able to restart her classical music. For her, music was a source of deep fulfillment, it was her meditation and she has continued to sing throughout her life.

Bhai Vir Singhji, the great contemporary mystic poet, enjoyed hearing Ramindra sing the shabads and his mystic poems

Sapne wich tusi melai asnoo

Asadha galwakrdi pye

Nira noor tussi hath na aye

Sadi kamdi rahi kalayi

Ramindra led a creative life writing, reading, singing and became a pillar of not just her extended family, but also of society. She was an active member of the International Women's Club organising many events, cultural programmes and was elected the Treasurer. She remains today President of the Bhai Vir Singh Study Circle and also a founder member of the Bhai Vir Singh Sadan and takes an active interest in their activities.



In 1999, she released her first book of short stories *Kanki* written in Punjabi. In the foreword written by Khushwant Singh, he said about her: "She has immense talent. Besides being an excellent housekeeper, the best of cooks, she was into music and poetry. Her gift of story telling I only discovered after she let me read some of the short stories included in this anthology. I was charmed by the originality, as they deal with themes no other writer of short stories has thought of writing about. They have a lot more of them than a simple narrative of events and quirks of individuals. They carry a message for those sensitive enough to discern it. With this first collection of stories Ramindra has carved for herself a place among the foremost of Punjabi short story writers".

Ramindra is the kind of person who gives her best in whatever she does. For her every act is a celebration of the gift of life that her Maker has given her. Her home is a place of elegance and warmth. Her mastery of cooking is unparalleled, whether it is a simple everyday food or exotic Mughlai, European or Chinese, it is delectable and she has not only given demonstration of her recipes, but she has given many cooking lessons.

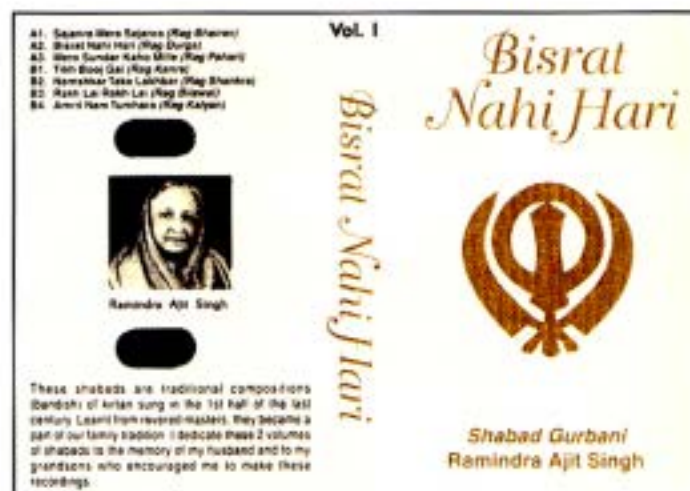
In the 1980s when she stayed with a weaver designer in Chicago and saw her creating her own creations by introducing beads into her weaving, Ramindra was inspired to make specially embroidered fans and had an exhibition of her work. She began to make special creative hand bags as gifts for her friends and family and they have become collectors items.

Her latest recording of some of the shabads was at the persuasion of her grandsons, who felt that this tradition that she was maintaining needed to be recorded for posterity and kept alive by the younger generation.

This style of kirtan, which was rendered by the women folk, has a quality of a personalised devotion, a part of the everyday life of the family. It was the women who maintained this tradition. The singing was not a ritual to be performed and forgotten, it was the very life lived. Every month in the first day of the Indian calendar *sankrant*, was celebrated by singing shabads, by reciting the *barahmasa*, and by partaking of the *prashad*. Every festival was first celebrated in the family whether it was *gurupurab* or the seasonal festival. Every birthday was celebrated. One sang not only in the family shrine, but when one was happy, when they remembered someone, even when they were moved by the rains, *Bundhkahani tayag chatrik*. When their hearts lifted after a period of sadness,

Bharam khoi shant sehej sawani. Pargas bhaiya kawal khilia. When a life was lived richly and fully, but in complete truthfulness, one sang Jogi andar jogia te bhogi andar bhogia. Tera ant na paya sarab mach payaljo.

This tradition goes back to the beginning of the last century when young women learnt to sing shabads from revered masters, who were traditional ragees and so as to enrich their lives. There was also no distinction, if one was a Hindu or a Sikh. In Ramindra's family it was her mother's family, which maintained the tradition though this was a non-Sikh family of Rai Bahadur Rocha Ram. Gurbani is the bani of the mystics, Sufis and the devotees of India. The Guru Granth Sahib is perhaps the only revered collection of sacred verses, which is not only the bani of the Guru's, but also of Baba Farid, Kabir, Namdev and many others.



The two tapes that were released this evening are a blend of tradition. The first tape *Bisrat Nahi Hari* is the traditional style of singing the shabad, which goes back to the first half of the last century. The second tape is of new compositions developed by her sister with Nizam Bhai, a true Sufi and musician of great rasa and devotion with whom Ramindra has been singing, evolving a new range of shabads. Nizam Bhai, who is himself a Sufi, has now become a known figure in the singing of shabads from the Gurbani.

These tapes were released by Bhai Sahib Bhai Avtar Singh, who is a direct descendent of those who sang gurbani in the presence of Guru Gobind Singhji, the tenth Master.

When Ramindra and her grandsons distributed the tapes to those who had gathered together they all wanted to take more for other members of their family, who were not present there, to pass on this rich heritage to their loved ones. Culmination of the special evening was when Ramindra's family, her son, daughter and their children together sang with her and Nizam Bhai, the family favourite

Rakh laee meri gurple meri rakh rakh laee.

Annual Seminar of the Institute of Sikh Studies

Socio-Political Turmoil: Leadership Failures



Keynote address at Chandigarh, November 2001

The topic 'Institutional Failure in Punjab with respect to Sikhism' chosen for this Seminar is very timely and challenging. There are a wide spectrum of views on the subject and it would not be possible for any one person to take up this multi-dimensional topic in a single paper. However, the most important aspect of this problem relates to the failure of socio-religious leadership of the Sikhs in pre and post-Partition period. It is mainly because of incompetent leadership that the time-honoured Sikh institutions have failed to play the desired role and confront the dangers from within, and without, which are eating into the vitals of Sikhism. Socio-political turmoil witnessed in Punjab in the recent years points towards the need for serious introspection to make amends for such failure. We cannot afford to sit down in impotent rage and utter idle lamentations. We should venture to search for new directions and new dimensions so that we can address the

pragmatic socio-political concerns and deploy what we learn, so as to solve such problems. Escape from the present is neither possible nor desirable.

Institutions have been the life blood of the Sikh community. The Sikh religion owes its distinctive character to these institutions which have nourished and sustained the Sikh through the centuries. Guru Nanak took great care that his creed should be well-defined and should not be confused with the beliefs and practices of other religions. He established *Dharamshals* (earlier nomenclature for Gurdwaras) as the centres of a new society, which not only came to serve as repositories of the Sikh faith but also played a significant role in maintaining the corporate life of the community and reinforcing the notion of religious collectivism. The Gurdwaras welded the Sikhs into an independent community bound together by faith in the teachings of

their Gurus. Apart from spreading the gospel of the Gurus, they served as rallying centres of Sikhs, where problems concerning the welfare of the community were discussed. The establishment of the Gurdwaras was a practical step for carrying the society forward towards collective enlightenment. At these centres, the Gurus saw the fulfilment of their mission of universal love, peace, tolerance, brotherhood and the spiritual and moral regeneration of man.

The Sikh congregation, which began to be known as the *Sangat*, met daily around the Guru, mostly for socio-religious purposes. The virtues of this participation were obligatory features of the Sikh discipline. The twin institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* became living examples of the ideals of unity and human equality preached by the Gurus. Through the practice of *Langar*, the Gurus led the path of universal brotherhood and love. In Sikhism, from the earliest days, the corporate obligation was maintenance of *Langar*, the responsibility for which rested on the entire Sikh community. Guru Arjan compiled the *Granth Sahib* and built the Harimandir, which became focal point of the Sikh faith. Gurdwaras have always been the guardians of the Sikh way of life and the extent to which they have been free has always had a decisive bearing on the socio-political status of the community. It was on the basis of the strength of their institutions that the Sikhs became a force to be reckoned with and came to occupy a status of 'a state within a state'. Here it should be noted that development of the Sikh ideal of brotherhood is intimately bound with the history of the gradual consolidation of the Sikh *Panth*.

The raising of the Akal Takht next to the Harimandir Sahib by the sixth Guru was a unique idea of the spiritual and empirical unity handed down to the Sikhs by their Guru. It was from the Akal Takht that the Sikhs conducted their long drawn political struggles against the foreign invaders. The Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh performed the epitomic act of creating the *Khalsa* and prescribing the role of *Sant-Sipahi* for his followers. The Guru laid the foundation of a grand collectivity called the *Panth*, which was invested with the collective leadership of the community and was to guide itself in light of the Word (*Shabad*) as incorporated in the *Guru Granth*. The greatest respect began to be shown to the incorporated Word. The Guru's injunction that "there shall be one Guru, one Word and only one interpretation" (Guru Amar Das in *Var Sorath*) became the guiding principle for the entire *Panth*. The Sikhs were gradually becoming familiar with a kind of self government of their own at the centre of which was the Guru with his unchallenged authority, his magnificent *Darbar* and his control over the entire organisation of the

Sangats then was to them a symbol of unity and of something mystical beyond all ordinary considerations. Imbued with the ideals of discipline, dedication and self-sacrifice and institutions that gave practical shape to these ideals, the *Sikh Panth* began to be looked upon as a potential threat to the rulers.

The Sikh institutions flourished as long as the Sikhs followed the Guru's injunctions. One could come across examples of Sikhs who represented the best in Sikhism. The Gurus had themselves set all doubts, dissensions and differences at rest by setting aside all those elements which were likely to create schisms, cults and sects. Accordingly the *Udasis*, the *Minas*, the *Dhirmalias*, the *Ram Raias*, etc. were not allowed to associate in any way with the mainstream of Sikhism. It is note-worthy that the fifth Guru Arjan put the seal of his sanction on the *Masand* system but when the *Masands* started deviating from the path shown by the Guru, the Tenth Master put an end to the institution of the *Masands*, in unequivocal terms before the creation of the *Khalsa*.

The growth of their institutions made the Sikhs tough and unbending under the stress and strain of the greatest of sufferings. The collective will of the community expressed through the *Sarbat Khalsa* and *Gurmatta* provided cohesion and unity to them. As the Sikh *Panth* consolidated its strength, it became more fit to play its destined role to fight the forces of tyranny and oppression and to stem the tide of invasions on the borders of the country. The Sikhs were infused with a corporate spirit and a sense of social obligation, not only towards their co-religionists but towards all those who were the victims of socio-political tyranny.

In the eighteenth century, when the Sikhs were passing through a turbulent phase and prices were fixed on their heads, they had great difficulty in preserving their institutions. The institutions of *Sarbat Khalsa* and the *Gurmatta* kept the torch of their faith burning and preserved unity and integrity in their ranks. But unfortunately when the Sikhs were, literally, in exile the Gurdwaras came under the control of *Mahants* and *Udasis* who were corrupt and indulged in practices that were contrary to the spirit of Sikhism. Whenever the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Sikhs was desecrated, there were heroes like Bhai Mehtab Singh and Baba Deep Singh, who came forward to fight the forces of vandalism and uphold the tradition of sacrifice and martyrdom.

When the Sikhs returned from exile, they organised themselves into *Misls*. Again the institution of *Sarbat Khalsa* and *Gurmatta* infused a spirit of unity and cohesion in their ranks and enabled them to devote their energies for the

well being of the *Khalsa Panth*. On the Diwali day of October 27, 1761, the Sikhs assembled at Amritsar and passed a *Gurmatta* to liberate Punjab from the foreign invaders and seize all their strongholds. People looked eagerly to the rise of a messiah, who would finally deliver them from socio-political persecution.

The emergence of Ranjit Singh on the scene was not a freak of history; rather it was a unique historical phenomenon. He was a characteristic product of the Sikh tradition, who referred to his government as *Sarkar-e-Khalsa*, which derived its legitimacy from the *Khalsa* Commonwealth. Catholicity of the Sikh tradition left its visible impact on the outlook and policy of Ranjit Singh. He gave to Punjab four decades of peace, progress and prosperity, the benefits of which were equally shared by all communities.

The period following annexation of the Punjab was a time of intense trauma and turmoil for the Sikhs when their institutions were in crisis. The British knew very well that the Sikhs derived their entire strength and vigour from their institutions. Therefore they made sure that the Sikh religious places were kept in hands that were hostile to the thesis of the Gurus and sought to divert them to the ritualistic maze of Hinduism. D. Petrie, an Assistant Director of Criminal Intelligence, Government of India, in a confidential report on the *Development of Sikh Politics* (1900-1911) wrote:

"The British adopted a very strict and rigid policy detrimental to the growth of Sikhism. After annexation, the Golden Temple at Amritsar, along with six other Gurdwaras and the Gurdwara at Tarn Taran were practically controlled by the British authorities through a Manager of these Gurdwaras appointed by the British Government. The *Waqf Act* of 1861 gave the control and management of the holy places of the Hindus and Muslims to the communities concerned but in the case of the Sikh Gurdwaras, the Act was not applied on political grounds. The properties of Sikh places of worship were transferred and given over to the *Udasi Mahants* and others, throughout the Punjab.

The colonialists had been extra vigilant about the control of the Sikh shrines, as is clear from the letter written by Lt. Governor R. E. Egerton to Lord Ripon, the Viceroy, on August 8, 1881: "I think it will be politically dangerous to allow the management of Sikh temples to fall into the hands of a Committee emancipated from government control, and trust Your Excellency will resist to pass such orders in the case, as will enable to continue the system, which has worked successfully for more than thirty years." (*British Museum, Additional Manuscript No. 43592, Folio 300-301*).

It was left to the Singh Sabha leadership to usher in a new era of socio-religious awakening among the Sikhs. Their leadership helped the Sikhs to regain strength and cohesion. They invoked the authority of the Sikh Gurus, the Sikh scripture and the Sikh tradition in support of everything they said and preached. The chief pillars of the movement such as Giani Ditt Singh, Bhai Gurmukh Singh, Bhai Mayya Singh, Bhai Jawahar Singh and Bhagat Lakshman Singh were quite ordinary persons of hardly any consequence in the socio-economic or the political life of the community. There was nothing to recommend them except their devotion to the cause of the great tradition which the mass of the people understood very well. They rendered Yeoman's service to the community by raising institutions like Singh Sabhas, Khalsa Diwans, Sikh Educational Conferences, Chief Khalsa Diwan, Khalsa College, Amritsar and scores of Sikh educational centres. The formulation of the Anand Marriage Act (1909), legalising the Sikh form of marriage was another significant achievement of the Singh Sabha. All these were important steps towards the re-assertion of an independent socio-religious identity of the Sikhs.

Soon after formation of the Shiromani Akali Dal in 1920, the Akalis pleaded that the Sikh shrines and religious establishments be handed over to the elected body of the Sikh community. They could no longer afford to permit their religious institutions to become places of corruption and also to be used to destroy the very roots that in history had given them unbelievable strength and vigour. A strong but peaceful campaign for Gurdwara reform and control led by the Akali Dal was successful in forcing a reluctant colonial government to pass the *Sikh Gurdwaras and Shrines Bill* (1925). This also led to the formation of the SGPC to take over the management of Sikh religious places. It was the first legally constituted public body in colonial India for which the principle of universal suffrage was recognised. It was a committee elected by all adult Sikhs including women.

Under control of the SGPC, the Sikh shrines, particularly the Darbar Sahib, continued to be the fount of Sikh power and inspiration. It was from the precincts of the Darbar Sahib that the Akali Dal waged a struggle for the liberation of the country. In this context the observations of Sardul Singh Kaveeshar, who partook in the Sikh struggle at this time are worth recording. He wrote: "A Sikh wants to fight his country's battles from the vantage ground of his religion. Being of a religious trend of mind, he finds everything subordinate to his *Dharma*; politics is nothing for him but a promising child of religion. A Sikh has not yet developed that fine sense of doubtful value that divides life into water-tight

compartments and makes of religion in the West something different from one's social and political life. For the Sikh, politics and religion are one. He wants the freedom of his religion, he wants the freedom of his country, but he knows that he cannot have one without the other. If religion is safe, he is sure to get back, soon or later, the freedom of the country. In fact he regards religion as the strong post, from which one should start to get back the lost liberty, as in his opinion the religious spirit alone can keep the freedom of a country safe once that has been won".

It was obvious that the struggle for the country's freedom was fought by the Sikhs on the basis and strength of their religious identity and institutions. Removal of government control over the Gurdwaras led to the emergence of the SGPC as the foremost institution of the community. Those who came at the helm of affairs of the SGPC began to be acknowledged as the leaders of the Sikh community.

But a retrospective look reveals that the SGPC has not been able to provide a good recruiting ground for the political leadership of the Sikhs. The educated elite section of the community has not been successful in gaining representation in the SGPC. While the Hindus and the Muslims had the benefit of guidance of enlightened leadership from all over India, the Sikh leaders displayed a complete lack of political vision and foresight. In spite of their parallel standing as the third political entity at the time of the country's independence, the Sikhs could not get a fair deal and relinquished their bargaining power as there was no leader among them of the stature of Gandhi and Jinnah, who could articulate the Sikh case and promote the political interests of the community. Here, it is noteworthy that in Punjab most Sikh movements have been mass upsurges unlike those in the rest of India, where those have generally been either among the literate classes or in the urban areas.

In free India the basic issue faced by the Sikhs has been that of preserving their distinctive socio-religious and political identity. The community feels that in the current socio-political milieu, Sikh traditions, institutions, culture, language and identity are seriously threatened. Here it is pertinent to point out that the organised modern state is much more powerful, coercive and pervasive than that of the medieval times. After the Second World War, with the withdrawal of colonial rule, many nation states emerged on the world scene. Ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in these newly created nation states are feeling more insecure and threatened than ever before. In the so-called secular democracies, the states imbibe the religious symbols of the majority communities. The Indian Constitution also accepts the Western Secularist-cum-

Democratic model. This system in its day-to-day working sharpens the conflict between the majoritarianism and the suffering minorities. This is highly hegemonic and detrimental to the interests of the minorities. It accepts the subordination of religio-ethnic minority to the socio-cultural majority nationalism and of the citizen to the state. The dictum of the modern state mechanism and set-up is that 'the religion salutes the flag'. For a whole life system like that of Sikhism, the calibre, vision and commitment of the religio-political leadership matters more than anything to keep the community cohesive and vibrant and the institutional frame work intact. The majority community can cope with a pride of sovereignty even if its leadership is not upto the mark but a minority community just can not afford these kind of laxities.

Indian polity has failed to establish its credentials as a dispenser of justice and fair play in the Punjab. The arbitrary, discriminatory and even vindictive policies which the Congress in the post-Independence period pursued in Punjab under the guise of secularism have driven the state and the Sikh community from one disaster to another. The role of the Akali Dal leadership has also been equally blameworthy. The party which had won universal acclaim during the Gurdwara Reform Movement has failed to salvage the socio-political identity of the Sikhs. Lacking in commitment and sincerity of purpose, the Akali leaders have reduced their politics to a sordid game of self-interest, political expediency, internal strife, mindless opportunism and corruption. Sikh institutions have been rendered subservient, impotent and alienated. They have been deprived of their democratic character. Ridden by nepotism, corruption and factional loyalties, these institutions have suffered an unprecedented decline in recent years. It is a matter of regret that even the horrendous attack on the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Sikhs and the massive anti-Sikh violence in Delhi and other places in 1984 failed to shake the Sikh leaders out of their insensitivity. Even as the traumatic events filled the 20 million Sikhs all over the world with anger and anguish, the leadership failed the Sikhs. Unmindful of the grievous hurt caused to the Sikh sentiments Harchand Singh Longowal signed the Rajiv-Longowal Accord (1985) which made no mention of the "Blue Star" attack. Accord was also detrimental to the interests of the state. It was virtually a deed of surrender. The Akali government under Surjit Singh Barnala that came into power in 1985 helped the centre to find a way out of potentially disastrous political impasse. Barnala under direction from New Delhi, planned and ordered a police assault, code named 'Operation Search' on the Darbar Sahib Complex. The game plan of the Centre was to provide legitimacy to the "Blue Star" attack through the Sikh Chief Minister. After the Jallianwala

Bagh tragedy General Dyer too had tried to impart legitimacy to his act through the pro-British *Mahants* and *Pujaris* of the Darbar Sahib, who had even presented a *Saropa* to him when he paid a visit to the shrine soon after the massacre.

The Centre continues to rule Punjab by proxy. The Akali-BJP alliance in the state has been used by the BJP to impose its hegemonistic agenda on the Punjab and to dilute or destroy all strongholds of Sikhism. The RSS has made inroads into the premier Sikh institutions in order to subvert Sikh culture and identity. Efforts have also been made to distort the Sikh scripture by focussing on the Dasam Granth, whose authenticity and integrity have not been established. All kinds of *Sadhus*, *Sants* and *Mahants* have been mobilised by the *Hindutva* forces, and sent to every nook and corner of rural areas to wean the Sikhs away from the teachings of the Gurus. A feeling has been growing among the Sikhs that the Akali Dal, led by Parkash Singh Badal, is being manipulated by the BJP to subvert Sikh ideology. It is unfortunate that incidents of burning of Sikh scriptures have taken place under the Badal government. Badal has been accused of playing second fiddle to the BJP. He has given a severe jolt to the Akali Dal which is supposed to represent the aspirations of the Sikh community ever since its inception in 1920. Under Badal's hegemonistic leadership, the Akali Dal has become a decadent and undemocratic organisation. By wresting control of the SGPC and the Akal Takht, Badal who is the Chief Minister and the party supremo, has arrogated all the authority to himself. Autocratic and unscrupulous, he is pursuing policies and strategies to promote his own kith and kin. This is a very disturbing phenomenon which requires serious introspection by the Sikh community.



Challenging Times

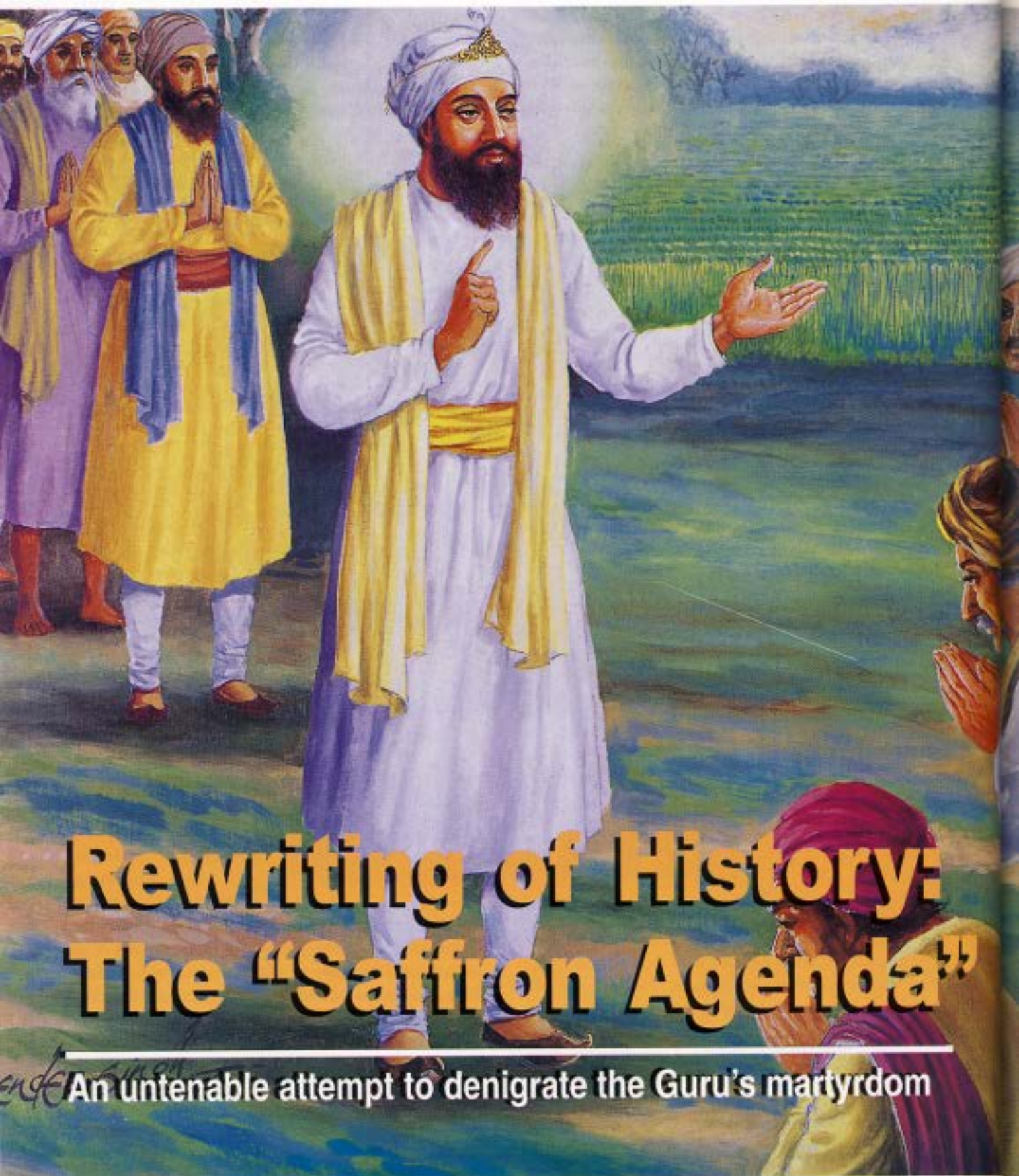
The Sikhs are passing through challenging times. They need to reorient and rejuvenate their institutions in the light of their ideals and past traditions. These institutions should bear the stamp of all that is the best, progressive and dynamic in Sikhism. They should grow, develop and cope with the need of the times but without compromising

on the basic principles on which they were established. The task can be accomplished by a new and well-equipped leadership who would blaze new paths of thought and action.

Decadent leadership which has caused enough damage to the ideals and institutions of the Sikhs for the last so many decades must be replaced by a vibrant, visionary, honest and committed leadership. It is noteworthy that in the post-Independence period the other parties in the country have witnessed so many changes in the socio-political leadership whereas the Sikhs, inspite of being dynamic and enterprising, have not shown any potential to discard the incompetent and corrupt leadership with dismal performance.

Hegemonistic leadership of one man has to be substituted by an apex body, which should exercise the corporate will and authority of the entire Sikh community and also give unity and coherence to their decisions. Members of this apex body should be men of impeccable credentials, enlightened and wide awake. They should be men of stature and above the lure of self-aggrandisement. All contentious issues relating to the *Sikh Maryada*, *Langar*, calendar, identity, role of the Akal Takht and the SGPC, should be referred to this body. Its decisions should be final and binding.

Prof. Gurdarshan Singh Dhillon



Rewriting of History: The "Saffron Agenda"

An untenable attempt to denigrate the Guru's martyrdom

"Tilak Janjoo Rakha Prabh Tanka"



"Hind Ki Cháddar": Guru Tegh Bahadur offering solace to the Hindus.

I read with great interest Satish Chandra's attempt to justify his distortion of the event of Guru Tegh Bahadur's supreme sacrifice in *The Hindu* newspaper. It is good that he has broken his silence on the issue and has at least accepted responsibility for defending his writing.

It is untrue that the Sikhs have only recently become aware of the "serious aspersions" cast on Guru Tegh Bahadur by Chandra deliberately presenting "facts in distorted manner". The distortion and the deliberate nature of the presentation has been in the Sikh view ever since day one. My daughter, who was studying in the XI class in about 1990, brought this controversial assessment to my notice. Some of us got together to approach the NCERT, the Governor of the State and other authorities to remedy the matter. We continued to bring it to the notice of all and sundry, without any effect, for a long time. In 1991, I wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, explaining the problem to him and subsequently brought it to his notice during my talks with him. He very quickly referred it to the NCERT authorities from whom he received a stale reply essentially on the lines now given by Satish Chandra. The Prime Minister was kind enough to send me a gist of it. The matter kept on simmering for a long time and was under discussion in many Sikh fora. An advocate took it to the Punjab and Haryana High Court, which gave some directions that were ignored by the NCERT. The disdain shown by it went unnoticed until it flared up in a big way as a result of the bold step taken by the Delhi Sikhs. Satish Chandra is not stating the truth when he says the Sikh people have only recently become aware of the aspersions. Again it is not a "section among the Sikhs" which is protesting against the unbecoming distortion of facts but the entire Sikh people who can in no way individually approach everyone concerned.

His argument that there is no contemporary account of the Guru's martyrdom in Persian is only technically right. Dr. J. S. Grewal, a renowned historian of medieval India in his *Guru Tegh Bahadur and the Persian Chroniclers*, published by the Guru Nanak Dev University in 1976 has quoted at least ten such works in Persian. Muslim scholars have written five of these: a Sikh and Hindus the other five. Several of them date from the same period as the *Siyar al-Mutakhirin*, which the present author has used, without explaining why he prefers it to all these other works. Or indeed, why must he depend only on Persian sources. No historical discipline entitles one to selectively use a work (of even Persian) without making the reader aware why it was so done.

There is no earthly reason why Chandra should depend exclusively upon Persian records in the face of abundant historical material being available to historians in Punjabi, Braj and Hindi.

His contention that there is likewise no contemporary Sikh account is not tenable at all. Perhaps the first such account is that of *Parchian Sewadas* written by a contemporary Udasi in 1708 CE. This manuscript has been available in many libraries and private collections. I myself have three identical manuscripts of it. Several publishers have published this in book form. I have analysed it and along with another colleagues translated it into English. *Sri Gur Sobha* (1711 CE) of Sainapat is another source emanating from the Guru's household itself and is considered, by historians, to be an excellent source book for the period. Koer Singh's *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, written in 1751 (which I have also analysed) is another good source on the martyrdom of the Guru and so also the *Bansawalinama* by Kesar Singh Chibbar (1767). In 1961, Giani Garja Singh had unearthed a completely new source of Sikh history comprising the records maintained by several contemporary Bhattas. His work *Shahid Bilas Bhai Mani Singh* (based on which I contributed an article to the Punjab History Conference several decades ago) contains trustworthy references to the martyrdom. Though not written by Guru Gobind Singh as is sometimes claimed, the *Bachittar Natak* is known since 1748 CE and contains an account of the event. It is not contended that the accounts given in these works are faultless. They have their limits but doubtlessly preserve the kernel of the happening in very complete shape. The list of sources given here is not exhaustive.

It would be difficult to disregard later Punjabi and Hindi works like those of Bhai Rattan Singh Bhangu and Bhai Santokh Singh (both of which I have also analysed) who depend upon near contemporary sources. They also give an account of how Baghel Singh, in the teeth of opposition, demolished mosques on the sites and constructed Gurdwaras in 1783 CE where the Guru had been beheaded and cremated. It is significant that a lady whose father had witnessed the event and had removed bloodstains from the place, had identified the exact spot of martyrdom. Now, is one entitled to ask Satish Chandra why he does not refer to this evidence at all? Is it possible that he has no idea that these sources exist?

We may try to understand why Ghulam Hussain's work was a bad source and should not have been used, much less solely used, by any historian. As pointed out by Dr. Grewal, it is 'a general history of India' and mentions the Guru almost in the passing. "In a work of three hundred thousand words he gives only a few hundred words to

Guru Tegh Bahadur". Ghulam Hussain's interest is mainly in Bengal to which he devotes more than three-fourths of the book. He deals with Sikh history only as a backdrop to Banda Bahadur's activity. He does not quote any source upon which he is relying and is certainly not referring to the tradition current in the Punjab of those times. He places the martyrdom in Lahore, which is factually wrong, and the manner of disposal of the Guru's body mentioned by him, is also contrary to all known facts. Hafiz Adam, who is projected as the Guru's companion in the "lawless activity", had died much earlier. He had been banished from India in 1642 CE by Shah Jahan on the recommendation of his minister Sadullah Khan with orders never to return to the east of River Attock. He died in 1643 CE while on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina; that is, twenty-one years before Guru Tegh Bahadur succeeded to the Guruship. There are at least a dozen authentic works, which testify to that fact and include Kamaluddin Muhammad Ahsan's *Rauza-tu-Qayumia*, Nazir Ahmed's *Tazkirat-ul-Abidin*, Mirat-I-Jahan Numa, Ghulam Nabi's *Mirat-u-Qaunin*, Mirza Muhammad Akhtar's *Tazirah-I-Auliya-I-Hind-o-Pakistan* and so on. All these considerations should have prevented Satish Chandra from rushing in where even angels have feared to tread.

Before accepting the views of Ghulam Hussain, it would be more objective to have analysed the writings of Guru Tegh Bahadur which have come down to us intact and form a part of the Sikh scripture, *Guru Granth Sahib*. A prominent literati, Dr. Attar Singh on attempting to understand it, has written that his writings betray a deep and sublime religious personality. This is the universal opinion. M. A. Macauliffe, writing in the nineteenth century had rejected Ghulam Hussein's testimony primarily on this score. That would be taken to be the position of any serious writer who knows the Guru was successor of eight prophets and the predecessor of one. How could such activity as looting the people and causing "disturbances" be ascribed to him? Even Ghulam Hussain literally turns the tables upon himself in the last sentence, 'but the followers of Guru Tegh Bahadur used to move about like *fuqara* and they were not in the habit of wearing arms'. It is not known on what rational consideration Satish Chandra refuses to bring this sentence of Ghulam Hussain to the reader's notice? But since he sticks to the objectionable part of Ghulam Hussain's oft-rejected statement, it is obvious that he wants to deliberately highlight the wrong and highly derogatory reasons for the martyrdom. His explanation that he has dubbed it the 'official account' is again not tenable. 'Official' is not *ipso facto* a bad word and he has not indicated that he regards it so. Besides this assessment is based on the assumption that its source actually is the report of the *waqia navis* of Aurangzeb. This is just an assumption as it

is inconceivable that that piece of reporting was available to Ghulam Hussain a hundred years after the event, particularly when it had never been seen before or after him. He also wrongly harnesses Suri to his defence. Sohanlal Suri's support to Ghulam Hussain's thesis has no meaning in view of the above discussion and also because he came another fifty years after Ghulam Hussain. That Suri's work *Umdat ul Tawarikh* is a certainly "one of the most respected histories of the Sikhs" for Ranjit Singh's period and *not for the earlier period*, is well known to all serious historians.

His quoting the convenient portion of the 'Sikh tradition' is equally pointless. Like any other, it has its uncritical chroniclers. Any historian sure of his methodology knows what to make out of the alleged Ram Rai culpability. Guru Gobind Singh met Ram Rai and thus absolved him of plotting against his father. In fact, Ram Rai was not in Delhi when Guru Tegh Bahadur was there. He had moved to Dehra Dun. Finally, it is most presumptuous of these Satish Chandras of the world to imagine that it is possible for them to either elevate a martyr prophet to "high pedestal" or to "malign" him. They can only express tolerance or exhibit malice for the Sikhs by following one or the other course. The Sikhs demand objectivity and fair assessment and nothing more.

Even at this stage we may refrain from attributing motives but may legitimately try to understand the mindset of this peddler of distorted views.

The Sikh historians aforementioned are unanimous in recording that the Guru was martyred for defending the freedom of conscience against the doings of a bigoted emperor Aurangzeb. He propounded the cause of Kashmiri Pandits who were being particularly targeted. By that act he became a bulwark against the conversion of all Hindus—in fact the entire Hind to Islam. The choice offered to him was between conversion to Islam or death. For the sake of freedom and pluralism in faith that all the Nanaks preached and upheld, he preferred death. That is upheld by the subsequent conversion of Kirparam Datt of Mattan to Sikhism and his martyrdom at Chamkaur along with the forty other Sikhs including the Tenth Guru's two elder sons. He was one of the Kashmiri Pandits who had come to the Guru to plead with him to stand up for the Hindus. His perception was that the Gurus were fighting for the good of humankind and beneficiaries of their striving would be the Hindus of India. That section of the Sikhs which feels that the Hindus should not, according to the rudimentary norms of gratitude prevalent in all civilised societies, be talking of the Gurus in the tone used by Satish Chandra, feel amazed to read that chapter in the "text book".

The other section which perceives him to be a spokesman of the 'falsely secular socialist chauvinists' is also ill-disguised because he is trying to achieve fascist aims by ostensibly employing academically acceptable norms. That is doubly reprehensible. Then there is the section which he is trying to serve as the 'false gods of unity and integrity, which anyway are red in tooth and claw,' and deems it his duty to distort history as a sacrifice.

Yet another section on the Sikhs attributes motives to him. Their first reason is that this matter of Ghulam Hussain has already been churned thoroughly in 1975 when Dr. Fauja Singh of the Punjabi University first raised it. Some of the arguments presented above were presented to counter his untenable contention. All this is very well known to the academic fraternity and even laymen. It is not conceivable that Satish Chandra remained ignorant of that controversy or the negation that Ghulam Hussain received then. His attempt to impose the same view, rejected on sound academic grounds, so renders him an excellent candidate for attributing diabolical motives. His refusal to correct himself at the instance of the country's Prime Minister and the High Court shows the dogged determination with which he insisted on holding on to discredited views. What confirms his brazenness further is his refusal to honestly own up the mistake. His attempt even now is to explain away things rather haughtily. What renders him liable to be designated a mere propagandist is his attempt to plead fear of distortion of history in favour of retaining his demonstrably jaundiced views on the subject of Sikh history. The way he has tried to indoctrinate our unsuspecting and impressionable children renders him a plain criminal in an attempt to denigrate the successor of eight prophets and try to instil irreverence for him in the minds of the young ones of this country who have every human reason to love and to cherish the Guru's memory. I do not buy the argument that Murli Manohar Joshi can be prevented from saffronising education only if the insult offered to my Guru is retained as a part of the text book meant for my children.

Gurtej Singh

[The author, a post graduate in history, and designated as Professor of Sikhism by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, is a former IAS man, a student of history and is an author of eight books on history, religion and politics. He writes both in Punjabi and English and has contributed scores of articles to national papers, magazines and research journals].



Search for the Sacred Swords



Two swords of Guru Gobind Singh, known as the *Toshkhana* sword and *Raikot* sword, were taken to England as "war booty" sometime between 1853-55, soon after annexation of the Punjab. The *Toshkhana* sword was kept in a London museum, while the *Raikot* sword was given as a gift to her majesty, Queen Victoria. One hundred and fifty years later, in all probability, these swords are lying forgotten and uncared for in one of the many museums, the Royal Armoury, or with some private collector in Britain.

The Indian Government is well aware of the history of the swords, how and when these were taken to England, based on the documents in Indian archives traced by the renowned historian, S.Nahar Singh. Rajiv Gandhi and VP Singh, when they were Prime Ministers, were approached by S.Nahar Singh, seeking their help in locating and bringing the swords back to India. Unfortunately no serious



*"Food for the poor and sword for the tyrant,
Oh God let both go hand in hand"*

*"When all remedies have failed,
it is justified to have recourse to the sword"*

*"Sword that smiles in a flash,
That disperses the armies of the
Wicked in the vast fields of battle.
Hail to the wielder, saviour and sustainer,
Hail to thee sword supreme"*

Guru Gobind Singh



efforts appear to have been made to retrieve these most precious relics of Guru Gobind Singhji, and most sacred to the Khalsa Panth.

Lord Dalhousie visited Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Toshkhana on 17 December 1850, and was quick to spot the weapons of Guru Gobind Singh, including his personal sword with his name written on the blade in Gurumukhi, thus known as the Toshkhana sword. Dalhousie found that the Maharaja had given strict instructions for the

worship of these weapons every day. Knowing the importance of the Guru's weapons, he approached the British Government to purchase them for his personal collection. He told the British Government "It would impolitic to allow any Sikh institution to obtain possession of the set of arms which Sikh traditions assert to have belonged to Guru Gobind Singh". The British Government viewed "that the sword, as having belonged to the Sikh

nation, we are desirous of placing this in our museum as an historic relic". The sword was sent to England in February 1853 and then kept in the museum.

Based on S.Nahar Singh's research, most of weapons of Guru Gobind Singh, less the swords, were traced to Lady Lindsay, the great grand daughter of Lord Dalhousie. On request by the then Prime Minister, Lal Bahadur Shastri, the lady returned the weapons and those are now displayed at Anandpur Sahib. The search for the swords continued. Tracing the Guru's sword became Nahar Singh's life's mission and after research of almost 20 years, he traced the relevant documents in the archives in 1986. The correspondence between the Punjab Government, the Government of India and Britain's Secretary of State, gives the history of the swords and their final disposal at that time.

The search for the missing swords started in 1921 by the British with the efforts of Sardar Bahadur Sir Surinder Singh Majitha (1871-1941). The British viewed that it would be a good gesture and "politic to return the swords and any other arms of the Guru if and when available to the representative of the Sikh community". This was the time when the "Gurdwara movement" was at its peak in the Punjab (1921). The Sikh community was very agitated against the British Government for supporting the Mahants and especially after the Nankana Sahib massacre and Jaito Marcho, return of the Guru's swords would have gone a long way to assuage the feelings of Sikhs. The search for the swords was abruptly stopped on 20 March 1928, after passing of the Gurdwara Act and in pursuance of policy dealing with Sikh affairs.

The search for the swords was carried out for short-term political gains and not with the sincerity and earnest needed. The documents clearly confirm that the final destination of the Toshkhana sword was in the British Museum at London. However, the British were unable to locate this in the museum, no document of its removal from the museum could be traced, hence its whereabouts are not known.

There is a brief mention of the Raikot sword in Sikh history. It was gifted by the Guru to Rai Kalha of Raikot in 1705 as a goodwill gesture. Further details about the sword were known through the communication on the subject between 1921-28, traced in the archives by S.Nahar Singh.

After the battle of Chamkor and after traversing the jungles of Machiwara with Mughal armies in pursuit, the Guru left by disguising as *Uch-Ka-Pir* (Saint of Uch) with the help of two pathans. The Guru at Raikot was welcomed

by an influential Muslim named Rai Kalha who was the chowdhry of Jagraon and Raikot. The Guru stayed with him for sometime and here received information of the martyrdom of his two death-defiant younger sons at Sirhind, and the death of his mother.

While leaving Raikot, the Guru gifted his sword to Rai Kalha in return of the courtesy and goodwill shown towards him with the injunction that the sword should not be worn or carried except in battle or in some great emergency.

The Raikot sword was preserved with great reverence as a treasured heirloom by the family of Rai Kalha for some generations. Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Sikh Chiefs, including the Maharaja of Patiala, who knew the significance of the sword, tried their best to acquire it by offering large sums of money. The family of Rai resisted all temptations and remained adamant not to part with it, that is until after the demise of the last Rani of Raikot.

In all probability the Guru had this sword with him during the battle of Chamkor and when he was traversing the jungle of Machiwara, the sword would have definitely drawn blood, hence this is an important relic of the Guru.

Rae Imam Baksh, the only descendent and a far off relative of the Rani, brought the sword to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Ludhiana in April 1854, with an intent to present this to the Governor General, a gesture to show his loyalty to the British Empire.

Henry Brerton the then DC of Ludhiana, in his letter to the Commissioner of 1 May, 1854, gives the history of the sword as told to him by Rai's family. "..... The sword was treasured with religious care, until the time of the late Rae who took it with him on occasion of a sporting excursion contrary to the earnest remonstrances of his followers. His horse happened to fall with him, he drew the sword to cut the stirrup leather by which he was entangled. The struggles of the horse, however, were violent and the Rae received, from the drawn weapon, a wound on his thigh, the haemorrhage from which quickly caused his death.".

I have translated the following inscription from Gurumukhi which is engraved on the side of the blade: *'May God's protection rest on me. There is one God, and a true Guru, whom I worship. This is the signature of the 10th Khalsa Avtar (i.e. Guru Gobind). This sword is the protection of all kinds of harm, the Omnipresent God is with me always, God the protector of the lives of men'*. The original Gurmukhi and Persian version copied and signed by the DC states:

The accurate English translation of the inscription on the sword is:

(On the right side of the sword) "The eternal being will save me. God is one and Suth Gooroo is the great incarnate. This sword is his gift and bears the Royal Signature. All instruments of iron will do no harm".

(On the left side of the blade) "I am safe (with this) at all times, All creatures will protect me".

The original Gurmukhi and Persian version copied and signed by the DC.

In yet another letter dated 15 July 1854, the DC further wrote, "It has been a legend well-known among the people of these parts and Sikhs generally that as long as this sword remained with the Raikot family, and the injunctions of the Guru regarding its use were observed, no evil could befall on them. The death of late Rae by an accident wound from this weapon, the absence of the lineal descendents and heirs to his name, and the subsequent absorption by the Supreme Government of the sovereign rights and possession of the family are all attributable to the violation of the Guru's instructions by the deceased Rae".

Once the history of the sword became known, it was decided that it would be presented to Her Majesty, the Queen of England. On 14 September 1854, giving his reasons the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner Punjab wrote: "If Nanak was the first religious teacher, Gobind was the first political teacher of the Sikh faith. He established theocratic policy and founded the famous Khalsa. He gave his followers the name of 'Singh' or Lion, and taught them to resist the oppressors by force of arms. He imparted unity and energy to a secular system. His predecessors were preachers. He was emphatically the warrior priest and his memory is reverentially cherished by the remnant of what was one of the strongest and most vigorous sects that ever arose in India. The sword of such a man (the chief commissioner wrote) is doubtless a relic of much historical interest"

The sword was sent to England sometime in 1855 as a present to Queen Victoria and in all probability was kept in the Indian Room at Buckingham Palace (letter dated 10 August 1922 signed by the keeper of the King's Armoury also states thus). However, as per the British version, there is no mention of this sword in the Windsor catalogue of arms and armoury, and it could not then be located.

And now, the most vital question : where are the swords? On abolition of the London Museum in 1879, some collections were transferred to other museums. It is possible that the Toshkhana sword (if still not in the main museum

where it was received on 10 August 1853) found its way to another museum, but ironically there is no record (as per the British version) of its transfer. The sword in all probability, is lying in one of the museums. There is also a possibility of its going to a private collector by unfair means, specially if we believe that they could not trace the sword in any of the museums.

From careful scrutiny of the letters in the period 1921-28, it appears that the sword reached the Queen, but anything further (if it was kept in the Indian room of the palace or armoury) is not known. There are no records of any kind, either in the palace, or armoury of receipt or transfer of this sword.

Now, when we are planning the search, we must constantly remember that any searches carried out by the staff at London were not done with the sincerity required and in all probability, the individuals involved did not know Gurmukhi and so read the writing. There must have been hundreds of swords of various kinds sent to England from all states as war booty, not only from India, but from all over the British Empire. Hence, locating two particular swords would be like looking for a needle in a haystack. This needed dedication by individuals who were searching, and this was simply not there.

With such background, there has to be a dynamic and well thoughtout search plan to trace the sacred swords. We need to take a number of actions at the Government level and some in the form of appeal and awards. First, the Indian Government should take up the issue of a thorough search by the British Government of all museums, Government and private, as well as Royal armouries and places where relics of Indian States are stored. Second, to announce an irresistible amount to purchase the swords if they have found their way to a private collector. Third, announce a handsome award for any person leading to information in locating the whereabouts of the swords. Fourth, depute dedicated Sikh scholars based in Britain to search for the weapons. Five, contact world famous auction houses such as Sothebys and Christies to locate these weapons through their contacts all over the world. Six, the SGPC must get involved and use their resources to trace the weapons.

Lastly and most importantly, world media must advertise that the Sikhs are looking for their swords, giving the inscription on each one of them—and announce lucrative awards for those who trace them.

**Major General (Retd) Kulwant Singh,
UYSM, PGDBM, PGHRM, Ph.D**