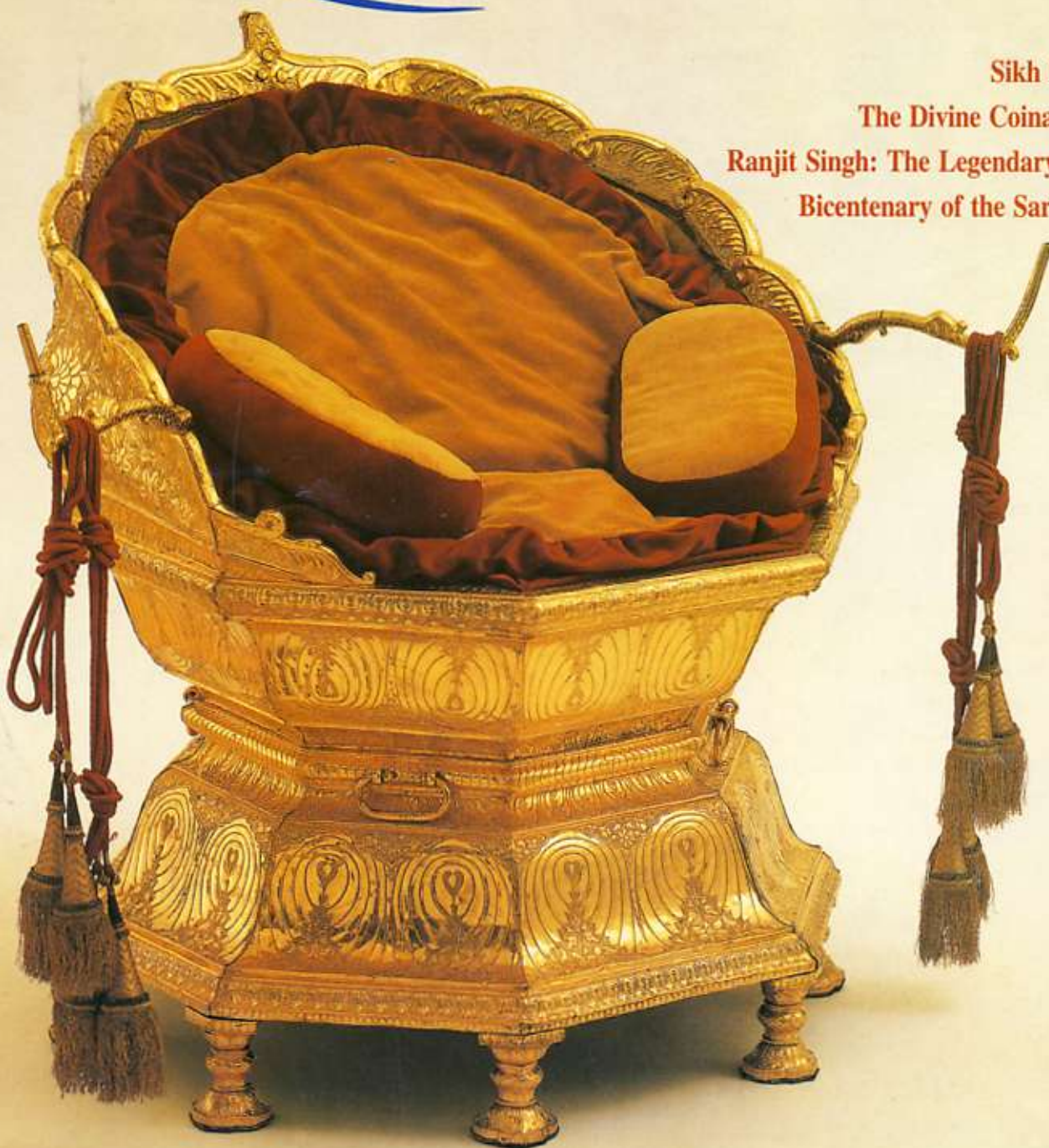


# NISHAAN

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Sikh Musicology  
The Divine Coinage of Sikhs  
Ranjit Singh: The Legendary Maharaja  
Bicentenary of the Sarkar Khalsa





# NISHAAN



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## Editorial Director

Prof. Darshan Singh Maini

## Executive Editor

Pushpinder Singh

## Editorial Board

Sikandar Singh Bhayee

G. P. Singh

Birinder Singh Malhans

Hardev Singh

Manjit Singh

## Editorial Office

D-43, Sujjan Singh Park

New Delhi 110 003 India

Tel: (91-11) 4617234 Fax : 4628615

e-mail : nishaan@lycos.com

website : www.nishaan.com

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During the dragon-ridden days of the eighties when the Government's assault on the Sikhs became so much a part of our angry, incensed musings in the wake of 'Operation Bluestar', I wrote, week after week, articles on the nature and drift of that tragedy, on its dimensions and its dialectic, more often in an elegiac vein than in polemical. I was keen to put the perpetrators of that crime against a brave and loyal community with a matchless history of martyrdoms and sacrifices in the service of the nation, under a pitiless scrutiny and to seek at the same time clues to the total failure of nerve, insight and action on the part of the Sikh leadership. And in that effort, I had the opportunities to explore the deeper and darker regions of the Sikh psyche, in general, and of the Sikh intelligentsia in particular. A few Sikh writers and intellectuals did stand up bravely, openly and fearlessly to question the credentials of the top Akali leadership which, mired in mutual accusations, divided and dispirited, had lost its mandate, harbouring not only some hot-headed wrong-doers, but also known Quislings and machiavels. It's no use recalling those *rolls of dishonour*, of disgrace abounding, for quite a few from that flock are still around and still eye-deep in *panthic* polemics and in the politics of power, pelf and plunder. The Sikh Establishment of today (which in truth, is a Jat Establishment with a feudal world-view) had grievously failed at that moment of the deepest crisis in Sikh history since the oppressive days of the Moghuls and, sadly, it remains as schismatic and as squint-eyed as before. It has never had a larger vision, a higher awareness of the modern world, a deeper understanding of

the changes taking place in the Sikh mindset in India and abroad. In sum, the *Jathedari* politics which seldom rises above the village-level problematics are pitifully narrow, hegemonic and patrimonial and therefore, unable to cope with the complexity of the issues affecting the Sikh community today.

To be sure, the *Bluestar* tragedy did create a certain air for the revival of the pristine Sikh spirit and for some signs of a resurgence, a kind of renaissance in thought-structures and in our letters, but the promise reaching its apotheosis around the time of the tercentenary celebrations in April 1999 (which incidentally, brought the *Nishaan* into being) got dissipated soon enough to leave the *panthic* leadership as visionless as before and as conceited and confined. It may be observed that the spending of hundreds of crores on fabulous memorials, complexes, trusts etc. is less an example of its devotion than of its confused politics. Yes, we all are proud of the magnanimities of the Sikh spirit, in general and proud of our heritage but palaces of marble and artefacts of gold and silver do not change the Sikh situation on the ground. Such diversionary exercises and extravaganzas lose their essence when one goes deeper into the copy of mixed motives.

Where do the so-called Sikh intellectuals stand, then, in relation to the *state* of the Sikh community today, and in relationship to the Establishment of which they are, by and large, vocal but ineffectual part? I have been a witness for years to the type that has come to represent their kind. Often a convenient *tool* (as ghost-writers, publicists and



speakers at sponsored seminars) in the hands of their patrons, they resort, often in despair, to polemical pamphleteering and partisan heroics in their writings. And I have seen them *sold* for positions in universities, in *Sahit Akademies* and other such outfits. A true intellectual is, by definition, a person who is governed by intellect and reason and whose perception of truth dares him to preserve an unswerving moral vision. And if he is true to the salt of his 'calling,' he cannot but be on the wrong side of the Establishment. How many in the business of selling their intellectual 'wares' would then emerge as true and fast in their integrity? Some, to my own personal knowledge, have changed their politics, their parties and their known, published views just for "a mess of pottage", or in some cases, for positions of power outside of the ruling structure itself. To be a George Orwell or a Naom Chomsky one needs a sense of visionary commitment and the courage of "the lonely heart". Eventually, it becomes a question of one's authenticity. As an American critic, Irving Howe put it, "It takes two to be sincere, *one* to be authentic".

This brings me back to my earlier articles alluded to in the beginning. The first of its kind "The Punjab Tragedy and the Sikh Intellectual" (*The Sunday Observer*, September 2, 1984) examined in brief detail the cruel dilemma of intellectuals in times of momentous events. To begin with, the question of politics and the intellectual *per se*, discussed by me in several separate places, involves the tragedy of thinkers who are paralysed, Hamlet-like, in the face

of such assaults on the mind. And yet politics in their spiritual and metaphysical sense have a visionary nature and the intellectual, in his authenticity cannot but be a part of "the destructive element", to recall Joseph Conrad's phrase. Now the Sikh intellectuals too were caught thus when overwhelmed by the horrendous happenings around them. And it was then that religious fundamentalism found a secret ally in most of them, and that terrorism was sought to be rationalised, if not sought, as a way out of that moral crisis.

In another article written some years later for the *Indian Express*, a kind of sequel in which enlarging the theme, I examined the infirmities of character to be found, time and again, in the Sikh Establishment, and the *hauteur* that characterised Jat Sikh thinkers, in particular. I did not find any significant change in their conduct when the challenges facing the Sikhs in the new millennium are countenanced. Among these are the questions of Sikh identity, of the *patit* Sikhs, of the *Sehjdhari* Sikhs, of the class called *Mazhabi* Sikhs (a category invented by the rulers and politicians against the very essence and edicts of Sikhism), of the management of the Sikh *gurdwaras* in the changing context, and of the role of the *Akal Takht* in the life and affairs of the community when the appointed Jathedars have themselves lost their credentials and become a noisy squad blaming this faction or that for the sorry plight of the *panth*.

The Sikh intellectuals are either silent or evasive, shying away from the truth that's so hurtful.

Darshan Singh Maini



## Baisakhi: A day for self-purification

**B**aisakhi on April 13 is celebrated throughout India in many ways. In the Himalayan region, it is also called *Baishak Sankranti*. It is observed in even in Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, where it is called *Songkran* and celebrated on April 14 as the Water Festival. Children visit their parents and elders and offer scented water in homage to obtain their blessings for the New Year.

Baisakhi traditionally marks the end of the month-long 'New Year' celebrations of the Hindu Calendar. The new 'Samvatsar', an astrological forecast of things to come during the New Year based on position of the different planets, and the culmination of Navratras with the birth of Lord Rama, are the two main religious aspects of these celebrations. In northern India, Baisakhi also marks the harvesting season, and village folk celebrate the occasion by holding community-wide festivities—sports, fairs, offering of sweets, community feasts and so on.

In the Punjab, Baisakhi celebrations encompass both the religious and cultural sentiments in equal measure. It was on this day over 300 years ago, that the Tenth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh Maharaj, established the 'Khalsa' order. The word 'Sikh' means disciple and all the followers of the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev and the subsequent nine Gurus were called Sikhs or followers. They included both Hindus and Muslims. The fundamental message of 'universal brotherhood' was propagated by Nanak Devji in a unique manner by insisting on the triple principles of *Seva*, *Pangat* and *Sangat*. All the followers were to share in community service (*Seva*), meals (*Pangat*) and prayers (*Sangat*). All were equal before the 'Order'. Even the king had to share *Seva* and *Pangat* before meeting the Guru in *Sangat*. The teachings of the Sikh Gurus were so simple in comparison to the complicated ritualistic orders of that time that they appealed to the masses, far and wide.

The very fact that the Tenth Guru was born in Patna in Bihar and merged with the Divine at Nanded in Maharashtra, shows the spread and universality of their

teachings. To manage such a vast following, the Gurus appointed their nominees, the Mansads, and held annual conferences for the Sangat on the Baisakhi day. The Mughal ruler, Aurangzeb proved to be a tyrant and oppressor of Hindus, and was carrying out forced conversion to Islam. It was in this hour of social unrest and terror that Guru Gobind Rai asked the Baisakhi day congregation in 1699 for five volunteers who were ready to sacrifice themselves for the faith. One by one, five volunteers who hailed from different parts of India and belonged to different social groups, came forward. The Guru took the first one to the nearby tent and returned in front of the congregation with his blood-soaked sword. He asked for the next volunteer, and then a third, fourth and fifth. There was a dead silence in the congregation. But after the fifth, Guru Gobind Rai surprised the congregation by returning not with the blood-soaked sword but the five volunteers in resplendent uniform. They were called 'Panj Pyaras' (the five beloved ones).

This marked the beginning of the Khalsa (meaning pure) Order. The Guru blessed them by offering holy water and then got himself ordained by accepting the same *amrit* from them, thus subordinating himself also to the Khalsa order. The five were given the title of 'Singh' or Lion, and he also became from that day, Gobind Singh. They were directed to sport the five *Kakars*—*Kesh* (unshorn hair), *Kangha* (comb, tucked in the hair under turban), *Kara* (steel wristband), *Kachha* (under pant) and *Kirpan* (dagger). The Guru also directed all Sikhs to henceforth accept the 'Holy Guru Granth Sahib, the repository of the teachings and hymns of the ten Gurus and hymns of several Sufi saints, Hindus and Muslims included, as their eternal Guru. The Guru wanted to remove the fear of death from his followers' mind. A 'Khalsa' who is pure at heart and committed to serve the community, cannot be afraid of death as demonstrated by the five volunteers. He should know, the soul never dies. Fear of any kind—of guilt, theft, greed, etc. and the most frightening of all, that of death—is the root cause of all human sufferings and miseries. Guru Gobind Singhji's most famous couplet: *Deh Shiva Bar Mohe Ehe, Shubha Karman Te Kabahoon Na Daron* is an inspiration for all time.



By doing away with the succession of Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh wanted to ensure that the Khalsa order was not exposed to divisive tendencies and thus remained strong and united.

Let us on the day of Baisakhi remember Guru Gobind Singh and observe it as an occasion for self-purification and moral rearmament.

*C.M. Bhandari*

*From : The Times of India*

## Maharaja who created *Punjabiya*

**H**istory is not only a mirror to the past, but also a live link between yesterday, today and tomorrow. We should look at the bicentenary of the coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh not in isolation but in toality with a view to understanding that eventful period in the face of challenges confronting us. This should help us to objectively assess where we stand in terms of governance and liberal values that guided the Maharaja and his team.

Winston Churchill once said: "The more we dig into the past, the more we understand the present". Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not merely an outstanding personality, a sagacious statesman and the maker of modern Punjab, but an institution, a unique symbol of defiance, fortitude and prudence. In the annals of history he holds a distinguished position of a constructive genius, who during the darkest chapter of our history, brought peace and stability to the Punjab.

Ranjit Singh's vision was crystal clear. His boundless curiosity was the most important part of his personality. He had a ceaseless quest to learn from all quarters and adopt new ideas to improve his administration. His intense urge to modernise his army under the guidance of French and Italian generals exemplifies this rare trait in his personality.

He never allowed himself to be bullied or intimidated by anyone, not even by the British colonial rulers whom he treated on equal terms, and thereby brought dignity, status and a spirit of self-reliance to Punjab. When the British had established their control

in the rest of the country, Maharaja Ranjit Singh succeeded in maintaining the independence of Punjab. He also successfully slammed the door on the invaders from the north-west, who used to create chaos and havoc in northern India

The Maharaja actually sowed the seeds of Punjabi nationalist ethos (*Punjabiya*) which might be seen as an earlier version of Indian nationalism. If this process of inter-community partnership by integrating three major religions which he fostered had continued, possibly the communal problem which destroyed the unity of Punjab might have been solved and the partition avoided. It would have simplified the class problem by providing aristocratic leadership to a modernised state and a united aristocracy, bourgeoisie and peasantry in common pursuit and patriotism. But alas! That was not to be.

The Maharaja's unworthy successors proved incompetent, reckless and opportunistic, animated by narrow selfish interests and they destroyed what he had built. When Sardars of rank threw down their weapons in 1849 in the last heroic battle, a grizzled warrior was heard saying, "Today —Ranjit Singh is dead".

Maharaja Ranjit Singh symbolises for us boldness, courage, sagacity, foresight, magnanimity, endurance, common sense and inter-communal partnership of *Punjabiya*. These values are a precious treasure of all advanced civilisations, and for advancement and progress these values have to be cherished, sustained, and diffused so as to serve as a beacon light in the sea of many oceans.

We have paid our tribute to the genius of the Maharaja but however, need to know more and more about him. It is necessary to promote historical research on the Maharaja and his times on which excellent studies have been produced outside the Punjab. Persian and English source material in the U.K. lies buried in archives.

This rich treasure should be made available to scholars so that the Maharaja and his contributions are viewed in proper perspective. This is the minimum that the Punjab Government needs to ensure.

*Hari Jaisingh*

*From : The Tribune*



# Whither SGPC elections?

Meeting of the Sikh Core Group (SCG) took place in New Delhi on 31 March 2001, primarily to discuss role of the media in dissemination of the views and programme of the Sikh community and the need and scope of synergy amongst the three journals, being *The Sikh Review* of Calcutta, *The Nishaan* of New Delhi and *The Spokesman* of Chandigarh. This was in context of the suggestions made in the spirit of constructive co-operation by *The Sikh Foundation* of California, USA.

The Group also reviewed the choice of suitable representatives in the forthcoming community elections and for evolving a suitable methodology and strategy for implementation (see below):

"Many of the happenings that occurred during the tenure of the current Shiromani Gurdwara Parbhandak Committee (SGPC) have been far from edificatory. The serious shortcomings in the expectations from this prime *Panthic* organisation cannot but be placed squarely on the shoulders of the elected members of this august *Panthic* institution. Although little can be redeemed from the past impaired record of functioning of the SGPC, it surely is the vital concern of every Sikh that the image and status of the SGPC is restored to an extent that it performs true to its purpose and objectives.

The tenure of the present SGPC members as stipulated in the Gurdwara Act, ends in November 2001 and elections for constituting a new generalbody of the SGPC are due to be held around September 2001. It is the earnest desire of the members of the Sikh Core Group (SCG) that appropriate steps are taken in time by various authorities responsible for the election process of the SGPC, so that the election schedule is faithfully adhered to. The SGPC election must not be postponed for any political expediency !

It has also been an extremely agonising experience that unethical and insidious practices have crept in the selection of the candidates as well as for conducting the campaign for elections of the SGPC members. Regrettably, the Shrimonai Akal Dal (SAD) leaders cannot be relied upon for self reformation because it is primarily this leadership which has caused havoc, for the sake of narrow and selfish political gains. It is, therefore, crucial that credible *Panthic* origins join hands to evolve an alternate, viable system to nominate only deserving candidates for elections and that political factions are restrained from despoiling the election process for the SGPC members.

"It is earnestly suggested that institutions of the Akal Takht in conjunction with two other Takhts be entrusted to play a major role in evolving a system so that the management of the Gurdwaras is directed towards the best interests of the Sikh *Sangat* and maintenance of high *Panthic* traditions. A tentative proposal is to form non-political committees of prominent Sikhs under the guidance of the three Takhts, in areas to be so identified, for nominating *Gursikh Sevaks* as candidates for the SGPC elections. The suggested committees could consist of non-controversial, since-retired judges, ex-defence service officers, civil servants and social workers drawn from respective defined areas. Ideally, the SAD should not only be debarred from putting up candidates (as it has been doing solely on political considerations) but also bound over to support candidates nominated by the aforementioned committees.

This outline proposal could be progressed with the backing of the Core Group Chapters at Chandigarh, Calcutta and Delhi and in consultations with the Core Group Chapters in Australia, USA, Canada and UK.

It may also be considered that before finally evolving a definitive scheme, dialogue be organised with heads of the World Sikh Council (WSC), the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Institute of Sikh Studies (IOSS) and Guru Gobind Singh Study Circle. In such dialogue, Jathedars of the Takhts should be invited to participate and the Jathedar Sahib of the Akal Takht be requested to Chair the conclave which should be organised within the next months, possibly at Chandigarh"



# Conference on the Guru Granth Sahib

**T**he Sri Guru Granth Sahib contains a philosophical system based on *unity in diversity* that celebrates the unique merits of each particular approach to the divine energy. Yet, it also provides a way that each of these approaches can be weaved into a cohesive whole".

Such stated Dr. Harbans Lal, Chairman, Academy of Guru Granth Studies, USA while delivering the key-note address at the first international conference on "Sri Guru Granth Sahib: world's first interfaith scripture" at Guru Nanak Bhavan Auditorium, Guru Nanak Dev University, at Amritsar on 26 February.

Professor Harbans Lal, resident of Arlington in Texas, USA, and Emeritus Professor of Religious Studies of Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, spent several weeks in India during February and March 2001. As Chairman of the Academy of Guru Granth Sahib Studies, USA, he delivered the key note address at the first international conference on "Sri Guru Granth Sahib : the world's first Interfaith scripture" at Amritsar in late February 2001.

This first-ever global conference was organised by Guru Nanak Dev University in view of the 400th year of compilation of the holy Granth in collaboration with the Academy of Guru Granth Sahib, USA.

Dr. Harbans Lal stressed that any institution of organised religion would have to go through the process of "creative ferment" to survive in the new age. He said it would have to take into account the confluence of religions throughout the globe. Each traditional approach to religious truth would have to encounter challenges from another tradition.

Dr. Harbans Lal said the mode in which the Guru Granth Sahib was compiled four centuries ago "tells us that these encounters create a deeper understanding of spiritual thought in the mind of a religious speaker".

Capt Kanwaljit Singh, Finance Minister of the Punjab, who inaugurated the four-day interfaith conference, said that the Guru Granth Sahib was a universal scripture in which a model for human welfare and human dignity had been envisaged. He said this model was a practical one with emphasis on a "true, practical and respectful life-style". The world faced several challenges and problems owing to the information technology revolution and globalisation. "On the one hand, we are living a life of global outlook and on the other it has created many problems for humanity". In this context, he said a new religious awakening was needed.

People were today becoming closer through the Internet and had started thinking about a "universal religion" which would lead to a unique unity involving salient features of all religions.

The Finance Minister hoped that the galaxy of international and national scholars gathered at Amritsar would discuss various aspects of interfaith issues, interfaith perspective and movement. They would also explore the significant of the great Guru's teachings for the well-being of humankind in the new millennium.



*Prof. Harbans Lal talking to the young boys and girls gathered to meet with him.*

Dr. H.S. Soch, Vice Chancellor, in welcoming the delegates, said that the Vedas were written on this land. The Gita was recited by Lord Krishna here and Sufism was also propagated and promoted in this area of the country. Gurbani of the Sikh Gurus had "conjoined the masses with the Almighty".

Expressing concern at the denigration of values, Dr. Soch said the University was committed to imparting value-based education so that "our coming generations may not divert from our rich traditional values". It had decided to make spiritualism a part of the curriculum at the college level. A book on the subject had already been published by the university.

Dr. K.P. Aggarwal, who is secretary general of the Crime Prevention Society of Lucknow, in his presidential remarks said that the Guru Granth Sahib was a historical scripture. The Granth had provided a unique philosophy for human development, which was neither a synthesis of old schools of thought, nor a completely new one. "It has the essence of cultural integration of India", he added. Dr. Aggarwal lucidly defined the word "shabad". He also spoke about the importance of "naam".



Dr.S.P.Singh, convener of the conference, said that more than 60 scholars and 100 delegates from all over India, the USA, Canada and Pakistan were participating in the four-day deliberations on the Guru Granth Sahib, with nine academic and panel discussions on various aspects of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. A special session would be devoted to the Gurbani CD as a research tool in Sikhism and cyber space.

He said an exhibition of "Sikh Heritage" displaying different coins of the Sikh regime, manuscripts, rare books, portraits and other holy scriptures was organised at the Khalsa Heritage Centre of the University.

Fifteen papers were read on various aspects of Guru Granth Sahib by foreign and Indian scholars. Dr.Manmohan Singh of the USA delivering his lecture on "scriptural and experimental understanding of the nature of personal discovery of reality and universality" opined that scriptures are the "voice" and the "way", but the seeker has to hear, understand and accept with his head and heart and learn to surrender his ego.

Dr.Jodh Singh of Patiala in his lecture on "dialogical human reality and the Guru Granth Sahib" said that every object was considered perennially infused with spirit and hence the mystical songs of the rishis, the saints and the gurus. He said every object of the empirical world is trying to transcend itself in order to have realisation and mergence in the divine spirit.

Dr.Amar Singh Dhaliwal from Canada in his paper on "Sikhism stands founded on a scientifically sound footing" highlighted the most crucial of objectives: if Sikhism, or the Sikh way of life stands founded on a scientifically sound footing then why could it not become a globally and universally employable system of human life? He went on to mention five main causes for this.

Dr.Harbans Lal, while presenting his paper on the "healing power of altruism" said that since "gurnat" (the path of the Guru) is about active meditations, this meant getting ready to engage oneself in the experience of one's cosmic self in divinity. What this involves, he said, is actually giving up stress, hatred and letting go of the pain, revealing the hidden tranquility. Tranquility is *within*, but hidden under the pressure of materialistic life style.

Dr.Darshan Singh of Chandigarh, speaking on "Gurbani's concept of suffering" concluded that suffering was a part of human existence and was inherent to life: it was the product of one's own action".

Mr.S.S.Dhanoa presented his paper on "nam simran as an interfaith unifier", Dr.Madanjit Kaur on "Ecological

concerns in Guru Granth Sahib", Dr.Maheep Singh on "Significance and importance of the Guru Granth Sahib", Rev Travis Rejman on "focus on Sikh sacred writings and inter-religious dialogue", Dr.T.S.Tukhmani (Canada) on "Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the Upanishads: some parallel concepts", Dr. Harijinder Singh Dhillon on "Sufi view of world spirituality in the Guru Granth Sahib" and Balwant Singh Hansra on "Sri Guru Granth Sahib in world parliament of religions".

Dr.S.C.Sachdeva of Sonapat in his paper on "Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the Vedas: a comparative study" said the "bani" of Guru Granth Sahib was essentially secular, democratic and meant for the entire human race.

Rev. Elizabeth Esperson, consultant of inter-religious affairs, Dallas (USA), speaking on "interfaith movement: call of a larger God" said genuine inter-religious dialogue and cooperative action would be necessary. She felt the need for a new preception, a shift of paradigm and the gift of discernment in our thinking and our values.

Dr.K.P.Aggarwal, secretary general of the Crime Prevention Society, Lucknow lectured on "incarnated (*sagun*) and omnipresent (*parbrahm*) forms of Hari, Ram and Krishna in Sri Guru Granth Sahib manifest omnipresent (*parbrahm*) and also incarnated (*sagun*) God".

In his presidential remarks, the Chief Khalsa Diwan stressed religious tolerance and appealed to the scholars and religious preachers to preach the teachings of the Gurus. Dr. H.S.Soch in his address said this conference would be held till 2004, to mark the 400<sup>th</sup> year of compilation of the Guru Granth Sahib. Dr.Soch announced that the proceedings of this conference would be published in book form. He also said an international journal of Guru Granth studies would be published in which 11 articles of eminent religious scholars would be included.

A special session was devoted to Gurbani on CD and cyber space, in which Dr. Kulbir Singh Thind and Colonel Parminder Singh (Retd) presented their papers. Colonel Parminder Singh said the availability and use of Gurmukhi fonts had fortunately evolved along with the advancement of computer technology. However, he said the international unicode standard for Gurmukhi fonts had not been adopted and many fonts were not compatible with each other.

Dr.Satinder Singh, the convener said that the panel discussions held during the last three days would give the GNDU guidelines' to formulate the topic of the second international conference on Sri Guru Granth Sahib to be held in February-March 2002.

The learned Professor Dr.Harbans Las also found time to talk to the little members of the community, as seen in this photograph during his interaction with the new generation of Sikhs in New Delhi.



# Defence Colony, New Delhi forms Youth Association

The Sri Guru Singh Sabha of Defence Colony, New Delhi which functions from a handsome Gurdwara Sahib in C-Block, has enlarged the scope of its activities, from organising the evening *Kirtan Dewans* to now focus on the youngsters of the Colony. Adapting the title *Sikh Youth Cultural Association* (SYCA), the inaugural meeting took place on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2001 on the second floor of the Gurdwara Sahib to formally announce the formation, select a steering committee, discuss various plans and programmes and then have an open forum on various aspects.

These will include talks on Sikh culture, history, architecture and tradition, conduct of classes to teach Punjabi, encouraging children to memorise five Gurbani paaths, teaching young boys to tie smart turbans and generally instilling pride in their turnout as also for encouraging creative instincts.

In his address, Major General Mohinder Singh Chadha, President of the Shri Guru Singh Sabha stressed the significance of the SYCA and its role in developing cultural awareness among the hi-tech professionals. Captain L.S. Bahl, Chairman of the Youth Forum presented a detailed report on the activities and the project to develop an eastern *parikarma*, including *jorrah ghar*, to be financed entirely by the youth of Defence Colony.

Amongst the SYCA office bearers, and members of the Steering Committee, are G.S. Alag (Vice Chairman), Sardarni Preeti Ahuja, Kirandeep Kaur, Harpreet Narula, Madhu Bahl, Pawan Singh and Rani Gadhoke. Sardar Rajinder Singh Ahuja as Treasurer will also look after public relations while Sardar Harinder Singh, Lt. Col. Vikramjit Singh, KS Ahluwalia, G.S. Saluja and Ashvinder Singh Puri are also part of the committee.

As the president later summed up, "Considering the professional and academic profile of SYCA members, this will be an organisation with a difference."



Major General (Retd) Mohinder Singh Chadha, President of the Sri Guru Singh Sabha Defence Colony (nearest camera), and Colonel Manohar Singh (furthest to the camera).



The new generation at the meeting.



Ladies of Defence Colony were present in considerable numbers.





Inaugural function at New Delhi

## Bicentennial Celebrations: Coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

With Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India as chief guest and presided over by Prakash Singh Badal, Chief Minister of the Punjab, the "Maharaja Ranjit Singh Bicentennial National Celebration Committee" organised an inaugural function of the year-long bi-centennial celebration at New Delhi's Vigyan Bhawan on 21 April.

Chaired by Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, Union Minister for Fertilisers and Chemicals and co-chaired by Ananth Kumar, Union Minister for Culture & Tourism, there were more VVIPs on the dias than appropriate evidence of the occasion, with only a replica of the Maharaja's throne to one side while a backdrop painting purported to be that of the Lahore fort.

Speakers included Khushwant Singh, who with his characteristic directness, chided the Government of today on the blatant on-goings of the right wing factions and the effect of such divisive forces even as he cited the successes of Ranjit Singh in



Full page advertisement in daily newspapers.....

building a powerful empire 200 years ago. The Maharaja had inculcated a strong sense of *Punjabiyyat*, with simply no demarcation between people of different communities.

In his talk, Faqir S. Aijazuddin, whose forefathers were the closest members of Ranjit Singh's court, had come from Lahore for the function, and recalled the glorious days of the Kingdom of the Punjab. Sardar Tarlochan Singh, Vice Chairman of the Minorities Commission was outspoken on his views that the role and contribution of Sikhs before and after the independence of India had not been appreciated in appropriate manner.

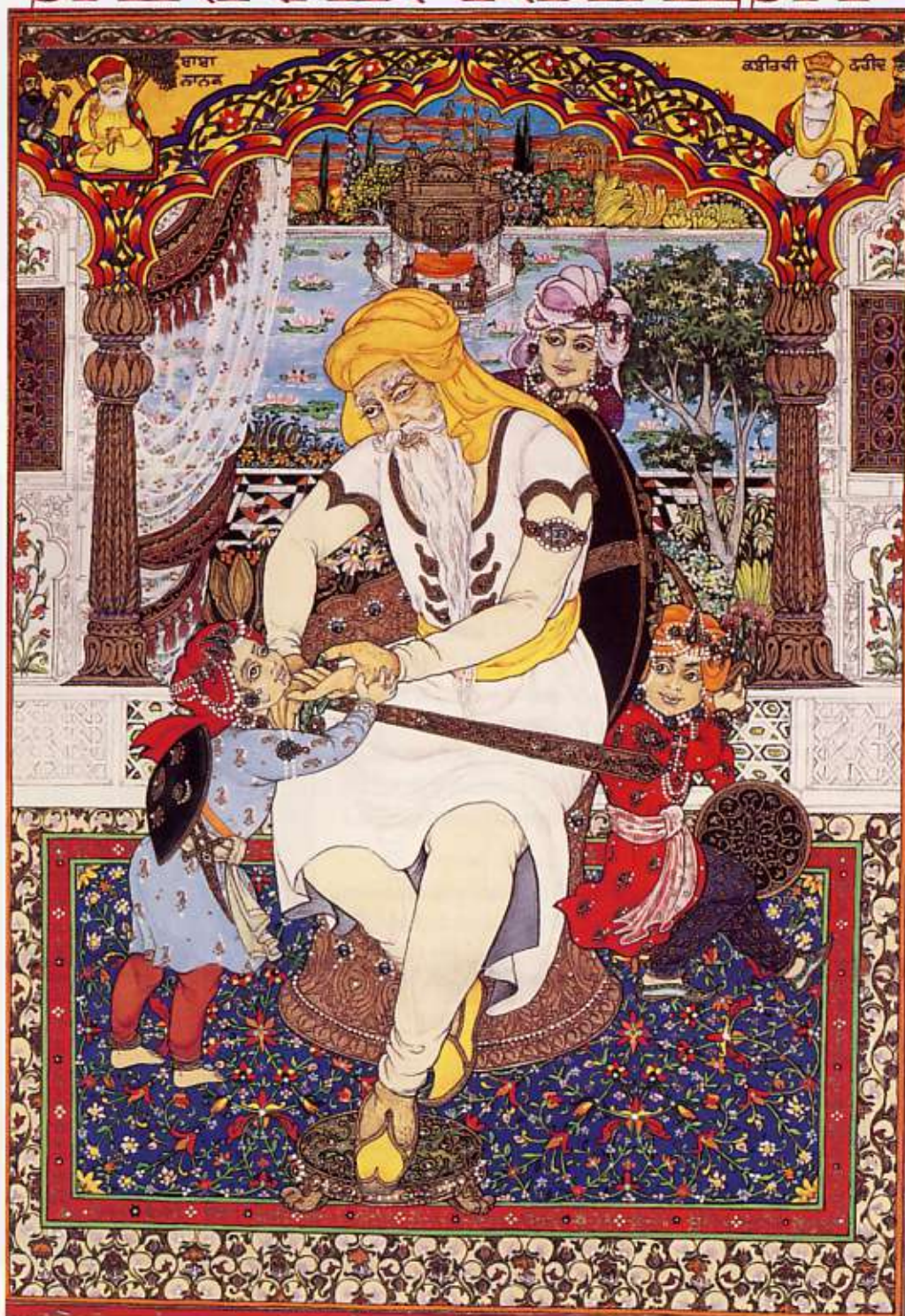
As the *Tribune* later reported, "while the audience applauded, the so-called VVIPs could do little except to come up with some predictably worded speeches."



.....and the invitation on a scroll.



THE CANADIAN WAY: CELEBRATING  
BICENTENARY OF THE  
SARKAR KHALSA



1801-2001





Deep and Mehtab Kaur lead the Ardaas.



"In the court of the Maharaja", tabla recitation.

**B**icentenary celebrations of the formation of the Sarkar Khalsa were launched in Toronto, Canada on Saturday, March 31, 2001 with a gala dinner hosted by *The Sikh Centennial Foundation* at the Malton Marriott and attended by over 550 guests.

It was on Baisakhi Day in 1801 that Ranjit Singh was proclaimed Emperor of the Punjab. Though wielding absolute power, the Maharaja remained a man of the people: he refused to wear a crown nor sit on a throne, or take on the usual ostentations of power. The coins struck to commemorate the event proclaimed that power in the new empire was held only "In the Name of Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh".

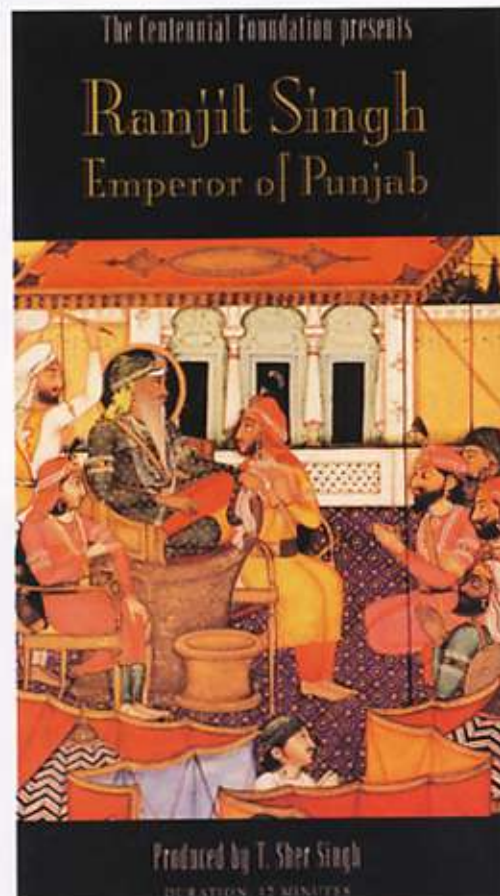
Talking on the name of Khalsa Ranjit Singh and the simple honorific: "Singh Sahib", the man who came to be known as *The Lion of Punjab* called his kingdom the *Sarkar Khalsa* - the Government of the People. Thus an Empire was founded not by way of a coronation, but through an act of humility. What followed was unique: a rule of four decades, shaped by compassion and benevolence.

The year-long celebrations that will span the globe were given a befitting commencement in Toronto. A star-studded list of attendees led by The Rt Hon Harbance Singh Dhaliwal, Canada's Federal Minister for Oceans and Fisheries-included politicians, academics, police executives, corporate leaders, professionals, entrepreneurs plus substantial proportion of school and university-age youth as well.

The evening began with a reception and a tour of an exhibit on the Sikh Raj produced by Bhupinder (Lally) Singh Marwah and Sandeep Singh Brar. A dazzling array of rare books, manuscripts, sketches, paintings, and various artifacts from the period provided a context to the evening's celebrations.

The dinner was preceded by *Ardaas* led by sisters Deep and Mehtab Kaur. The trio of Gurpreet Singh, Amrit Singh and Parminder Singh gave an impressive tabla recitation entitled "In the Court of the Maharaja".

The key-note address was delivered by Sardar Harbinder Singh Rana, Executive Director of *The Maharaja Duleep Singh Centennial Trust* from the United Kingdom. Sprinkled with the trade-mark self-deprecating humour







Double take! The twin sisters, Amrit and Rabindra Kaur whose artistic talents are reflected in the poster ( reproduced on page 11)



Lord Iqbal Singh of Lesmahagow, Scotland.

of the Sikhs, his speech outlined the extraordinary life and times of the *Sher-e-Punjab* and his ongoing legacy.



Harbinder Singh Rana.

His remarks were well supplemented by Sardar Daljit Singh, also of the Trust, who outlined with the help of a power-point presentation the achievements and aspirations of the Trust, including its current ambitious project to chart an Anglo-Sikh trail associated with Sikh history in the British Isles.

Then followed the Sewa Awards, which are given annually—to Sikhs and non-Sikhs—for excellence and service to the community at large, in accordance with the principles of *Sikhi*. This year's list of honorees included British Columbia Prime Minister, Ujjal Singh Dosanjh; Lord Iqbal Singh of Lesmahagow, Scotland; Dr Deborah Swallow, the Senior Chief Curator of the Victoria & Albert Museum; the famous British artists, the twins Amrit and Rabindra Kaur Singh; civil rights activist Ratna Omidvar; and the renowned statistician Bhupinder (Lally) Sijgh Marwah.

An outsider's perspective and a stirring summary of the achievements of Sikh-Canadians in the course of the last hundred years was presented by Mr Rob Hain, CEO of AIM Funds Management Inc.

Entertainment for the evening included a novel rendition of the *Bhangra* performed by a troupe in business suits. The net effect was unusual—but stunning!

The evening also saw the release of three items, copies of which were gifted to each attendee: a 12-minute video, *Ranjit Singh: Emperor of Punjab*; a poster depicting a Moghul style miniature painting by Amrit and Rabindra Kaur Singh, entitled *Sher-e-Punjab* and *The Princes* and a new book of essays by Dr I.J. Singh, *The Sikh Way: A Pilgrims Progress*.

The evening was MC'd by lawyer Ramandeep Kaur Grewal, the awards by TV personality Monita Kaur Rajpal (soon to anchor with CNN). The formal portion of the evening was closed with remarks by lawyer Satwinder Singh Gosal who masterfully guided this year's event.

Music and dancing followed. A great time was had by all.



# RANJIT

# SINGH

The Legendary Maharaja



Ranjit Singh: Painting by Gautam Roy.

The wheel of time moves on and page after page of sometimes tumultuous but mostly peaceful decades are added to the manuscript of History. Turning back into the hoary and chequered past of the Punjab, there is one chapter that has to be emblazoned in golden letters – the unique and meteoric rise of a power in the Punjab. In fact, this is the history of a one-eyed, pock-marked king, who with his sterling qualities of leadership shaped the destiny of the *land of five rivers*, reaching the peak of success, in spite of heavy odds. This was Maharaja Ranjit Singh ("Sarkar" – as his subjects called him) *The Lion of Punjab*.

Born on 13 November 1780 in Gujranwala, Ranjit Singh was the only son of Mahan Singh Sukarchakia. He was named Ranjit or *Victor of Battles* as on the day of his birth, his father had won a significant victory in a battle! He was slight in frame with pock-marked face, owing to an early bout with small-pox, which left him blind in one eye and earned him the nicknam of *kanaa*.

Ranjit Singh had an impressive lineage : his great-grandfather, Budh Singh was a legend of bravery in his time, his grandfather, Charhat Singh was head of the misl and had conquered much territory through skillful campaigns. Though Ranjit Singh had no formal education; he was well versed with the history of the Sikh Gurus and the moral and spiritual core of Sikhism. He had a passion for horse riding and often performed prodigious feats of horsemanship : it was normal for him to ride over hundred miles a day. Coming in at full gallop, he is known to have sliced a lemon, placed on a soldier's palm, into an exact half.

Though diminutive in frame, he was full of daring and had remarkable guts. It is said that when the Sikh misls were laying seige to the Afghan forces of the ruthless Shah Zaman, Maharajah Ranjit Singh would ride up to the Shah Zaman's tower and challenge his thus : "Behold, Shah Zaman grandson of Ahmad Shah, here stands a grandson of Charhat Singh, come to meet you. Come, if you dare and accept his challenge!!" Shah Zaman never accepted the challenge. Ranjit Singh was only 17 years old then.

He was one of the very few rulers in the world who did not resort to murder of rivals or opponents; nor was he autocratic



or despotic in his ways. Justice, equal and fair was meted out to both rich and poor. No soldier of his ever harassed, molested or robbed anybody. Due respect was given to the ladies of all communities. For the first time in memory, the citizens of Lahore led a peaceful life, with prosperity and comfort, under him. He was not only tolerant of all religions and did not hurt the religious sentiments of anyone, but gave full respect. During his reign, Muslims were free to practice their 'Azan' (call to prayer), the Hindus could blow conch shells in their temples and the Sikhs could recite kirtan in the Gurdwaras.

He literally looked upon all "with one eye". Often he would go incognito, disguised as a poor man, merely to mingle with the crowd and so get to know their problems!

Owing to his benevolence and open-handed generosity, he was often called PARAS or "Philosopher's stone".

Ranjit Singh was a shrewd observer, who possessed an uncanny ability to foresee the adversary's potential—and limitations. Though his unimpressive looks belied his actual leadership qualities, he was a brilliant military leader, possessing remarkable mental strength and tenacity of will.

Under his shrewd diplomacy, he was the arbiter of his Kingdom's destiny. He was the first Indian in a thousand years to stem the tide of invasion from the north-west frontiers of Hindustan. He combined the strength of Sikhs and Mussalmans of the Punjab, to carry out an expansionist policy for the Kingdom, which brought the Kashmiris and Pathans on the Afghanistan border under him. He was thus able to extend his authority from the borders of Tibet and Afghanistan to the desert of Sindh in the south. Ranjit Singh in fact was the one who led the flame of nationalism which was, so far, been nascent amongst the subdued people. The British Resident at Delhi found Ranjit Singh to be ambitious, restless and of a war-like character".

Ranjit Singh had a passion for organising military exercises with his troops and spent a greater part of the day in organising and inspecting parades and drills. A German traveller, Baron Hagel, who visited the Maharaja, found him to be a "giant" with internal power, that generated boundless energy and magnetism, giving him a distinct air of exuberance and dynamic confidence. Although Ranjit Singh could neither read nor write, yet he possessed an insatiable hunger for events and news.

Steinbach, who had served under him, commented that the Maharajah possessed the *spirit* and *originality* of a *man of genius*. His mind was so sharp and resourceful, that he was always able to suggest apt measures to meet any kind of exigencies. The eminent historian Hari Ram Gupta, in his *History of the Sikhs*, throws much light on this, by saying that he never forgot the name of any horse in the royal stable, nor of any hunting dog, gun or elephant!

The biographer, Sir Lepel Griffin, put Ranjit Singh's name amongst the greatest leaders in history, from the great Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar through to Napoleon Bonaparte

In spite of holding sway over such a mighty Kingdom, Ranjit Singh was humble to the core. His faith in the Almighty was unshakable and his love in the Guru's hymns was, virtually boundless. He would begin every single military campaign with *Ardas* and obeisance to the Guru Granth Sahib.

It was this enigma of a man, with incredible talent, who became the legendary figure in founding the Sikh Empire, which was the very last to be annexed by the British—but only a decade after Ranjit Singh had passed away into history.

*Kamal Gurtaj Singh*





# RANJIT SINGH'S

## ...Place in History

In 1799 Ranjit Singh captured Lahore. Two years later, in 1801 on the Baisakhi day to be precise, he held some kind of a coronation. Indeed it could not be described as one for, according to the Sikh tradition, he could not be the sovereign. The coins issued at that time described him as the servant of the Guru and not as a king. Two centuries later, however, it may not be out of place to assess his place in Indian history.

His first achievement is a part of history rather than contemporary in nature and significance. It was almost after 2,000 years that Ranjit Singh reversed the trend of inroads into India. There are references to Chandra Gupta Maurya venturing into Central Asia. There are one or two other similar instances also, like that of Kanishka. Otherwise, for the most part, people came into India rather than went from India to other countries. With the turn of the first Christian millennium, things began to change in a significant way, however.

The earlier invaders generally came into India and settled down here. Most of them hardly professed any kind of a faith. When they entered India they continued to stay in an undefined, pagan kind of way and gradually got merged into the Indian population. That some of them got assimilated into the Hindu Varnashrama is evident from the fact that Rajputs, Gujjars, Jats and several other war-like tribes got accepted into the Hindu fold. This is something so widely known that it should not be necessary to dwell on it.

What happened at the turn of the millennium was different. The advent of Islam into India was unlike the earlier forays. Islam was a well-defined religion. Even though the Caliph's army had invaded Sind in the 7th century A.D., that did not have much impact. The impact came with the repeated invasions of Mahmud of Ghzani. In the wake of those invasions, the northern belt of India gradually embraced Islam. By the time the Sultanate era was inaugurated in the early 13th century, everyone to the north of the river Indus had turned Muslim. Elsewhere too conversions had taken place. The structure of society in that area was tribal unlike those in parts of modern Punjab which lay to the south of the river Jhelum where the caste system was as much a fact of life as in the rest of India.

Without going into further details, one may jump to the early 18th century when the Mughal empire was given a knockout blow by Nadir Shah. Everyone submitted tamely except the Sikh misls which attacked him relentlessly when he was going back. Instead of the Mughals, it was the Afghans who now took over. The second half of the 18th century witnessed see-saw fighting between the Afghans and the Sikh misls. This culminated in the capture of Lahore by Ranjit Singh in 1799 and he emerged as the new ruler of the Punjab. With the passage of time and a squeeze from the East India Company, Ranjit Singh had no choice except to move north and occupy the Khyber Pass and its outlying areas. This phase of Ranjit Singh career lasted something like two decades.

The neatest description of what Ranjit Singh accomplished during that period has been given by a Bengali biographer of Ranjit Singh, N.K. Sinha. He has described Ranjit Singh as "the chastiser of unruly Pathans". Throughout history Pathans have been unruly without question. Everyone seeking to enter India, including Alexander the Great had to come via Afghanistan. Unlike Iran which was able to establish a glittering civilisation more than 2,000 years ago, Afghanistan was never able to establish anything even remotely resembling what had happened to its north.

Throughout history, Afghanistan has been the pathway for anyone seeking to enter India. This in turn created a certain kind of psychology in that country. When Ranjit Singh confronted the Pathans, they acted as aggressively usual and refused to accept him as their ruler. In his characteristically thorough style of functioning, Ranjit Singh saw to it that they did so. Indeed he asserted himself so effectively that, for almost a century after his rule had come to an end, the memory of how he had subdued them was still fresh in the minds of most pathans. To put it no more picturesquely, he did something in recent times, which none of the earlier Indian rulers had been able to do. But there is a second dimension to his achievement also. What is more, it has a contemporary echo as well.



Ranjit Singh became ruler of the Punjab after seven centuries of unbroken Muslim rule. The Sikhs were barely a little over 5 per cent of the total population of the state. In fact, once Ranjit Singh had moved beyond central Punjab and captured areas like Multan, Kashmir, the Derajat and the Khyber, the proportion of the Sikhs went down even further. How was he to administer the country when he was looked upon as a Sikh ruler, and the bulk of the population did not belong to the Sikh fold?

It is this feat of winning the goodwill of his subjects that needs to be studied in detail. The truth of the matter is that even after he had been dead for several years, the most popular poet of that time, Shah Mohammad, wrote about him admiringly in the wake of the First Anglo-Sikh war. In this poem which has been recently rendered into English and Hindi verse by N.K. Nijhawan, Shah Mohammad projected him as the Maharaja of Punjab, and not of the Sikhs. How was this miracle accomplished?

The answer is simple. He treated everyone alike. He did not impose any oppressive system of administration upon the people. Everyone followed his customary law and the administration was fair and just. Some of the small chieftains who had been defeated and replaced had a grudge against him. This is understandable. But this was not true of the average citizen. In his eyes, he was a hero and they admired him no end. Instead of the kind of the trifurcation of society into Hindu, Muslim and Sikh which characterised the late 19th century under the British, there was no such cleavage of perception at that time.

This did not come about automatically. He followed a kind of statecraft which, more or less, ensured that every one felt that he was a citizen of the state. If one may use the modern idiom, he was a liberal in the sense it is understood today and evolved something like a secular notion of the state. Two incidents in this connection may be referred to here.

In 1825, there was some controversy about the display of "tazias" in public. Ranjit Singh did not favour this practice but one of his senior officials argued that this practice had been followed for a number of years and a new, unwelcome restriction need not be imposed. Even though his principal adviser and foreign minister Fakir Azizuddin agreed with his way of thinking, the status quo ante was restored.

The second story is perhaps more to the point. Lahore boasted of a mosque called the *Sunehri Masjid*— the Golden Mosque. On one occasion, it was captured by the Nihangs, a group of Sikhs who were a law unto themselves. Nobody was prepared to take them on and the Maharaja himself confronted them. He asked them pointedly: "What do you intend to do? Do you want to read the Holy Quran, or do you want to instal your Holy book in that mosque?"

Since they did not want to do either of those two things, the issue was how to resolve the problem. On further probing, one of them said, "You are supposed to be a Sikh ruler but it is the Muslims who have the Golden Mosque. How do you explain that?" Ranjit Singh immediately understood the point. He told them that the Golden Temple at Amritsar too would be given a golden covering.

There are people who dispute his version. The fact remains that, till the beginning of the 19th century, the Golden Temple at Amritsar was known as the *Hari Mandir* (the Abode of the Lord). Since the day its dome was covered with gold, it has come to be known as the Golden Temple.

Whether this story is entirely correct or not, what needs to be underlined is that Ranjit Singh knew how to manage things. Not only that, he designed a well-thought out policy in this regard, and followed it faithfully and comprehensively. Not only did he give lavish grants to all places of worship, in one case, when the attack on the Khyber was being mounted, he heard about a well stocked Muslim library in that area. He immediately issued instructions that the library should not be damaged or destroyed in any way. (Contrast this with destruction of the priceless Sikh library near the Golden Temple in June 1984: Ed.)

It goes without saying that what he managed to achieve has lessons which have a contemporary application to our policy. No society can discriminate against any section of its people and then function peacefully. Ranjit Singh understood this basic truth. If what Ranjit Singh managed to achieve during those difficult and anarchic day can be seen as a precedent, which is worthy of emulation, the situation around us would undergo a profound change. In Pakistan today, three personalities of the Punjab are referred to in favourable terms. They are, apart from the great Guru Nanak, only Ranjit Singh and Bhagat Singh.

Need more be said?



# The Divine *Coinage* of The Sikhs

The bi-centennial of the coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is an appropriate occasion to recall the coinage of the Sikhs. Their coins exhibit the theme of divinity and valour which are the hallmark of the nation. The Punjab's history has been chronicled extensively but a study of the unique and distinct coinage of the Sikhs has remained somewhat neglected.

The period of the coinage discussed in this article is from Baba Banda Bahadur (AD 1710) and includes the Misls, the Kingdom of Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and concludes with the annexation of Punjab in AD 1849. This covers a span of about 140 years.

## Lahore Mint

## Amritsar Mint

Obv.

Obv.



Rev.

Rev.



Date VS 1839  
AD 1782  
with flag

VS 1840  
AD 1783

VS 1859  
AD 1802  
dotted leaf

VS 1859  
AD 1802  
with *Kartar*

## *Coins of the Misls*

Baba Banda Bahadur was appointed leader of the Sikhs in AD 1708 by Guru Gobind Singh. As the head of the Sikh army he waged war against the Mughals to avenge the death of the Guru's sons. The first Sikh coin was struck by Baba Banda Bahadur (Banda) after he had consolidated his seat at Lohgarh in AD 1710. This is a silver rupee, and the couplets thereon are dedicated to the glory of the Sikh Gurus. This dedication is, perhaps, unique as the coin does not bear the name or title of the ruler. In normal numismatic tradition, a new monarch



would announce his ascension to the throne and order coins to be struck to commemorate and mark the event. Such coins generally had the name of the new ruler, his title and at times even his effigy. However, the Sikhs departed from this accepted practice and struck coins in the name of their Gurus: Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs believed that victory (*Fateh*) and power are not achieved by mortals, but is a blessing bestowed by the *Sachcha Padshah* - the True King, the supreme authority.

The Banda coins have Persian couplets:

Obv: *Sikka Zad Bar Har Do Alam Fazl Sachcha*  
*Sahib Ast Fath- I - Gur Gobind Singh*  
*Shah - I - Shahan Tegh - I - Nanak Wahib Ast*

Translation and Transliteration : Coin struck in the two worlds (spiritual and secular) by the grace of the true Lord. Nanak is the provider of the sword(power) by which Guru Gobind Singh, King of Kings is victorious.

Rev: *Zarb Khalsa Mubarak Bakht*  
*Ba-Aman Ud-Dahr*  
*Zinat At-Takht*  
*Mashwarat Shahr*  
*Sanah - 2*

Translation and Transliteration : Struck at the Refuge of the world, the Council City, the Ornament of the Throne, of the Blessed Fortune of the Khalsa. Year 2

These coins have no Vikrama Samvat dates (Vikrama Samvat = VS. AD 1 = VS 57) but the regnal years 2 and 3. Banda Bahadur introduced his own calender commencing from his victory at Sirhind, and the numerals 2 and 3 pertain to this calendar. There is no mint name, but from a reading of the honorific names assigned to cities at that time, Lohgarh seems to be the most probable location.

The question is as to why were the accepted numismatic practices dispensed with? Were these coins struck to serve as devotional aids, as is the intent behind the issue of temple tokens? There are no records to show that this was one of the reasons behind the issue of the coinage beginning with Banda Bahadur. However it is apparent that these coins contributed to further propagating Sikhism and its message. They also served as a defiant symbol against the religious persecution which the Mughals had carried out against the Sikhs to force them to convert to Islam. In fact, history records that before Banda was dismembered, he was offered the option of being spared the eventual horrific decapitation if he and his son and followers renounced their faith.

These coins could have had another function, which was to send an unambiguous and clear signal to the Mughal oppressors that the Sikhs, with the help and blessings of their Gurus, would never succumb or be vanquished. It was as if a rallying battle cry was distributed in and through the coins, and they became the medium of the message at the time of the Sikh state's formation, still then in its infancy.

The official seal of Baba Banda Bahadur which he used for *Hukamnamas* and *Farmans*, or orders, was patterned after the seal of Guru Gobind Singh and repeated the couplet:

*Deg Teg O Fateh Nusrat Be-dirang*  
*Yaft Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*

Translation and Transliteration: Abundance, the sword, victory and help without delay Guru Gobind Singh obtained from Nanak.

Banda Bahadur was executed by the Mughal emperor in AD 1716. Leaderless, the Sikhs were in for more difficult times but they again reorganised themselves into Misl or clans, each under its own chief. Not only did they carve out their own territories, often in rivalry with each other, but were also under double attack by the Afghans and the Mughals. As they emerged victorious and took over major cities, they minted their own coins.

Obv.

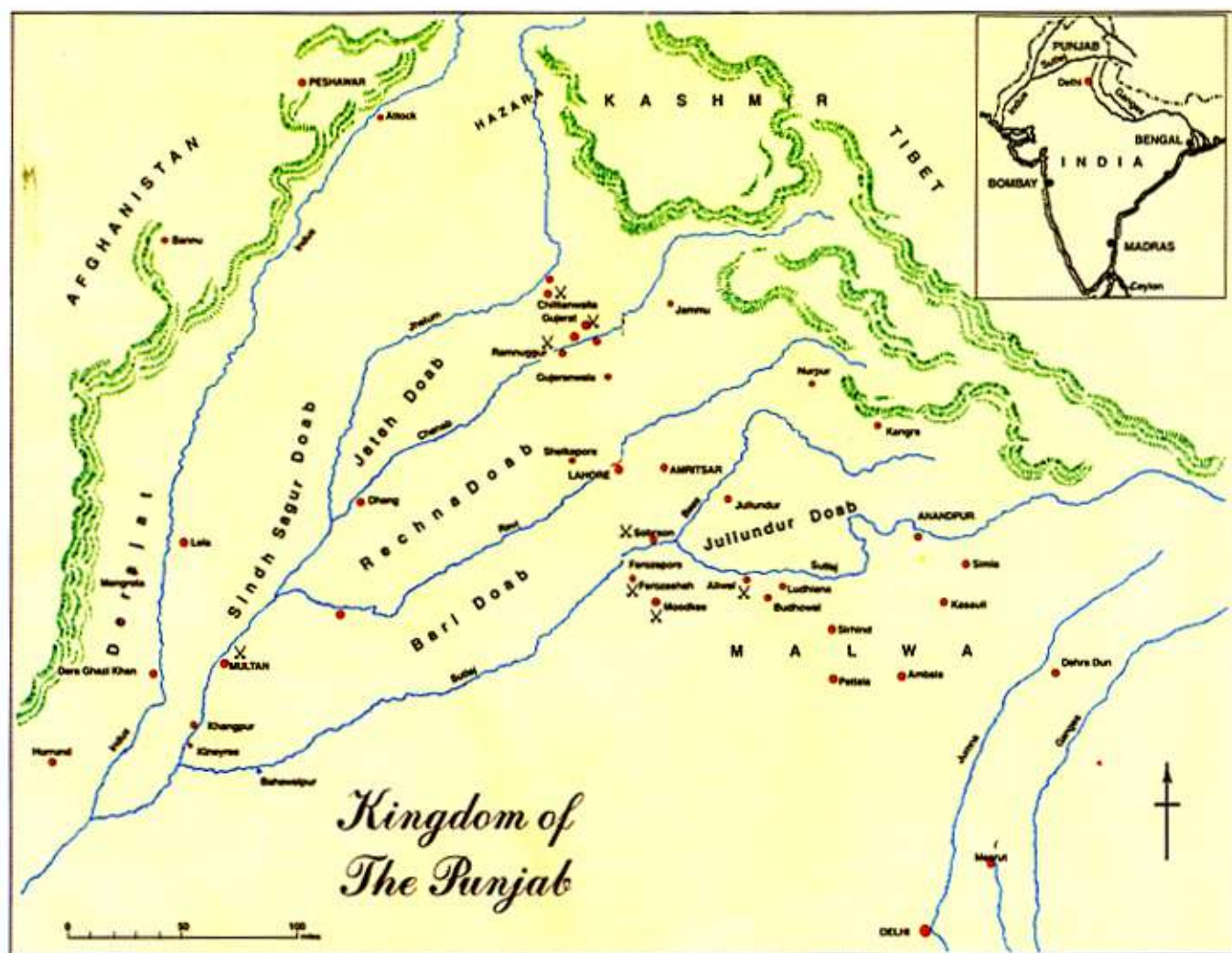


Rev.





The first Misl coin was struck at Lahore in VS 1822 (AD 1765). The couplet is from the seals of Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Bahadur and thus these coins are known as 'Gobind Shahis' or money of (Guru) Gobind. The next coin was struck in VS 1829 (AD 1772) at the mint in Multan. A variety of Sikh coins were struck at the sacred city of Amritsar, the first in VS 1832 (AD 1775). The Amritsar coin is known as 'Nanak Shahi'. Later, however, all Sikh coinage came to be known as 'Nanak Shahis'. The translation of the reverse of the Amritsar coins reads as 'struck at Illustrious Amritsar in the Vikrama Samvat year during the fortunate rule of the *Takht Akal*'. The history of the major Misls can be traced through their coinage. The coinage from these three cities is mainly attributed to the Bhangi Misl, but there is evidence to believe that other Misls also had a hand in the striking, particularly at Amritsar. The Misl coins continued to be struck till the ascendancy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.



Ranjit Singh, the head of the Sukerchakia Misl rose to power in AD 1799. He was proclaimed Maharaja in AD 1801. Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled a vast Kingdom whose area stretched over thousands of square miles. His territorial ambitions continued to be of concern to the British. When he died in AD 1839, the Kingdom extended in the north across the Great Himalaya Range into Ladakh; in the north-west to the borders of Afghanistan and its southern boundary was the river Sultej (see map).

Though a monarch, Ranjit Singh, believed that he was but a servant of the Gurus and hence coins should continue to bear their name and not his. This was a reflection of his deep humility and the supreme esteem in which he held them and his faith. Thus, he continued to have his coins struck with the same



inscriptions as were prevalent during the Misl period. Previously, only Sikh silver rupees had been struck. For the first time now, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, introduced coins in various denominations. These consisted of the gold mohur, silver rupee and copper paisa. Silver coins are in denominations of one, half and quarter rupee. The copper paisa and half paisa are in the *Gurmukhi* script and read 'Akal Sahai Guru Nanakji', they were also struck in the Persian script. Most rupees have a high silver content and were valued at sixteen annas to the rupee.

His currency exhibits a refinement both in terms of artistry and workmanship, when compared to that of the Misl period. Coins are embellished with the moon and stars, little flowers, beads and *chevron* borders. The calligraphy rivals contemporary Mughal and Durrani money, specially on those struck at

### Amritsar Mint

Rev.



with fixed date  
VS 1885

Obv. Actual dates



VS 1897  
AD 1840  
'Om'  
in Nagari



VS 1903  
AD 1846  
'Sat'  
in  
*Gurmukhi*



VS 1905  
AD 1848  
'Ram'  
in  
*Lundi*

### Peshawar Mint

Obv.



Rev.



VS 1892 AD 1835

### Amritsar Mint

Obv.



Rev.



Copper paisa in *Gurmukhi*

Note: The illustrations have been enlarged. All coins are silver rupees except the copper paisa. The rupees weigh approximately 10.7 g to 11.1 g. The rupees of Peshawar, Derajat and Kashmir are of lesser weights.



the Sikh Peshawar mint. Symbols of varying kinds such as *Kartar*, leaf, trident, sword, *Om* and *Ram* appear on them. Some coins, in the year that Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to the throne, bear the royal umbrella on the side, and some a *panja* (hand) in the middle. The post-Maharaja Ranjit Singh period brought in other symbols and names like the flag, trident, *Sat*, umbrella, *Ram*, and *Shiva*. These decorations are religious and martial symbols.

Significantly, all his coins only had one symbol in common - a leaf. Because of the stylistic variations of the leaf, it is difficult to trace the botanical origins. Several attempts have been made to identify the significance of this symbol. It has been suggested that it could be *pipal*, *ber* or even a lotus leaf. Until now no conclusive proof of its origin has been provided and this subject continues to engage numismatic scholars in controversy and speculation. Whatever the name or origin of the leaf may be, it is very distinctive and easily recognizable. Perhaps the intention was that this pictorial representation would help the common man easily identify it as a coin of the Sikh realm.

The main mints of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were at Amritsar and Lahore. As his dominions increased, he established mints at Multan (AD 1818), Kashmir (AD 1819), Derajat (AD 1821) and Peshawar (AD 1834). In Kashmir, eleven successive governors held office during his time. Only coins from this province bear the initial or symbol of each individual governor. One prominent Governor, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, was a general held in high esteem by the Maharaja for his valour. It is interesting to note that the *Nanakshahis* of Kashmir came and continued to be known as *Hari Singhjis* in the region, long after the annexation of the Punjab in AD 1849.

Lahore

Kashmir

Multan

Obv.



Rev.



VS 1884  
AD 1827

VS 1899  
AD 1842

VS 1879  
AD 1822



There is an amusing anecdote linked to one of the Maharaja's coins known as the *Morashahi*. It is well known that Ranjit Singh was fond of the good life, dance and dancing girls were a part of his *zenana* or harem. One of his favourites was Mora, a woman of uncommon beauty and whom he later married. He is said to have been seen drinking with her, while perched upon an elephant on the streets of his capital Lahore. Mora, too, like the Mughal empress Nur Jahan before her, wanted coins to be struck in her name. It is believed that the clever Maharaja, not wanting to give offense to his subjects and yet wanting to indulge Mora, ordered coins to be struck bearing a peacock tail. The peacock in Punjabi is called *mor*. These coins, thereafter, came to be known as *Morashahis* or coins of Mora and are now much sought after.

Obv.



Amritsar Mint

*Morashahi*

VS 1862  
AD 1805

Rev.



The legacy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign continues to this day. Unfortunately, as far as his illustrious coinage is concerned, it had a short span. Soon after annexation of the Punjab, this unique and remarkable currency struck by the first Sikh King was discontinued. Mints all over Punjab were closed. The *Nanakshahi* was sent to Bombay and Calcutta to be melted down and re-coined into Company rupees.

We are fortunate that some of these coins still survive and can be seen in various museums, notable amongst them being the Lahore Museum, the British Museum in London, the Sheesh Mahal in Patiala, the American Numismatic Society in New York and some private collections.

*Jyoti Rai*

*The author is a member of the Standing Committee of the American Numismatic Society (ANS) on Central and South Asian Coins. Member of the Art Acquisition Committee for the Khalsa Heritage Complex - subject expert for numismatics, textile, decorative arts and traditional Punjabi jewellery (Anandpur Sahib Foundation). She has catalogued the Sikh collection at the ANS and has worked on several other Indian collections. The Oriental Numismatic Society UK, has published several of her papers. She has a large collection of coins including an extensive and noteworthy collection of Sikh coins and tokens.*

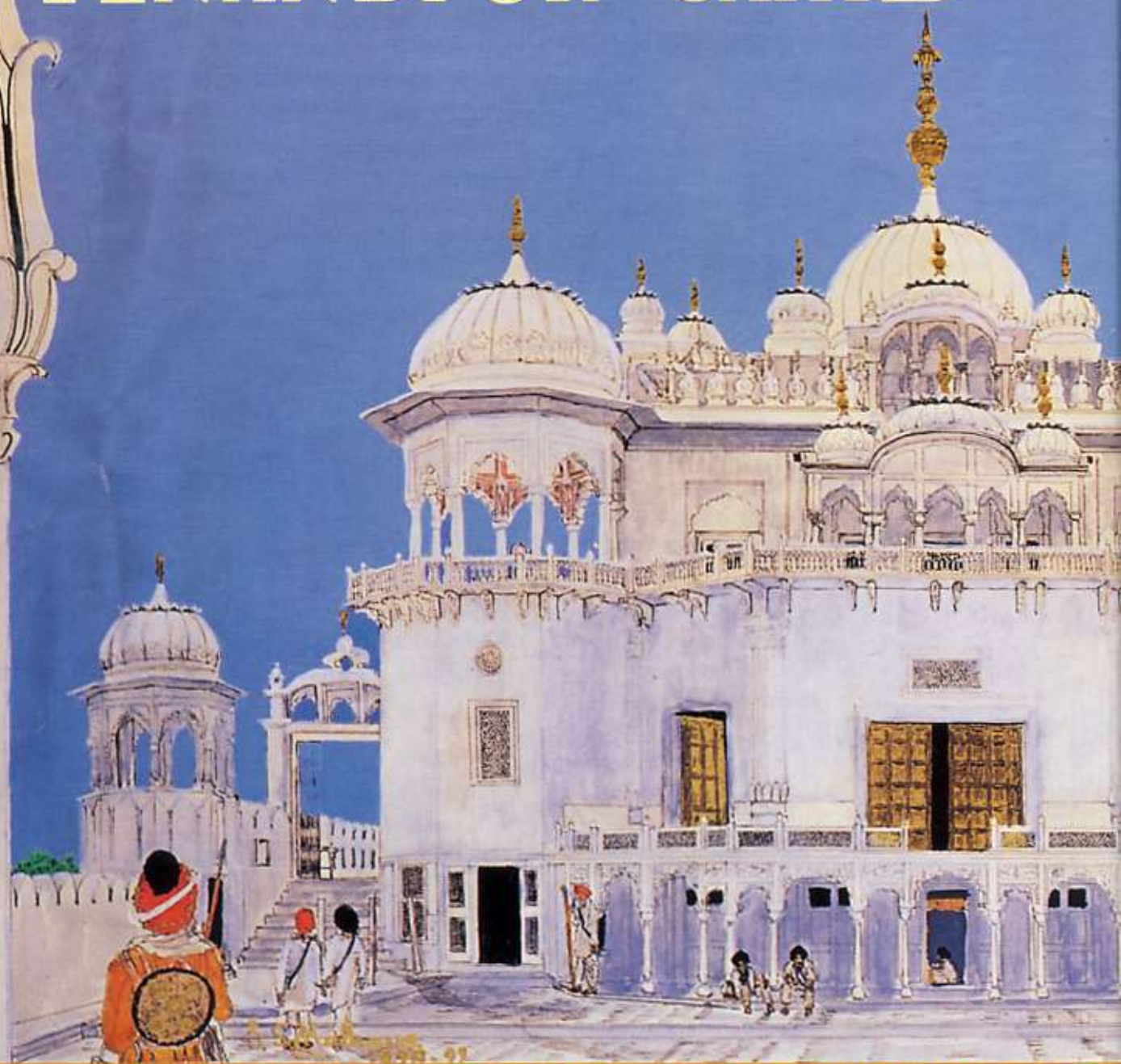


*Daughter of Air Chief Marshal H. Moolgavkar, Jyoti does research on the coins of India and has recently conducted a study and an examination of several thousand Indian coins of various varieties at the ANS.*



# HISTORIC GURDWARAS OF THE SIKHS

# ANANDPUR SAHIB







Anandpur, literally meaning the City of Bliss, is situated on one of the lower spurs of the Shivalik ranges in Ropar district of the Punjab. One of the very important historical and sacred centres of Sikhs, it is reverently called Anandpur Sahib.

Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib, one of the five *takhts* (lit. thrones) or seats of highest religious authority for the Sikhs, and several other historical gurdwaras are located here. Having been abode of the last Gurus of the Sikhs for two score years, the town was witness to many a momentous event in Sikh history.

The foundation of Anandpur was laid by Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-75), the Nanak IX, on 19 June 1665, on a piece of land covering the ruined mound of an older village, Makhoyal, which the Guru had earlier purchased for this purpose from the Rajput hill state of Kahlur (Bilaspur). He named the new habitation *Chak Nanaki* after his mother, and shifted here with his family from Kiratpur.



The small habitation grew into a flourishing town frequented by devotees from the Punjab and elsewhere. It was here that in May 1675, a group of Brahmans from Kashmir came to the Guru with their tale of woe. Religious persecution and forcible conversion were the order of the day in Kashmir under its Mughal governor. Guru Tegh Bahadur took up the cause and resolved to go to Delhi, to challenge this oppression and stand for the religious freedom of every one. Naming his young son, Gobind Das (later, Singh), hardly nine years of age, as his spiritual successor, he set out on the journey to Delhi, where he was taken into custody, tortured and executed publicly under the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb in Chandni Chowk on 1 November 1675 where Gurdwara Sis Ganj stands today.

Back at Chak Nanaki, the young successor, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), first received and then cremated with exemplary courage and composure the severed head of his father, brought at great personal risk by a daring Sikh, Bhai Jaita. Chak Nanaki was now renamed Anandpur after one of the ring of forts (Anandgarh) which he, apprehending trouble from the hill rajas, now undertook to raise. The forts were Keshgarh, in the centre and Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Holgarh, Fatehgarh and Taragarh around it. Bhim Chand and his son, Ajmer Chand of Kahlur, had not shed their chagrin over the defeat they had suffered at Bhangani at the hands of the Guru, although the latter had helped them in the battle of Nadaun (1691) against a Mughal general sent against them by the governor of Jammu. Their rajas made an alliance with the Katoch ruler of Kangra and several other chiefs, attacking Anandpur more than once, but each time Guru Gobind Singh repulsed their onslaughts.

On Baisakhi day, 30 March 1699, Guru Gobind Singh carried out the supreme task, culmination of the mission of Guru Nanak by formally creating the Khalsa panth, and administering amrit and evolving the first five Sikhs into the fold of the Khalsa. Several thousands followed on that and subsequent days to receive the rites of initiation by the double-edged sword. Anandpur thus became the birthplace of the Khalsa. It is known commonly as *Khalse di vasi* (Abode of the Khalsa).

The emergence of the Khalsa caused some panic among the chiefs of the surrounding hill principalities, and they planned a strategy to dislodge the Guru from Anandpur. They sent him emissaries who assured him, on oath, that they would forever cease troubling him and his Sikhs if only he would temporarily leave his citadel and move out of the town. At the same time, they secretly sought armed assistance from the Mughal faujdar of Sirhind in order to



encircle Anandpur and force the Guru out of the town. Guru Gobind Singh left Anandpur but, still suspicious of the rajas' intentions, encamped at the village of Hardo Namoh, 4 km south of Kiratpur, taking up a tactically viable defensive position. He was soon attacked by the Hindu chiefs from the north and by the Mughal contingents equipped with cannon from the south. These attacks, which according to Bhatt Vahis took place on 7, 12 and 13 October 1700 were repulsed, and on 14 October, Guru Gobind Singh and his Sikhs broke the cordon and crossed the River Sutlej into Basohli.

As soon as the imperial troops withdrew, the Guru reoccupied Anandpur. The hill chiefs then waited upon Emperor Aurangzeb and warning him of the new danger that the rise of the Khalsa spelt for his kingdom, entreated him to take some severe measures. A combined force of the hill chiefs and the faujdar of Sirhind and governor of Lahore marched upon Anandpur and laid siege to the town in May 1705. The Guru and his Sikhs withstood their repeated assaults for several months. The besiegers were eventually tired out and offered on solemn oath safe exit to the Guru and the Sikhs if they evacuated Anandpur. In good faith, Guru Gobind Singh along with his family and the Sikhs left the town during the night of 5-6 December, 1705.

Before departing, the Guru directed one of his Sikhs, Gurbakhsh, an Udasi by faith, to stay behind to look after the local *sangat* and the shrines, especially the one commemorating the site where Guru Tegh Bahadur's head had been cremated. Years later, as the situation permitted,



Gulab Rai and Shyam Singh, sons of Guru Gobind Singh's first cousin, Dip Chand, who had since the evacuation of Anandpur taken refuge with the friendly Raja of Nahan, came back. Gulab Rai purchased the town of Anandpur from the Raja of Bilaspur and pretending to be a successor of Guru Gobind Singh established his own religious seat, remonstrances from Gurbakhsh Udasi notwithstanding. All the four sons of Gulab Rai had predeceased him. His widow managed the affairs for some time, but soon died having bequeathed the *gaddi* to Sodhi Surjan Singh, a grandson of Shyam Singh.

After the conquest of the Punjab by Sikhs, several rulers and chiefs made rich endowments to the shrines which continued to be managed by the local Sodhi family until the rise of the Gurdwara reform or the Akali movement in the early 1920's. The shrines at Anandpur were taken over by the Akalis on 12 January 1923; they were formally handed over to the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee by the local Sodhis on 14 March 1923.

These are:

**TAKHT SRI KESHGARH SAHIB** is the principal shrine at Anandpur. Resplendent in its white marble glory, the shrine stands on a hillock and marks the site of the Keshgarh Fort where the historic Baisakhi congregation of 1699 had taken place. The present complex was constructed during 1936-44. Being on a slope, the complex has two levels protected by retaining walls on the sides. On the lower level, approached by a flight of steps is the imposing two-storeyed gateway, offices, and a 30-metre square courtyard. The level on which stands the main building is 2.5 metres higher than the courtyard. The 16-metre square hall with a balcony in front contains within it the sanctum, a 5.5-metre square room in which some old weapons, preserved as sacred relics from the time of Guru Gobind Singh are displayed on a low platform. The Guru Granth Sahib is seated under a canopy outside the sanctum. *Guru ka Langar* is on the lower level behind the central building. The relics placed in the inner sanctum of Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib include a *khanda*, a *katar* (dagger), a *saif* (double-edged straight tapering sword), a muzzle-loading musket, a spear known as *karpa barchha* and a *nagani* (a kind of spear with a twisted and pointed blade). Another set of weapons believed also to have once belonged to Guru Gobind Singh, and which had been taken away by the British to England after the occupation of the Punjab in 1849 had been brought back from there at the time of the celebration of the 300th birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh in 1966-67 and are now on display here.

**GURDWARA QILA ANANDGARH SAHIB** is situated on another spur, about 800 metres southeast of Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib. It is a newly constructed building though marks of the old, original structure are also still traceable. The present building complex was raised during the 1970s by Sant Seva Singh whose successors are now managing and further developing it. Earlier, during the 1930s, a fort-like building was constructed which is still intact, on top of the hillock. The present gurdwara, separated from this building by a spacious terrace paved with slabs of streaked marble, is a 15-metre square hall with an 8x3 metre porch in front. The 6-metre square sanctum within the hall has above it a lotus dome topped with a gilded pinnacle and *khanda* as a finial. The entire walled surface has a facing of streaked marble. This building was completed in 1970. The water level of an old *baoli*, a stepped well 4-metre in diameter, is approached through a covered passage. The *baoli* has 135 marble steps. At the lower levels on the eastern flank of the main building are a spacious hall for *Guru ka Langar* constructed in 1972, and 300 rooms for pilgrims and administrators.

**GURDWARA QILA FATEHGARH SAHIB**, situated on the northern outskirts of the town of Anandpur, marks the site of another fortress bearing this name. The present building was constructed during the late 1980s. The gurdwara is a two-storeyed domed building. In front of it is an old well which once served the needs of Fatehgarh Fort.

**GURDWARA QILA LOHGARH SAHIB**, some one and a half kilometres southwest of Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib, marks the site of the fort of that name constructed by Guru Gobind Singh to protect the riverside flank. It was here that Bhai Bachittar Singh faced and turned back a drunken elephant which, during their siege of Anandpur in 1700, the hill chiefs had sent to batter down the gate of this fort. The present building, octagonal in shape and three-storeyed high with a dome on top, was constructed during the late 1980s.

**GURDWARA HOLGARH SAHIB** stands on the site of Holgarh Fort, one and a half km northwest of the town across the Charan Ganga rivulet. It was here in the spring of 1701, that Guru Gobind Singh introduced the celebration of *hola* on the day following the Hindu festival of colour-throwing, *holi*. Unlike the playful sprinkling of colours as is done during *holi*, the Guru made *hola* an occasion for Sikhs to demonstrate skills-at-arms in simulated battle. *Hola* or *Hola Mahalla*, became thereafter an annual tourney of warlike sports at Anandpur as long as the Guru stayed there. The observance of *Hola Mahalla* was revived after the Sikhs had established their rule in the Punjab. It is now the biggest festival of Anandpur. The *mahalla* or the march on this occasion starting from the Takht Sahib on the concluding day of the week-long festival ends at Holgarh, where sports like fencing, coit-throwing and tent-pegging are held.



The present building, a three-storeyed octagonal, domed edifice, was constructed under the supervision of Sant Seva Singh and was completed in 1970. The sanctum is in the middle of the marbled ground floor.

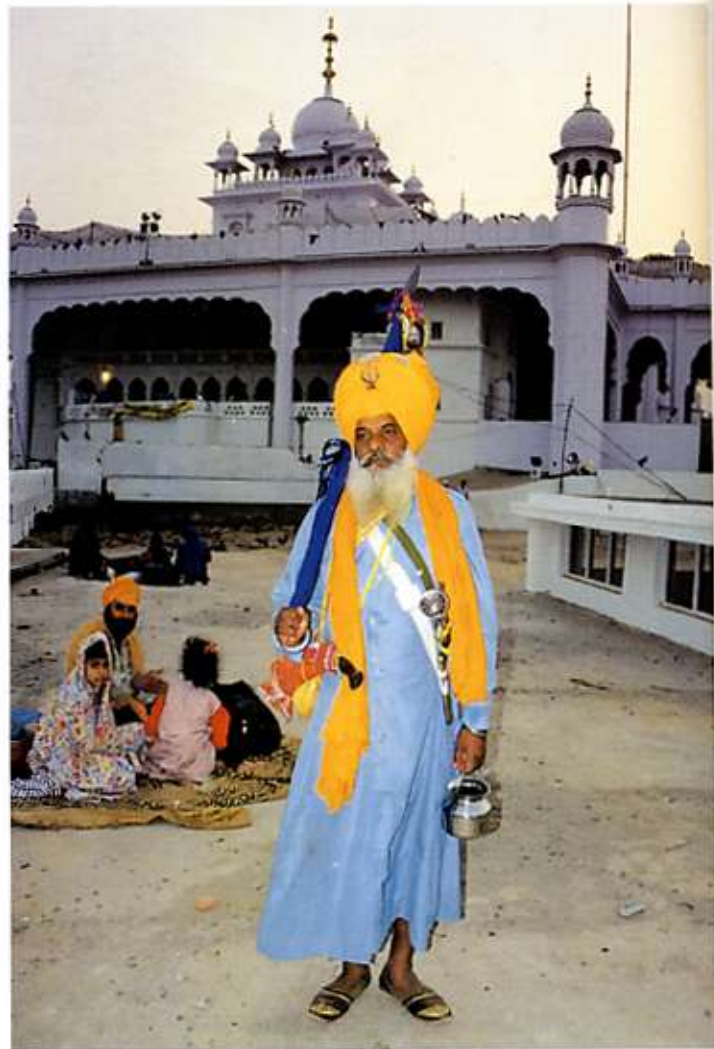
**GURDWARA MATA JITO JI**, built within a half-acre enclosure just outside Agampura village, about 2 km northwest of Anandpur marks the site where the body of Mata Jito Ji, wife of Guru Gobind Singh, was cremated in December 1700. The present three-storeyed domed building was completed in 1972. The 4-metre square sanctum marked off by four pillars is in the middle of the square hall on the ground floor. The fluted lotus dome on top of the building has a gold-plated pinnacle and a gilded *khanda* as finial.

**GURDWARA MANJI SAHIB**, also called Damalgarh located close to precincts of Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib is dedicated to Guru Gobind Singh's sons who used this place for learning and practising of martial skills. The double-storey domed building of the shrine stands in the middle of a 20-metre square marble-paved compound. Its 3-metre-square sanctum is in the middle of a 15-metre square hall on the ground floor.

**GURDWARA SIS GANJ SAHIB** within the town, is sacred to Guru Tegh Bahadur whose head was cremated here in November 1675. A memorial shrine in the form of a platform within a small room was constructed over the ashes by Guru Gobind Singh himself. At the time of the evacuation of Anandpur in December 1705, Guru Gobind Singh especially entrusted it to the care of Gurbakhsh Udasi. The original pavement in the front compound with old Nanakshahi bricks arranged in geometrical patterns is still intact. The two-storey building with a pinnacled dome provides a 4.5-metre wide covered circumambulatory passage supported on exquisitely designed marble columns around the inner sanctum where the Guru Granth Sahib is seated.

**AKAL BUNGA**, opposite Gurdwara Sis Ganj within the same compound is a small shrine housed in an old building said to have been built by the *pujari*, priest, Man Singh in 1889. It comprises a pentagonal room on either side of a masonry pedestal on which the Guru Granth Sahib is seated behind glass panels. The pedestal marks the spot where during the obsequies of his father, Guru Gobind Singh delivered a sermon to his followers.

**GURDWARA DAMDAMA SAHIB**, along with Thara Sahib and Bhora Sahib in the same compound, is close to Sis Ganj, formerly called Guru ke Mahal, i.e. residential quarters of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Damdama Sahib marks the site where the Guru used to sit while receiving and



*With the western face of Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib at the back, a Nihang and a family at Amrit Vela (dawn).*

addressing visiting *sangats*. The ceremony installing Guru Gobind Singh as Guru was performed here. The present domed octagonal building was constructed during early decades of the 20th century.

**THARA SAHIB**, an half-a-metre high a 5-metre square marble-paved platform stands in the open space in front of Damdama Sahib. It was here that Guru Tegh Bahadur received the group of Kashmiri Pandits who called upon him in 1675.

**GURDWARA BHORA SAHIB**, a three-storeyed domed building close to Damdama Sahib, was a part of *Guru ke Mahal*. Here in a *bhora* (basement) Guru Tegh Bahadur used to retire for solitary meditation. A 1.5-metre square and half a metre high platform in the middle of the present basement marks the site of the original *bhora*. The Holy Book is now seated on platform on the ground floor. Extension of this Gurdwara involving blocks for *Guru ka Langar* and residential accommodation is in progress.





**G**urmat Sangeet is a unique musical tradition of the five centuries-old Sikh religion established and preached by all the Sikh Gurus, from Guru Nanak Sahib, the Founder of Sikhism onwards. With *Gurmat Sangeet*, the divine message is communicated through *Shabad Kirtan*. *Shabad Kirtan* has been made an inseparable part of the Sikh way of life. *Kirtan Chauki* tradition has been in vogue in the gurdwaras for centuries and the *Kirtan* tradition in practice on special occasions is an extended form of this tradition. This practical *Kirtan* tradition is in accordance with the *Shabad Guru* of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

The *Bani* of the Granth Sahib, written and indexed according to the prescribed *Raagas*, singing forms, music signs, headings and the other guidelines issued in the *Bani*, creates original and specific musicology. A scientific approach to music can help in recognising more explicitly the music tradition according to the Guru Granth Sahib.

Such system of music, enshrined in the Holy Guru Granth Sahib is exactly in accordance with the musical tenets established by the Gurus. What came to be known as *Gur Shabad Kirtan* is a unique confluence of *Shabad* and *Kirtan* propounded by the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak with the help of divine music emanating from Bhai Mardana's *Rabab*. This emerged as a unique system in the

Indian and world music traditions. In *Bani Gur Shabad*, *Kirtan* has been assigned a very prominent status as stated in the following couplet:

*Kaljug meh Keertan Pardhaanaa.*

*Gurmukh Japee-ai Laa-e Dhiaanaa*

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Page 1075)

*Har Keerat Kaljug pad uttam*

*har paaiai satgur maajhaa*

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Page 697)

The Guru Granth Sahib contains *Bani* of the Gurus in addition to the *Bani* of contemporary and earlier Saints and *Bhagats*. The classification of *Bani* according to *Raags* makes it clear that the *Bani* is written in accordance with a particular system as conceived by Guru Arjun Dev the fifth Guru while compiling and editing the Guru Granth Sahib. Beside the *Raagas*, different classical and folk singing styles, *Rahaa* and other music signs are those elements of the *Gurmat* music system which always remain active due to their original musical characteristics and for the presentation of *Shabad Kirtan*. The *Bani* under *Shabad Kirtan* is to be sung according to the prescribed *raags*, *raaga* forms, singing styles, music signs, *Rahaa*, *Ank* (digit) and so on. Different music elements which discipline *Shabad Kirtan*,



Raagaa	Raaga forms	Page	Raagaa	Raaga forms	Page
* Siree	-	14	* Soohee	-	728
* Maajh	-	94		Soohee Kaafee	751
* Gaorhee	-	151		Soohee Lalit	793
	Gaorhee Guaareree	151	* Bilaawal	-	794
	Gaorhee Dakhnhee	152		Bilaawal Dakhnhee	843
	Gaorhee Chetee	154		Bilaawal Mangal	844
	Gaorhee Bairaagan	156	* Gond	-	859
	Gaorhee Poorbee Deepkee	157		Bilaawal Gond	874
	Gaorhee Poorbee	242	* Raamkalee	-	876
	Gaorhee Deepkee	12		Raamkalee Dakhnhee	907
	Gaorhee Maajh	172	* Nat Naaraain	-	975
	Gaorhee Maalwaa	214		Nat	975
	Gaorhee Maalaa	214	* Maaleegaorha	-	984
	Gaorhee Sorath	330	* Maaro	-	989
* Assaa	-	154		Maaroo Kaafee	1014
	Aasaawaree Sudhang	369	* Tookhaaree	-	1107
	Aasaawaree	409	* Kedaaraa	-	1118
	Aasaa Kaafee	365	* Bhairao	-	1125
* Goojree	-	489	* Basant	-	1168
* Devgandhaoree	-	527		Basant Hindol	1171
	Devgandhaar	531	* Saarang	-	1194
* Bihaangrhaa	-	537	* Malaar	-	1125
* Wadhans	-	557	* Kaanrhaa	-	1294
	Wadhans Dakhnee	580	* Kaliaan	-	1319
* Sorath	-	595		Kaliaan Bhopaalee	1321
* Dhanaasree	-	13/660	* Prabhaatee	-	1327
* Jaitsrei	-	696		Prabhaatee Bibhaas	1327
* Todee	-	711		Prabhaatee Dakhnee	1343
* Bairaarhee	-	719		Bibhaas Prabhaatee	1347
* Tilang	-	721	* Jaijaawantee	-	1352
	Tilang Kaafee	726			



can be known by an independent systematic discussion about them and its functional aspect may become more clear by systematic thought.

**The Raaga:** The entire *Bani* of the holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib has been classified under 31 *Raagas* and 31 different *Raaga* forms (*Parkaars*) thus making a total of 62.

*Raaga* references on the *Gurbani* as headings are a clear indication for singing any piece of *Gurbani* according to the prescribed *Raaga* and that has been ordained in Sikh tradition and fundamentals. Importance of the *Raagas* has been stated as follows:

*Sabhnaan raagaan wich so bhalli  
bhaaee jit wasiaa man aae.*  
(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Page 1423)

*Dhan su raag surangrhe  
aalaapat sabh tikh jaae.*  
(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Page 958)

*Gunh govind gaavah sabh harijan  
raag ratan rasnaa aalaap.*  
(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Page 821)

Under the *Gurmat Sangeet* tradition, *Raagas* are in propagation with their original melodic forms. Sikh musicians, uninfluenced by the changes in *Shudh Thaata* notes as *Bilawal* scales from *Kafi* scale, kept the traditional purity of *Gurmat Sangeet* in practical form. As a sequel, a tradition which is more than 500 years old, remains very much in existence as the Sikh musical tradition. These original *Raaga* forms of *Gurmat Sangeet* are a unique contribution to Indian music's *Raaga* tradition.

These *Raagas* (31 Main and 31 *Raaga* forms) are *Shudh* (*Siree, Maajh, Gaorhee, Aasaa, Dhanaasree, Soohie, Maaroo, Tookharee, Parbhatee* etc.) *Chhayalag* (nine *Raaga* forms of *Gaorhee* and *Aasa Kaaf*, *Tilang Kafee, Soohie Lalit, Bilawat Mangal, Parbhatee Bibhaas* etc.), admixture of two *Raagas* or including the melodic reflection of any other *Raaga*, and *Sankeeran* (*Gaorhee, Poorbee, Deepkee*), combination of more than two *Raagas*. Originality of seasonal (*Malhaar Basant* etc.) and regional (*Maajh Aasaa, Tookharee* etc.) *Raagas* under *Raag* forms is another important feature of the *Gurmat Sangeet* System. With a view to disseminate the divine message to the people, Guru Nanak Sahib toured different places. These travels of Guru Nanak are popularly known as *Udasis*. During these long travellings (*udasis*) Guru Nanak Sahib used *Raagas* belonging to local tradition to propagate his message, of which the *Deccani Raaga* (*Gaorhee Dakhnee, Wadhans Dakhnee, Bilwal Dakhnee, Raamklee Dakhnee, Maaroo Dakhnee, Parbhatee Dakhnee*) tradition deserves special mention. *Dakhani* in word in the Sri Guru Granth indicates the southern music system. In *Gurbani*,

the *Raaga Dhyana* (Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Page 83, 585, 791, 849, 950, 1027, 1285, 1419, 1425 etc.) of some *Raagas* have been given with a view to express the nature of different *Raagas* in their spiritual context according to the *Gurmat*.

**Singing Styles:** *Bani* has different headings alongwith *Raagas* such as *Ashtpadian, Chaupade, Ghorian, Alahmian, Vaar* and the others in the Guru Granth Sahib. Under the *Bani* arrangement, these forms not only assume poetical forms but specific singing styles and music forms also which have a particular technique. The Gurus have not only used different classical and folk music forms in *Bani* but these have also been used in conformity with the *Gurmat* musical system which is based on elements of music like *Raaga, Rahaa, Ank* and other musical sings. Under this system, classical musical forms have been liberated from the rigorous discipline of the art of music and given an equipoise



(*Sehaj*) by conforming it to the spirit of the Sikh musical system. Similarly spontaneous freedom of folk forms has been given the specific discipline of *Gurmat Sangeet*.

The Guru Granth Sahib contains *Ashtpadi* and *Partial* of classical music and *Vaar, Chhand, Ghorian* and *Alahmian* of folk music. *Vaar* (ballad) singing style has a special place in the folk music. In the Guru Granth Sahib different *Vaars* under different *Raagas* have been given a heading of traditional folk musical tunes.

**Ank (Digit):** In the Guru Granth Sahib, the digits have been marked at different places viz, ੧, ੨, ੩, ੪, .. etc. as *Ank*. In addition to the signs like *Rahaa*, the *Bani* has been divided through different digits. The line ending with digits (*Ank*) in a *Shabad*, provides serial to a *Shabad* unit. While being helpful in its systematic presentation, it also helps in understanding its meanings. In the presentation of *Shabad Kirtan, Rahaa* which contains the central idea of the *shabad* is to be sung as *Sthaaee* in the beginning and after every *Antra* to make the spirit of the *Shabad* more explicit. The



lines containing different similes, illustrations and reasoning etc. are also directed through different digits (*Ank*). These have to be sung in the form of *Antras*.

**Rahaa:** Under the *Gur Shabad Kirtan* tradition, *Rahaa* has a central and important place. In *Rahaa* the shabad has its central idea which is to get activated as a centripetal force in the presentation of the *Shabad*. Literally, *Rahaa* indicates pause, rest or to be stable (*Sahitya Kosh Paribhashik Shabddawali* Page 871). In the medieval period system, *Prabandha* and *Dhrupad* singing style has one element, *Dhruv* which is known as *Achal*. The other name of *Dhruv* is *Rahaa* which has been used for singing of *Bani*. Medieval saints and bhagats or poets have also used *Dhruv*

Under the *Gurmat Sangeet Shabad Keertan*, *Rahaa* is taken as *Sthaaee* and the tradition is to sing it repeatedly after every *Antra* because the *Rahaa* line has the central idea of the *Shabad* while the *Antra* line resolves the problem by giving argument and evidence. When the problem is resolved and there is a change in thought the *Rahaa* line also undergoes a change. If a *Shabad* has more than one *Rahaa* the second *Rahaa* line gets activated after the change in thought of the *Shabad*. The singing process of *Rahaa* in a *Shabad* is as follows:

According to the prescribed recitation system, *Rahaa* in a *Shabad* through the repeated singing of its line, is helpful in bringing forth the central idea and confirms the idea and increases its intensity. *Rahaa* is the central force in a *Shabad* which is active in the inner texture of the *Shabad*.

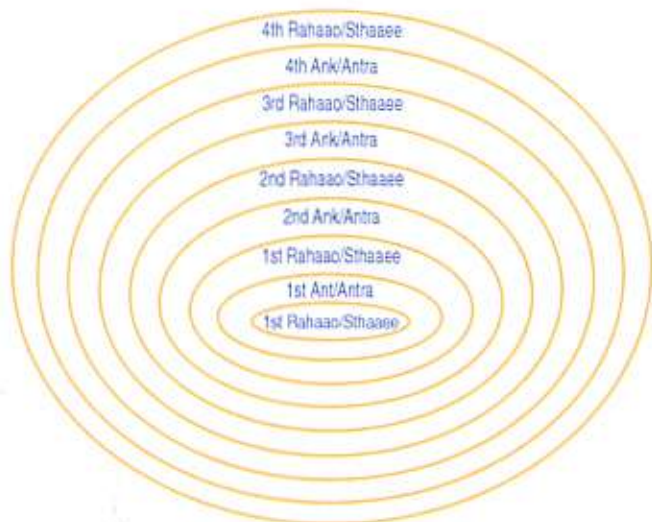
**Ghar:** Under the *Gurmat Sangeet* system in addition to the above function of *Rahaa*, there are other musical signs. In the *Guru Granth Sahib* for the recitation of *Gurmat Sangeet*, the next musical sign is that of *Ghar*. It is written as *Ghar ek*, *Ghar do*, *Ghar tin*. Total number of *Ghars* in the *Guru Granth Sahib* is seventeen. Scholars have different views about the concept of *Ghar*. According to *Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha* (*Gur Shabad Ratnakar Mahan Kosh*, Page 441) *Ghar* has two meanings: a *Tala* or a kind of *Tal*, *Swar* and kinds of *Murchanna*. According to *Bhai Vir Singh*, "There are three *grams* in musical instruments. *Grams* is constituted of *Ghar*. So *Ghars* are based on notes of these three *Grams*. *Ghar* indicates the prominent note of the *Raaga* being sung." (*Guru Granth Kosh*, Page 302). Majority of the music scholars take *Ghar* as *Tala*. This tradition of scholars seems to be influenced by the Persian *Tala* system where different *Tala* forms are addressed as *Ek Gah*, *Do Gah*, *Sih Gah*, and *Chahar Gah*. (*Shabadarth Sri Guru Granth Sahib* 'Pothe Pahl' S.G.P.C., Page 74) Therefore, it is possible that the *Gurus* also used *Ghar* to indicate *Tala*. It is accepted under the Persian music tradition that *Amir Khusro* invented 17 *Taalas* which are almost identical to *Hindustani Talas* and came to be used in India alongwith Persian names. (*Nibandh Sangoot Edi. Lakshmi Narain Garg*, Page 557-558) Majority of the scholars accept *Ghar* as *Tala* though *Ghar* is not more in vogue due to fixed scale and time difference. Even then under the *Gurbani* musical system, *Ghar* is clearly indicated as a musical sign.

**Jati:** The heading *Jati* under *Raaga Bilawal* is indicated as *Bilawal Mahala 1 Thiti Ghar 10* (*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Page 838) Under Indian musical system it is used as *Jati*. It means stages of rest in continuous tempo. In this regard *Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha* writes, "Concept of Music is *Jati*." (*Gur Shabad Ratnakaar Mahan Kosh*, Page 502). Dr. Charan Singh wrote in the *Guru Granth Bani Beura* "Jai, Gat Sath".



or 'Tek' for 'Rahaa' in their literary creations. In their works the first couplet is of *Tek* or *Rtihaao*, while in *Gurbani*, *Rahaa* follows the first line or couplet of the *Shabad* with the mark *Rahaa*. The particular digits are also found to indicate the number of *Rahaa*. In certain *Shabads*, 1 *Rahaa* (*Ik Rahaa*), 2 *Rahaa* (*Do Rahaa*), *Guru Granth Sahib*, Page 26-26, *Rahaa* (*Tin Rahaa*), 3 *Guru Granth Sahib*, Page 154, 4 *Rahaa* (*Chaar Rahaa*), *Guru Granth Sahib*, Page 96-97, 899 are also seen.





All the three are combined functions (*Kartab*) of *Jorhi* (*Tabla*), while the right hand acts as *Gat*. When both hands are free and the voice also comes out freely, it is called *Karkat*, means *Sath* [Sahib Singh (Prof.) Shri Guru Granth Sahib darshan (Pothis Six) Page 229]. Similarly, *Jati* is related to playing *Gat* on *Jorhi* (*Tabla*).

The above views make it clear that in medieval times, the *Band Bol* of *Tabla* were in vogue. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha's view in this regard seems appropriate. Contemporary musicians define *Jati* as "when the right hand plays *Khulla Bol* on *Jorhi* and left hand plays on *Band Bol*, such a rhythmic process is called *Jati*. It is clear from the heading as mentioned in the *Guru Granth Sahib* that this hymn in *Raaga Bilawal* is to be sung in the modulation of *Ghar 10*, with the specific pauses in *Jati* style and the poetic form/singing style is *Thiti*.

**Dhune/Dhuni:** Out of 22 *Vaaras* included in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, 9 have different *Dhuni* headings. These *Dhuni* signs indicate the special basis for singing tunes. The headings of *Dhunis* are as follows-

- ❖ *Vaar maaji kee tathaa salok mahalaa 1 malik mureed tathaa chandarharhaa sohee-e kee dhune gaavnhee.* (Page 137)
- ❖ *Gaouri kee vaar mahalaa 5 raa-e kamaaldee mojee kee vaar dhun upar gaavnhee.* (Page 318)
- ❖ *Aasaa mahalaa 1 vaar salokaa naal salok bhee mahale pahile ke likhe tunde us raajai kee dhune.* (Page 862)
- ❖ *Gojree kee vaar mahalaa 3 Sikandar biraahim kee vaar kee dhune gaavanhee.* (Page 508)
- ❖ *Wadhans kee vaar mahalaa 4 Laila behleemaa kee dhune gaavnhee.* (Page 585)
- ❖ *Raamkalee kee vaar mahalaa 3 Jodhe weerei poorbaahee kee dhune.* (Page 847)

- ❖ *Saarang kee vaar mahalaa 4 Raae mahime hasne kee dhune.* (Page 1237)
- ❖ *Vaar malhaar kee mahalaa 1 Raanhe kailaas tathaa maalde kee dhune.* (Page 1278)
- ❖ *Kaanrhe kee vaar mahalaa 4 Moose kee vaar kee dhune.* (Page 1312)

These *Dhuni* headings are the special features of ballad singing style sung on the heroic deeds of the warriors of Northern India. In addition to their importance for *Gurbani*, it has great significance for the *Hindustani Music*. These headings also provide a new formulation for the division



of Indian Music into *Hindustani* and *Karnatic* systems. In the landscape of Northern Indian Music tradition, the *Punjabi* tradition emerges as a central source.

The above mentioned musical signs, in combination with *Raagas* and music forms, create a special tradition for the *Shabad Kirtan* tradition which is clearly based on the prescribed system of *Bani* in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

**Process of Shabad Kirtan:** The process of *shabad kirtan's* singing/presentation, in the light of the above musical elements and music tradition as enshrined in the *Guru Granth Sahib* is as follows: *Shabad* has the basic importance in the *Kirtan* tradition. The basic purpose of *Shabad Kirtan*



is to imbibe the light of the *Shabad* into the human mind. Under *Gurbani*, truth is as the central point. *Rahaa* lines are to be sung first as they form the central spiritual point of the *Shabad*. Under their specified musical forms of classical and folk traditions, *Rahaa* lines are to be sung as *Sthaaee* and other lines are to be sung as *Antras* after dividing them in the light of the given tips.

### EK ONKAAR SATGUR PARSaad MAAJH MAHALAA 5 CHAOPADE GHAR 1

*Meraa man lochal gur darshan taaee.*

*Bilap kare chatrik kee niaaee.*

*Trikhaa na utrai saant na aavai bin darsan sant piaare jeeo.1*

*Trikhaa na utrai saant na aavai bin darsan sant piaare jeeo.1*



*Hao gholee jeeo ghol ghumaee gurdarsan sant piaare jeeo.*  
1 *Rahaa*

*Teraa mukh suhaavaa jeeo sah dhun baanhee. Chir hoaa dekhe saaringpaanhee. Dhan su des jahaa toon vasaa meet muraare jeeo. 2*

*Hao gholee hao ghol ghumaee gur sajan meet mumare jeeo. 1*  
*Rahaa*

*Ik gharhee na milte taa kaljug hotaa.*

*Hun kad mileal pria tudh bhagvanta.*

*Moh rainh na vihaavai need na aaval bin dekhe gurdarbaare jeeo. 3*

*Hao gholee jeeo ghol ghumaee tis sache gur darbaare jeeo. 1*  
*Rahaa*

*Bhaag hoaa gur sant milaa-i-aa. Prabh abinaasee ghar mah paa-i-aa.*

*Sev karee pal chasaa na vichhrhaa jan Naanak dass tumare jeeo. 4*

*Hao gholee jeeo ghol ghumaee jan Nanak daas tumaare jeeo.*  
*Rahaa 1*

(Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Page-96)

In the above *Shabad*, the *Keertan* process begins by making the first *Rahaa* as *Sthaaee* in which the Guru says:

**Rahaa 1.(First Sathaaee):** *Hao gholee jeeo ghol ghumaee gurdarsan sant piaare jeeo.1. Rahaa.*

(I am a sacrifice, and my soul, I sacrifice unto the sight of the Guru, the dear.1.)

**Ank (Digit) 1.(First Antraa):** *Meraa man lochai gur darsan taaee. Bilap kare chatrik kee niaaee. Trikhaa na utrai saant na aaval bin darsan sant piaare jeeo. 1.*

(My soul longs for a sight of the Guru. It bewails like a piedcuckoo; my thirst is not quenched, nor peace I find without the sight of the dear Guru saint.1)

**Rahaa 1.(First Sathaaee):** *Hao gholee jeeo ghol ghumaee gurdarsan sant piaare jeeo. 1. Rahaa.*

(I am a sacrifice, and my soul, I sacrifice unto the sight of the Guru, and dear 1).

**Ank 2.(Second Antraa):** *Teraa mukh suhaavaa jeeo sah dhun baanhee. Chir hoaa dekhe saaringpaanhee. Dhan su des jahaa toon vasaa mere sajanh meet muraare jeeo. 2.*

(Thy face is beautiful and the sound of Thine Words imparts Divine knowledge. It is long since the sparrow hawk has had a glimpse of water. Blessed is the land where Thou lives, 'O' venerable Divine Guru, my friend and intimate.2).

**Rahaa,2. (Second Sathaaee):** *Hao gholee hao ghol ghumaee gur sajan meet muraare jeeo.1. Rahaa.*

(I am devoted, I am devoted unto the honourable, Godly Guru, my friend and intimate. 1).

**Ank 3.(Third Antra):** *Ik gharhee na milte taa kaljug hotaa. Hun kad mileal pria tudh bhagvanta. Moh rainh na vihaavai need na aaval bin dekhe gurdarbaare jeeo.3.*

(Should I meet Thee not even for a moment, it amounts to the dark age, When shall I now meet Thee, 'O' my beloved auspicious Lord? I cannot pass the night and sleep comes not to me, without beholding the Guru's Court.3).

**Rahaa 3.(Third Sathaaee):** *Hao gholee jeeo ghol ghumaee tis sache gur darbaare jeeo. 1. Rahaa. (I am a sacrifice, and I sacrifice my soul unto that True quart of the venerable Guru. 1).*

**Ank 4.(Fourth Antraa):** *Bhaag hoaa gur sant milaa-i-aa. Prabh abinaasee ghar mah paa-i-aa. Sev karee pal chasaa na vichhrhaa jan Naanak dass jeeo.4. (It is my good fortune to*



have met the saintly Guru. The immortal Lord, I have found in my own home. I will now serve Thee and even for a trice and a moment will not separate from Thee Servant Nanak is a serf or Thine, O' revered Master! 4).

**Rahaao 4.(Fourth Sathaaee):** Hao gholee jeeo ghol ghumaee jan Nanak daas tumaare jeeo. *Rahaao. 1.*

(I am devoted, and my soul is devoted unto thee, servant Nanak is a slave of Thine).

In the above *Shabad* Guru Arjun Dev is yearning for darshan (sight) of the saintly Guru and is expressing different psychological states in terms of separation. Four *Rahaao* lines with four different *Rahaao* 4 *Ank* / Digit (1,2,3,4) signs are being changed with directions as indicated in the *Shabad* after every *Antra* line; that is why the *Shabad* Kirtan process will be as follows:

First <i>Rahaao</i>	First <i>Antra</i>	First <i>Rahaao</i>
First <i>Rahaao</i>	Second <i>Antra</i>	Second <i>Rahaao</i>
Second <i>Rahaao</i>	Third <i>Antra</i>	Third <i>Rahaao</i>
Third <i>Rahaao</i>	Fourth <i>Antra</i>	Fourth <i>Rahaao</i>

**Kirtaniaa/Kirtankaar:** In the *Guru Granth Sahib* not only are musical elements and units determined but there are also many directions for the musician and presentation of Kirtan; the *Guru* says :

*Bhalo Bhalo Re Keertanee  
Raam Ramaa Raamaa Gun Gaao  
Chhod Maya kai Dhand Suao*

(*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Page 885)

According to the above couplet, the musician's ideal is *Kirtan* shorn of any greed and ego. The *Kirtaniaa* is not to show off his ego, but he is to render *Kirtan* with humility.

*Ik gaavat rahe man saad naa paae.  
Haome wich gaavah birthaa jaae.*

(*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Page 158)

(Some go on singing, but their mind derives no solace. In pride, they sing and all goes in vain.)

The singer's heart is full of gratefulness, and he performs *Kirtan* by freeing himself from all ego and with a feeling of submission for the praise of God. *Kirtan* performed with the above feeling only is in accordance with *Gur Shabad* *Kirtan* tradition. Only by following this technique of recitation, the truth of the *Shabad* can be experienced.

**Kirtan Chaukies:** Original *kirtan chauki* tradition of *Gurmatal Sangeet* was started from the time of *Guru Nanak*

*Sahib*, developed and propagated by all the *Sikh Gurus*. *Sri Darbar Sahib Harmandir Sahib* (The Golden Temple) has a unique *Kirtan* tradition in the form of different *keertan chaukees*, such as:

- Tinpaher dee keertan chaukee
- Aasaa dee var di chaukee
- Bilawal dee chaukee
- Anand dee chaukee
- Charn kamal dee chaukee
- Sodar dee chaukee
- Aartee or kaliaan
- Kalyan's chaukee
- Kaanrhaa or keertan sohile dee chaukee

Besides these *chaukies*, determined according to *Raaga* and time, there is a particular *Kirtan* tradition for different occasions, festivals and ceremonies. Singing of *Raagas* according to different weather and seasons creates particular *Kirtan Chaukies*. Apart from these *Sahad Kirtan Chaukis*, *Kirtan* in folk style, *Vaaran da Kirtan* and *chauki sahib's Kirtan* also deserve special mention. *Vaar Kirtan* performed at the holy *Darbar Sahib* since the times of the 6th *Guru* and the singing of *Vaar* (Ballads) by the *Dhadis*, also forms a characteristic part of *Sikh Music*.





**Kirtan Instruments:** The Gurus while creating the above *Kirtan* tradition not only started different *Kirtan Chaukees* in functional form but also chose special musical instruments. Playing on the *Rahab* by Bhai Mardana during Guru Nanak's time, *Siranda* during the times of Guru Amar Dass and Guru Ram Dass, *Siranda* and *Israj* during the period of Guru Arjan Dev, *Taus* and *Dhad-Sarangi* for *Vaar* singing during the period of 6th Guru, *Mirdang* during the ninth Guru's time, *Tanpura* during Guru Gobind Singh's time, were particular which explicitly proves the use of special musical instruments. The use of special musical instruments in vogue was also done in an original way. The use of those 'Tanti (stringed) instruments are especially useful for purity of notes, of the *Raaga* and traditional excellence of the *Gur Shabad Kirtan*.

**Kirtan Centres:** In development of the great original tradition, the Gurus beginning with Guru Nanak Sahib along with *Sangat* (congregation) set up some *Kirtan* centres where musicians (performers of *Kirtan*) practically and fractionally developed such tradition. Sikh history bears testimony to the fact that after the second *Udasi*, Guru Nanak Sahib set up the *Sikh Dharamsal* (Gurdawara) as an institution where the tradition of *Kirtan* started by the Guru was specially reiterated. Historical references make it clear that *Gurhuni* was sung twice a day, in the morning and in the evening at Kartarpur.

*Sodaru Aartee Gavveai Amrit Vele Japa Uchaaraa* (Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 1, Paurhi 38)

At this place, first by making Bhai Mardana stay on, Guru Nanak proceeded on his third *udasi*. Bhai

Mardana continued to perform Guru Nanak Bani's *Kirtan*. After Bhai Mardana's passing away, his son Bhai Sajada (Sehjad) used to sing in the Guru's abode. Hence Kartarpur emerged as the first centre of *Gurmat Sangeet*. In addition, Guru Angad Dev founded Khadoor Sahib and continued with the Kartarpuri standard tradition. Besides Bhai Sehjad, Bhai Saddu Baddu were the famous *Rababis* at the Guru's abode. Guru Amardas founded Goindwal as a special centre for the propagation of Sikhism, 22 *Manjies* (Seats) were founded where as Sikh traditions and Sikh ways of life were propagated in different areas. *Gurmat Sangeet* was also popularised among the Sikh congregations. Bhai Deepa, Bhai Pandha, Bhai Bhula were the famous *Kirtanias* of the Guru's period. After Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas laid the foundation of Chak-Ram Das Pura, which later became famous as Amritsar. *Satta* and *Balwand* were the famous *Kirtanias*



of Guru Ram Das's time. Here singing of *Asa Di Vaar* in the morning, *Sodar* in the evening and *Arti* at night, remained in practice. By the time of Guru Ram Das, the *Shabad Kirtan* tradition of *Gurmat Sangeet* was fully developed and established under which a unique singing style like *Partal* came to be practised, not found in any other musical tradition.

The Fifth Guru, Arjan Dev Sahib had the onerous responsibility of developing *Gurmat Sangeet* tradition on a firm footing. By this time the Harmandir had been founded at Amritsar where continuous singing of *Shabad Kirtan Dhuni* was performed by different *Chaukies*. At this Centre of Guru Arjan Dev, where *Rababi Kirtan* Tradition emerged in a distinctive form, common Sikhs were also encouraged to perform *Kirtan* which is illustrated by the *Satta Balwand* story of getting annoyed with the Guru. At this time, besides professional *Rababis*, amateur *Shabad Kirtan* by Sikh *sangat* tradition also came into being. After Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Hargobind introduced *Vaar* music by *Dhadies* along with *Kirtan*. Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan Sahib further propagated *Gurmat Sangeet* tradition. Anandpur Sahib was founded by Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib where he made the traditional *Kirtan* an inseparable part of practical



tradition. Bhai Saddu and Maddu were the famous *Kirtan* performers at this great Sikh centre.

From the period of the Gurus, the same technique of training and propagation of *Gurmat Sangeet* has continued. According to one tradition, *Rababi Kirtan* performers continued to impart training on individual basis and with professional efficiency. As a result, different *Rabab* players and their progeny continued to perform *Gurmat Sangeet*, using the art of music. This tradition was in no way inferior to the contemporary tradition of the Mughal Court. In the world of music, these *Rabab* performers of the House of the Guru were recognised as *Babe Ke*. On the other hand, court musicians were known as *Babur Ke*. *Babe Ke* held a respectable place among the contemporary musicians because of their association with spiritual music traditions. This tradition of *Rababi kirtankars* continues till this day. Their particular style of singing and their perfection of *Gurbani* recitation successfully helps in differentiating their style. Many *Kirtan* performers became famous as a result of the amateur *Kirtan* tradition started during Guru Arjun's time. These *Rabab* performers who were recognised in comparison to the professionals, used to get their training from such musicians who were conforming to Guru's tradition and were well associated with the principles and practices of *Gurmat Sangeet*. Of these famous *Kirtan* performers of the Guru period Bhai Deepa, Bhulla, Narain Das, Pandha, Ugrsain, Nagori Mal, Bhai Ramu, Jhaju, Mukand are better known. Under the *Gurmat Sangeet* training tradition, where *Rababis* had family traditions, the amateur *Kirtan* performers had institutional traditions. Though historical sources of the contemporary *taksals* (institutions) are not available, their functioning at different places bear testimony to the fact that the seeds of this tradition were there in the Guru's period.

In the contemporary *Gurmat Sangeet* tradition, some *taksals* and institutions are as follows:

- Damdama Sahib, Taksal
- Budha Jor Taksal
- Mastuana Taksal
- Taran Taran Taksal
- Damdami Taksal
- Daudher Taksal
- Singhwala Taksal
- Hargana Taksal

- Sewa Panthi Taksal
- Dumali Taksal
- Kleran Wala Taksal
- Gurmat Vidyalya Rakabganj Taksal
- Yateem Khana, Amritsar
- Soorma Ashram, Amritsar
- Jawadhi Kalan Taksal
- Gurmat Sangeet Study Circle, Punjab
- Gurmat Sangeet Academy, Punjab
- Gurmat Sangeet Society, Patiala
- Amrit Kirtan Trust, Chandigarh
- Gurmat Sangeet Society, Chandigarh
- Punjabi University, Patiala
- Gurmat College, Patiala
- Gurmat Sangeet Academy, Anandpur Sahib
- Sikh Missionary College, Amritsar (S.G.P.C.)
- Sikh Missionary College, Damdama Sahib (S.G.P.C.)
- Gurmat College Delhi Gurdwara Management, and others

**Sikh Music Literature:** Since the beginning of the 18th century, many a scholar had composed *shabad kirtan* compositions in music notations. This parallels the efforts made in the arena of Hindustani music. Beside this practical performance on record, many scholars have contributed to the establishment of *Gurmat Sangeet* theory as well.

In the contemporary world of Sikh music, *Gur Shabad Kirtan* tradition, as founded by the Gurus and developed by the *Sikh Panth*, has established itself as an independent and original identity. This tradition of *Gurmat Sangeet* prescribed in the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* can be termed as Sikh Musicology. In order to understand the *Gurmat Sangeet* tradition as directed and determined by the Gurus, such *Kirtan* is to be performed in a particular *Raaga*, according to the established tradition.

Dr. Gurnam Singh  
Punjabi University, Patiala

Acknowledgement: Amrit Kirtan, Chandigarh.

For this purpose, *Shabad Kirtan* compositions have been composed in *kirtan* form among 31 *Raagas* and 31 *Raaga* forms by the author. He has recorded 10 Audio Cassettes (HMV SPHO 840550) and 6 CDs under the title *Gur Shabad Kirtan* (The Gramophone Company of India Pvt. Ltd.).



JUNE 1984:

# DAYS OF INFAMY



## "OPERATION BLUESTAR AND AFTER"

Little did President Zail Singh know that even as the Prime Minister was discussing the new formula on Punjab and Chandigarh with him, soldiers (some eight Divisions of the Indian Army) were already on their way to the Punjab by rail, road and air. And that Gen Vaidya (Chief of Army Staff) had visited Chandigarh to discuss the operation with Lt. Gen Sunderji and his chief of staff Lt. Gen. R.S. Dayal.

Zail Singh came to know of the army's moving into Punjab on 3 June 1984, though it was on 2 June that the government had formally assigned to the army the task 'to check and control extremists and communal violence in the state of Punjab and the Union Territory of Chandigarh, provide security to the people and restore normalcy...'

On 4 June Zail Singh told a Delhi Akali delegation that the army had surrounded the Golden Temple to pressurise

the terrorists to come out; it would not go in. Apparently he had no advance information of the operational plans.

Would he have stopped the troops if he had known that they would move into the Golden Temple? It is unlikely; like the Sikh soldiers, he must have known that it was a job, however unpleasant, that had to be done. When I asked him about it, he said perhaps Mrs. Gandhi did him a favour by not telling him of the plan for army action.

Zail Singh tried to telephone the Deputy Commissioner, Gurdev Singh, at Amritsar on 3 June but he had been transferred the day the army was deployed around the Golden Temple. In any case even the DC's telephone had been disconnected on that day. And from 9 p.m., indefinite curfew had been clamped, entry of foreigners prohibited, the press in Jalandhar and Patiala brought under censorship and *The Tribune* 220! *The Indian Express* in



Chandigarh served under the Punjab Press (Special Powers) Act.

Because of the curfew, many devotees were stranded not only in the Golden Temple but also in some forty-six other gurdwaras in the state where militants were suspected to have taken refuge. The hapless devotees, men, women and children spent the night huddled inside the shrines in fear and uncertainty.

On 4 June, the pre-dawn calm around the Golden Temple complex was shattered when troops of the 9th Infantry Division opened fire at 4.40 a.m.; as expected, their fire was returned. It was a probing operation to find out where the militants were posted and what type of armament they had. The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), a para-military outfit, had carried out the same exercise three days earlier, but suffered many casualties.

The troops stopped firing after four hours. The probe reconfirmed the terrorist positions atop the water tank, two towers (Ramgarhia Bungas) and some houses. It also confirmed that they possessed rifles, sten guns, automatic weapons, and also carbines. And their firing was well coordinated.

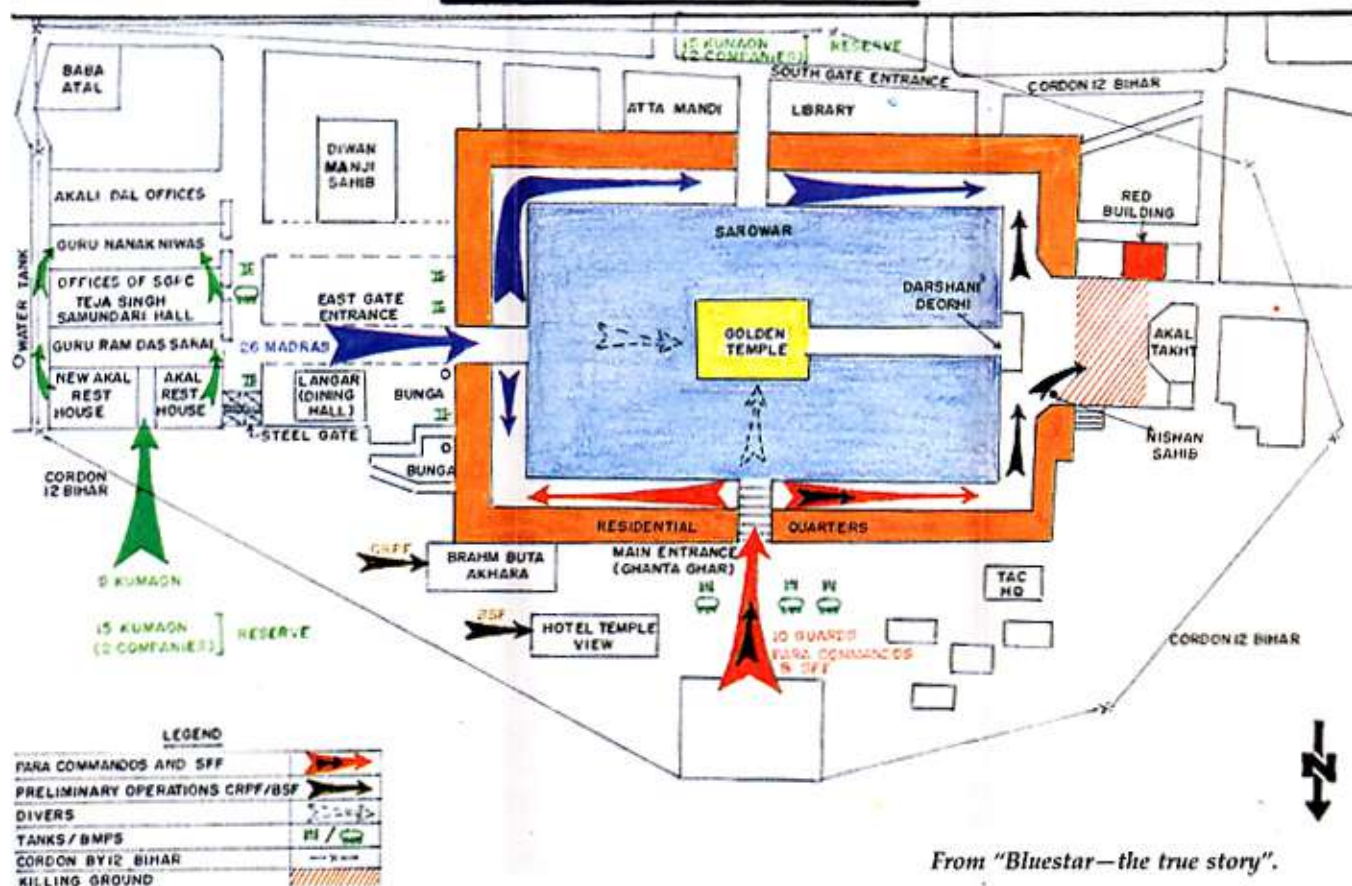
When the firing ceased, Gurcharan Singh Tohra, President, SGPC, went from his office on the ground floor of Guru Nanak Niwas to the Akal Takht to plead with Bhindranwale to surrender since the army was now bound to enter the Temple complex. Bhindranwale sent him back, calling him a 'coward' and 'Indira Gandhi's agent.'

General Shabeg Singh used the lull after the initial firing to coordinate his activities with the Babbar Khalsa. He wanted them to hold off the army as long as they could from getting to the rooms along the *parikrama* - the 38-foot wide promenade which runs round the Golden Temple and the water tank and towers near the *langar*.

At 4 p.m. on 5 June, using the public address system and megaphones, army officers asked the devotees and others inside the temple to come out. There was also an appeal to the militants to lay down their arms. As many as 126 people came out and surrendered to the army; but many more did not because of fear.

Some took refuge with Bhindranwale's men; other huddled in Guru Ram Das Sarai but a larger number took shelter in the many-pillared Teja Singh Samundari Hall and the nearby Guru Nanak Niwas where Longowal was

## OPERATIONAL PLAN



From "Bluestar—the true story".



staying. Then Longowal joined Tohra in the latter's room on the ground floor because of army firing on the two towers and the water tank. Since the doors were closed, they could not hear the army's call to come out.

Exactly at 7 p.m., the army resumed firing. The water tank and towers were the first targets and mountain guns were used against these. The mountain guns were dismantled and carried to the rooftops of a few buildings, which the CRPF had secured some days earlier at heavy cost, and reassembled there. A few other buildings were also now cleared.

After destruction of these vantage points the army prepared to move in though the militants used the ventilation recesses of the staircases leading to the towers and the water tank for intermittent firing which continued over the next three days.

At 10.30 p.m. on 5 June two batches of commandos (1st Parachute) entered the Golden Temple from its main entrance and Zail Singh was informed of this soon after. But they were in for a nasty surprise. Accurate fire greeted them from apertures on both sides of the steps. There was also firing from the museum, overlooking the staircase. It was a massacre. More than half of the 90 para commandos were either killed or severely wounded, with bullet riddled legs.

The commandos had simulated the raid on Golden Temple at Chakrata near Mussoorie but had been unaware of such defence traps.

As planned, two other columns were ordered to move in. The one of 26 Madras Regiment entered from the side of Guru Ram Das Sarai. The militants has positioned themselves on its roof while there were devotees inside it. The other column - 9 Garhwal Rifles and 15 Kumaon - entered from the passage at the end of the library building where the militants had placed machine-guns.

The Golden Temple had now become a battle field; and the army was in the midst of an operation in which the positional advantage lay with the defenders.

The holy Akal Takht was a veritable fortress, every

aperture of which emitted heavy fire. 'There were 30 LMGs within a distance of 110 yards. I have not seen such fire power in three decades of my career, not even during the wars with Pakistan,' Lt Gen R.S. Dyal, MVC, said. Dyal had led the capture of Haji Pir Pass in Kashmir during the 1965 War with Pakistan.

After the reverse suffered by the commandos, a unit of the 10 Guards, was asked to take over. They entered from the main entrance, and avoiding the staircase silenced the guns there that had mowed down the commandos. The task assigned to the 10 Guards was to clear the rooms on the left side of the *parikrama* behind the Harmandir Sahib. The Babbar Khalsa men positioned there offered surprisingly little resistance despite Shabeg Singh earlier exhortation. Only a few of the Babbar Khalsa men joined battle and lost their lives; the rest escaped through a tunnel, the existence of which was not known to the army at that time.

The other two columns made very little progress because the Sikhs had vantage firing points on balconies and windowsills, with slits for observation and firing. The soldiers, on the other hand, were exposed. The column under the CO moved towards the Akal Takht, lobbing in canisters of CS gas which is more pungent than teargas. Several men of the 10 Guards lost their lives trying to get close to the Akal Takht in this attempt which

proved futile because all the windows, and even crevices, were sealed. And the unfavourable direction of the wind saved the defenders in the relatively more exposed positions from the effects of the gas.

The 10 Guards then tried to storm the Akal Takht. But that was suicidal, for the open space before it was well covered by the guns. The marble façade of the building spouted fire; fire also came from the library building and the buildings attached to the Kotha Sahib (where the *Guru Granth Sahibs* were kept) and the Tosha Khana (where gifts and offerings of the devotees were kept). 'The 10 Guards fought very well,' Dyal said later. But after suffering heavy casualties they were forced to withdraw.





The column entering from the side of the library building made some progress but it appeared unsure of its bearings; over the radio the column's commander reported heavy fire from 'some red buildings', apparently referring to the Akal Takht and its neighbouring buildings. This only underlined the army's poor intelligence.

By then the third column, coming from Guru Ram Das Sarai, had also reached the *parikrama* after facing heavy resistance. The *langar* and Guru Ram Das Sarai were damaged in the exchange of fire. This column tried to advance towards the Library building but had to face heavy fire. The adjoining *beri* gurdwara was destroyed in the operation; not many realised the significance of this small gurdwara under a tree.

Brar was a worried man. Despite heavier weapons and pressing in more men he had not been able to overcome the resistance, a task earlier expected would take only a



few hours. His casualties were heavy and the advance of all the three columns had been virtually halted. The Akal Takht stood impregnable.

Brar wanted to finish the battle quickly; he had been told to finish before sunrise on 6 June. Another Division, the 15th Infantry, which had meanwhile sealed off Amritsar, reported that thousands of Sikhs armed with old guns, swords, *lathis* and whatever else which could be used as weapons, were marching towards the city. Bhindranwale's men were trying to rouse the countryside to come to their leader's help. Sikh villagers were told that the Golden Temple was being 'attacked' and their help needed to defend it.

Most of the marchers preferred discretion to valour when they found that the troops meant business—a few who tried to break through were shot. Tanks and helicopters were also used against them.

A crowd of over 30,000 led by Mahant Baba Bidhi Chand stopped near Jhabal on seeing army tanks blocking their path. Similarly, excited crowds which had collected at Dhandkesali, Fatehpur and Batala dispersed on seeing how heavily guarded the approaches to Amritsar were. Army patrols also managed to contain mobs at Chowk Mehta, where Bhindranwale's word had long been law, and Verka, where villagers nearly killed two constables. But the Hindu-Sikh relationship held firm; even when the excited Sikhs returned to their homes, there was no communal clash. Not a stone was ever thrown at any Hindu.

The Indian Army troops now entered the Samundari Hall and the Guru Nanak Niwas and fired indiscriminately. Nearly 100 devotees, including 35 women and 10 children, lost their lives.

According to eye-witness accounts, the devotees who stayed back with Ramoowalia, later joined the throng at Guru Ram Das Sarai. They complained that they were not given by the army the facilities offered to 'war prisoners'. This appellation may sound strange but the ward in a local hospital where wounded prisoners were kept had an army display board outside, saying, 'prisoners of war'.

The firing at Guru Nanak Niwas sparked off indiscriminate shooting from the Akal Takht, Library and the adjoining buildings. The troops fired back. It was probably then that the damage to Harmandir Sahib was caused - it carried the marks of at least 300 bullets. One *bir* (Guru Granth Sahib) was hit by a bullet; the government tried to take away that volume on 13 June by trying to make a priest an accomplice.

The assault from all three sides was grinding to a halt as the militant's automatic and LMG fire pinned down the troops. For the army the odds were bad, to put it mildly. Fighting in built-up areas is always a tricky business. Though the army earlier used to train its men in this aspect, it had been discontinued since the advent of the paramilitary forces.

Sporadic firing continued. The first light of dawn revealed the entire marble *parikrama* littered with corpses; those in uniform outnumbering the others. Some bodies were also floating in the *Amrit Sarovar*, the tank around the Harmandir Sahib. The firing abated somewhat as the sun rose, and soon grew desultory. The troops in exposed positions withdrew.

Some of the defenders perhaps thought that they could utilise this opportunity to clear the troops from their position near a tree opposite the Akal Takht; they had been holding out there since the night of June 5-6.



With his columns held up after suffering heavy casualties, Brar concluded that he would have to use tanks if the Akal Takht were to be taken. He rang up Sunderji at 11.30 p.m. on 5 June to seek his permission. Sunderji said he would decide after personal inspection. He came at 2.30 a.m. on 6 June and after assessing the situation allowed the use of tanks. (It is said that Mrs. Gandhi's permission was obtained).

Dyal recalled, 'Resistance was so heavy that they could not have cleared the terrorists from the Akal Takht if they had not used tanks.'

Brar first brought in armoured personnel carriers (APC) at 4.10 a.m. from the Guru Ram Das Sarai side to close-in on the Akal Takht. But anti-tank rockets fired from the Akal Takht substantially damaged one. This was another shock for Brar; no one had suspected that the terrorists had anti-tank rockets.

After destruction of the APC, seven Vijayanta tanks of the 16th Cavalry were brought in from the Guru Ram Das Sarai side. The steps leading to the *parikrama* had to be broken by a tank to facilitate the entry of other tanks. Some damage was also done to the *parikrama*, a part of it caving in under their weight. Once the tanks were stationed, appeals were made through megaphones to surrender.

The tanks opened cannon fire in the afternoon of 6 June. Under the cover provided by tanks, the jawans who had retained the position near the tree rushed in and captured a portion of the Akal Takht building after room-to-room fighting which resulted in heavy casualties on both sides.

The main assault on the Akal Takht and the basement, which was the terrorists' arsenal, began that evening. This was when an incendiary bomb fell in the library and set it on fire. The SGPC alleged that the library was set on fire by the army on the morning of 7 June. But it seems to have been an accident, the responsibility for which is difficult to determine. The library had some rare books and manuscripts, including handwritten copies of the Granth and hukamnamas bearing the signatures of several Gurus. All that was left of this priceless treasure was a mound of ashes.

The firing from the Akal Takht continued unabated. Earlier, Brar had used the 'search' lights of the tanks to blind the terrorists while his men crept up. But the lights would burn out quickly and the defenders could resume firing as soon as they were out.

The tanks were then ordered to use their heavy guns. Some shells from tanks stationed on the other side of the *sarovar* missed the Akal Takht and hit the Darshini Deori, the entrance to the caseway leading to the Harmandir Sahib, demolishing a part of it. Around 11 p.m. someone came out from the Akal Takht and rushing to the *Nishan*

*Sahib* and fired off a shot in the air. Some soldiers thought it might have been Bhindranwale's signal of surrender. But whoever it was, he carried no white flag and there was no let up in the firing. The lone man was hit in the leg and when he fell several men rushed out and dragged him into the Akal Takht. A few of them were killed in this rescue attempt.

The firing from the Akal Takht now lessened. Though it took the army a few more hours till late at night to clear the ground floor and the basement, the battle was clearly over. The bodies of Bhindranwale, his youthful associate, Amrik Singh, whose marriage Bhindranwale had blessed there only a few days earlier, and General Shabeg Singh, the commander of his forces and hero of the Bangladesh war, a walkie-talkie set still clutched in his hand, were



among those found in the basement. There were 31 more bodies strewn all over.

By this time the Indian Army's operation against the gurdwaras at Moga, Muktsar, Faridkot, Patiala, Ropar and Chowk Mehta were also over. There was unprovoked firing by the army in the Patiala gurdwara, Dukhnivaran Sahib, where 26 devotees were killed in cold blood. The army encountered a fair amount of resistance in the gurdwaras at Moga and Muktsar.

The death of Bhindranwale virtually ended the fighting, although occasional sniping continued till 8 June.

*Kuldip Nayar*

*\*Excerpts from "Tragedy of Punjab"*



# RECALLING "BLUESTAR"

While fighting against the army during June 5-7 1984, Sikhs inside the Golden Temple Complex at Amritsar were "exercising their legitimate right of self-defence." This is the unequivocal statement made by Lieutenant General S.K. Sinha (Retd.), former Vice Chief of the Army Staff and presently Governor of Assam.

"The Army action was not the last resort as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi would have us believe, decided upon toward May-end (1984). It had been in her mind for more than 18 months".

Said the General, highly respected and regarded for his sagacity and professional skills, that "when he was GOC-in-C of Western Command, he got a call around 10 p.m. from 'some in Delhi' that a decision had been taken at the highest level that the army should undertake the arrest of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindrawale. Nothing was heard after the General told the caller in matters like this he would like to hear from either the Chief of Army Staff or the Defence Minister."

This was towards 1981-end when Darbara Singh was Chief Minister or nearly 30 months before the Army actually struck at Amritsar.

"Again, when Sant Bhindrawale went into Mehta Chowk," adds General Sinha, "there was a request to the Army to supply Armoured Personal Carriers (APC) to the police to facilitate his arrest."

This was long before the Akalis launched their *marcha* in August 1982. Shortly after the *marcha*, the Army began rehearsals of a commando raid near Chakrata cantonment in the mountains over the Doon Valley, where a replica of the Golden Temple complex had been built.

"Another operation involving the Aviation Research Centre with Special F.F. commandos, was given in the Sarsawa area and Yamuna river bed in helicopters converted into gunships. This plan, earmarked for implementation in August 1983 and then in April 1984, was given up as it had leaked out to the Sikh 'militants'."

"In view of these military preparations, if Sant Bhindrawale and his men decided to defend the Golden Temple with all their might and means, no one can, and should, blame them."

"You are duty-bound to do your all when you know someone is going to raid your house. In this case, the house was the holiest Sikh shrine in the world."

"Mrs. Gandhi contends that arms were being collected by Sant Bhindrawale for the last one year. But this was much after she herself had drawn up plans for Army action against the Golden Temple and other gurdwaras."

"In December, 1983 two trenches were dug by the Sant's men in front of Teja Singh Samundari Hall within the holy complex but he was persuaded to fill them up."

"This proves that till then no responsible Akali leaders were prepared for an armed showdown with the Government."

Fortification of the complex, according to SGPC Secretary Bhan Singh, started from February 17 1984. And that also after CRPF and BSF units had resorted to unprovoked firing and had begun converting the buildings on the periphery of the temple into bunkers and fortresses. This action by Sikhs was a response to the provocation provided by Government's para military forces.

Again, toward May-end 1984, CRPF and BSF units deliberately fired some 10,000 bullets every day on the temple area for more than a week in order to find out from the return firing, as was officially admitted later, where the terrorist fortifications were located and what kind of equipment they had. This was given a deliberate design to escalate the conflict.

"No Sikh worth his salt could allow easy entry into the Golden Temple area to any armed force. It is his sacred duty to smash the enemy's teeth and sacrifice his life while fighting."

"This is what Sant Bhindrawale and his men did. In the best tradition of Sikh warriors, they fought to the last bullet and their last breath."

"For the same reason, hundreds of men, women and children, who had come to the Golden Temple as pilgrims, laid down their lives when they were caught in the crossfire of the army invading the holy area."

"Before this open clash of arms, there were only hardly five per cent Sikhs who supported Sant Bhindrawale's actions or utterances. But then the Government made him a hero in all Sikh eyes. Now everyone, including his previous detractors, hail him as a martyr of the same genre as Baba Deep Singh who had fought against Ahmad Shah Abdali's marauders."

Lieut. General (Retd.) S.K. Sinha  
Former Vice Chief of Army Staff, Indian Army

*"How can a man die better  
Than facing fearful odds,  
For the ashes of his fathers  
And the temples of his Gods?"*



# HUKAM

## Thoughts on Hukam, Suffering and Evil in Sikh Scriptures

As one who is not a student of Sikh theology as such or an explicator, I feel a little diffident while approaching the primal theme of *Hukam* or the *Divine Will and Command* which forms such an overwhelming part of the Sikh scriptures and which noted Sikh scholars and theologians have commented upon in scores of essays, monographs and research papers. Those that have I read from time to time have usually confined themselves to explication and exegesis, seldom touching upon some of the larger issues that need to be related and explained in the context of the concept enunciated by Guru Nanak in the concluding or clinching lines of the first *pauri* of his greatest composition, the *Japji*:

“*Hukam Raja-ee Chalna*  
*Nanak Likhia Naal*”

To live in the Will of God, Nanak,  
 Is the writ ordained thereof.

And this primal concept is elaborated in the second *pauri* in rich ramification. From the Creation willed into existence by Him to the questions of birth and rebirth of greatness and station, of nobility and meanness and so on. With the Master's characteristic opulence of thought and variations in the *Japji* and in his other great *bani*s, *Hukam* remains a running refrain. No wonder, this concept develops into a nuclear theme in the compositions of the first five Gurus in the *Adi Granth* compiled by Guru Arjan Dev.

To be sure, *Hukam* informs the thought of the later Gurus also, particularly of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the Tenth or Final Master, Guru Gobind Singh in a very special sense, though its first form is made manifest in the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev himself. That supreme event is seen as an awesome example of the Will of God as such as of his devotee, the Guru's cheerful acceptance of his ordained fate, a triumph of his prayerful spirit on the heights. Later,

Guru Tegh Bahadur's sense of *bahana* and complete resignation (as expressed in his swan song, *Nauvan Mohalla* in the *Guru Granth*), and the entire life of Guru Gobind Singh which warranted the sacrifice not only of his great father, but also of all his four young sons, among other ordeals of supreme struggles are but an epical extension of the theme of *Hukam* and *Razaa* in *dharma* and *deed*.

Since the expressions, *Hukam*, *Razaa* and *Nadar* are of Arabic-Persian languages, it's obvious that the *Sufi* movement of Islamic *darveshes* and divines which had deeply touched Indian consciousness in the centuries preceding Guru Nanak's advent had also later found an eloquent and rich variation in the Sikh scriptures. And the new overtones developed into sounds of symphony which comprehended such thoughts from Hindu *bhaktas* and *Dalit* devotees too.

What needs really to be understood is the way that reconciles the acceptance of God's Will and Command with *evil* and unmerited suffering in present life. The concept of past *karma* and punishment somehow doesn't always explain certain contradictions and difficulties encountered in the process. For the *gurbani's* apotheosis of life's endless blessings, magnanimities, postures and opulences and man's forceful, God-conscious participation in the affairs of the world ought to cancel out whatever baggage of *karma* he carries with him. And if this life is only an opportunity, a boon and a blessing to redeem oneself, then the presence of evil in all its form and its effects in unwarranted suffering, even if taken as a test of one's readiness for redemption somehow do not quite go well with the deepest *humanist* thought in Sikh scriptures. Somehow, the agony of understanding abides.

That all contradictions and contraries and polarities are reconciled in the *grand design* of God is a well-known concept, and at the *humanist* level, one



finds it so eloquently and magnificently expressed in the work of those earthy mystics who celebrate life with all its beauties—and terrors. To quote only two examples, of the American poet Walt Whitman and the Sikh poet, Puran Singh, all such contradictions are subsumed in an overarching vision of the earth beneath one's feet and of the life beyond. One recalls Whitman's famous lines affronting formalists and traditionalists in insight boldness:

Do, I contradict myself?  
Well, I contradict myself,  
I'm a sum of multitudes.

Clearly, pluralities *contain* polarities and they all find a common divine ground, or else evil, ever so puissant and good, ever so tender and compliant, would have darkened the world beyond the bounds of sentient life. And the "failure" of God would not remain an academic question.

As compared with Sikh theology, the Christian is so deeply involved in the problematics of evil as to have made it a primal issue. From the idea of "the original sin" and Adam's fall, Satan has never been absent from its theological thought and strongly colours the conduct of certain extremist, fundamentalist churches, both in Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The Manichean school, in particular, has developed a kind of pathological pedagogy and rhetoric.

Similarly, Western literature and art are profoundly influenced by the Christian demonising of certain human infirmities which are of a *constitutive* nature, and which erupt in human situations or relationships in instinctual, satavistic and irrational manner. Thus, evil becomes a powerful theme in its various aspects, masks or forms. And in civilized societies, its cruelties assume a patina of refinements, while remaining inhuman, even devilish in reality. From the Greek Tragedy to the Shakespearian-Jacobian, from the English writers of visionary tragedies such as Hardy and Conrad to the American Melville, Poe, Hawthorne, James, O'Neill and Faulkner, the anatomy of evil, intractable, obscure, eternal, has continued to be an obsessive moral and metaphysical concern.

Obviously, my references to British and American writers in an essay on the theme of *Hukam* would strike some readers as an odd exercise. But since I did not find *anything* of this depth and range in the Punjabi novelist and playwrights (whose work has come to my notice in some measure), I felt inclined to offer examples from the literature I'm more familiar with. The idea was to suggest that the question of evil in its profoundest form still remains to be seen critically examined in Sikh theological thought, and still remains to be dramatised in Punjabi fiction and drama.

It's not as though the question of evil receives no visionary attention in the *bani* of the Sikh Gurus and divines, only it hasn't in a major way, concerned our theological thinkers and explicators. And the reasons are obvious enough, for even the consciousness of evil (as in Guru Nanak's pointed reference to the menace of murderers, cut-throats, and the whole evil tribe in the *Japji* and the evocation of the evil, of ungodly political power and tyranny in his *Babar Vani* doesn't, in Sikh thought, assume vast inexplicable dimensions. To live morally and authentically in the midst of evil is assumed, for in the final analysis, it does not disturb the spiritual equipoise if one is attuned to the Will of God.

And yet one's compelled in extreme situations—tragedies of innocence and tenderness of crucifixion of saintliness and goodness—to pose the enigma of such evil where the overarching, all-inclusive, inculcable Will of God or *Hukam* is concerned. Why and how does the great God of boundless grace and compassion permit such a state of things to exist where suffering becomes, to quote Wordsworth (with supreme faith in God and Nature) "dark, permanent and obscure/sharing the nature of infinity".

In Christian theology, the ultimate salvation is possible not only through "the path of Affirmation" but also through "the Way of Negation" or *via Negativa*. One may live in time, suffer the reality, and even succumb to its blandishments and bareful attractions of sex and money and power, yet learn to climb the ladders to heaven. That's perhaps man's ordained fate in general. The Heraclitean time—the concept of *flux* and *flow*—may be changed into a sum



of values through the exertions of the spirit in doubt, and "the Night of the Dark Soul" may be experienced to emerge in sun-lit glory of God. The history of scores of saints affirms such a transformation.

However, in Sikh thought, the idea of "*sada vigaas*" of the spirit always in buoyancy whatever the ground realities, lays aside the question of pure tragedies and unmerited, inexplicable suffering. It's a supreme concept, but men and women can seldom rise above their *nature* which has constitutive darknesses, Freudian depths in it. *Nam Simran* is, of course, the *only* way out, but those immersed in the sea of suffering know how arduous is the *condition* that demands a positive response when all manner of negativities keep the mind pushing into the pit of uncertainties.

I think, it's in that area that the modern scholars of Sikh theology have to come up with arguments that are, to be sure, subsumed in the *bani* of the Gurus, but need to be made more transparent for those whose knowledge and reach are limited. One would wait for an authoritative, well-researched, well-documented essay or treatise on the obtrusive question of evil.

As I set down in the title itself, these are tentative musings, and having been in a state of pain and suffering for over 7 years now, following a neurological collapse and illness, I have undoubtedly struggled a great deal in the fastnesses of my heart and spirit, wrestled with all manner of ghosts to keep my vision on line. Those familiar with my writings, particularly with my poetry volumes in English (*A House For Dreams*, 1995 and, *The Aching Vision*, 2000) would easily understand the *raison d'être* of the present exercise. I continue to seek guidance from the *Gurbani*, and continue to wait for the Guru's grace.

#### **Post Script:**

I wrote this post-script about 6 months before mid-December, 2000 when I felt the touch of God on my body and being. God's grace had, in sum, materialised to lift my spirits, and regenerate me. The last issue of the *Nishaan* carried two little poems from me, one called "*Shukrana*" in Punjabi (my first-ever to be published) and the other in English entitled "A

Request, A Prayer". In my new poetry volume, to be published later this year, the whole concluding section carries the poems that seek to translate my partial vision and recovery. And I think, my observations on suffering, *nadar*, *hukam* and evil now fall into a pattern I had been seeking for so long. I'm, therefore, concluding this article with one of the new poems:

### *The Third Ear*

As I lay in the warm winter sun,  
Soaked in the sea of waves  
Washing over me, dissipating  
The arctic chill of years  
In my stricken bag of bones,  
Bee-hives of tender, lyric dreams  
And memories began to buzz  
As though the summer were  
wintering in a world apart.

Supine, surprised, sweetened  
In the lawn-bed, and in a swoon,  
I heard, I thought, a symphony  
Of bird, bud and breeze,  
And the third ear deep within me  
Responded, as it were, in concert,  
Erasing lines, levels, latitudes,  
Joining the ear and the heavens  
In a nuptials of naked notes.

And thus moments dissolved  
Into moments, echoes into echoes,  
And I felt blessed as though touched  
In the noon of my being,  
Eyes enchanted, turning tears  
Into stars in the grinning sun,  
Carrying me, a wandering feather,  
Over the far heaths and hills,  
My greening, I knew had begun.

Darshan Singh Maini





# Sikhism

An original, distinct, revealed and complete religion

The word 'Sikh', as we know, is the "Punjabised" form of the Sanskrit word *shishya*, meaning a disciple or a learner, especially a seeker of truth. It came to be used for the disciples of Guru Nanak Dev and his nine spiritual successors who graced humanity from 1469 to 1708 A.D. Thus, their religion, called Sikhism, literally means the path of discipleship and the new way of life.

Their faith is the youngest and most modern of the world's religions. It originated in the Punjab, the land of Five Rivers, some five centuries ago, during the Muslim rule of Lodhis followed soon after by that of the Mughals in India.

Soon after the passing away, in 1708, of the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, issued an imperial ordinance on the 10th of December 1710 from Delhi to "kill and finish them (the Sikhs) wherever they were found," ordering thus their wholesale destruction. That royal proclamation, outlawing the Sikhs and seeking their complete annihilation, was repeated by Emperor Farrukh Siyar, and it remained in force for three long years in all parts of the Mughal Empire. "According to it, every Sikh or Nanakpanthi, wherever seen, was to be immediately arrested. He was to be offered only one alternative, either Islam or the sword. He was to be executed there and then without any hesitation or loss of time. A schedule of valuable rewards was proclaimed. For every Sikh head Rs. 25 were to be given, and for a Sikh captive a sum of Rs. 100 was to be awarded. Their pretty girls were to be reduced to concubines, and others were to be made maid-servants. When a Muslim died, his grave was to be dug by the Sikhs or their Hindu sympathisers. For *begar* (unpaid labour), in place of cobblers, Sikhs were to be employed. The Emperor's orders were strictly obeyed. The Governors of Sirhind, Lahore and Jammu tried to surpass one another in persecution of the Sikhs in order to win the goodwill of Farrukh Siyar." Later, in 1746, according to Syed Mohammad Latif, "The Governor (of Punjab) Yahya Khan, issued a proclamation for a general massacre of all Sikhs, wherever they could be found. Death was to be the punishment of all persons who invoked the name of Guru

Gobind (Singh), and a reward was offered for the heads of Sikhs. Thousands were put to death daily, and their heads brought before the Subedar of Lahore for reward." It was reported, on three occasions, to the authorities that the Sikhs had been exterminated, root-and-branch. The Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, during his invasion of India in 1762 and his continued campaign against the Sikhs killed about twenty five thousand of them in a single day's battle. Besides, he ransacked their capital (Amritsar), blew up their Harimandar (the Temple of God, better known as Golden Temple), and desecrated its *Sudhasar* (sacred pool) with blood, bones and entrails of cows, etc., and had it filled up with debris.

With the establishment, in 1849, of the British rule in Punjab, Dr Ernest Trumpp, a German missionary, appointed by Her Majesty's Government to translate the sacred Sikh scriptures, asserted in 1877 that "Sikhism is a waning religion that will soon belong to history." Joginder Nath Bhattacharya rather prophesied in 1896 that "Under British rule, Sikhism is fast losing its vitality and is drifting towards amalgamation with the Hindu faith. In the course of a few more generations, Sikhism is likely to be superseded by one of those forms of Vaishnavism which alone have the best chance of success among a subject nation in times of profound and undisturbable peace." Max Arthur Macauliffe also apprehended such a danger of amalgamation or absorption, when he observed, first in his essays and papers (1881-1906), and later in his *magnum opus* (1909): The strength and vitality of Hinduism is like the boa constrictor of the Indian forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its folds, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior. In this way, many centuries ago, Hinduism on its own ground disposed of Buddhism which was largely a Hindu reformation; in this way, in a pre-historic period, it absorbed the religion of the Scythian invaders of Northern India; in this way, it is disposing of the reformed and once hopeful religion of Baba Nanak. Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its folds; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle



for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without state support." Gokul Chand Narang posing a self-prophetising question and answering it himself in a self-righteous manner, stated in 1912, "What is their (the Sikhs) future? It is anything but dark. However, it is apparent that the best days of the Khalsa are altogether behind."

During the all-out crusade of extermination against its adherents (who are easily recognizable by their strikingly distinctive appearance sporting unshorn hair and colourful headgear) immediately before and after the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan on the 15th August 1947, thousands of them (the Sikhs) were killed at sight. The rest were uprooted, *en masse*, from their homes, lands and historic shrines; and were deprived of all other belongings in an unprecedented way.

The horrendous holocaust reduced nearly half of their thriving community to a homeless, landless and seething refugee population. So much so that of all other persons, one of its own followers, Khushwant Singh, while prefacing his first book about them and their faith, observed in 1953: "The chief reason for my writing an account of my people is the melancholy thought that contemporary with my labours are being written the last chapters of the story of the Sikhs. By the end of the century, the Sikhs themselves will have passed into oblivion. Before that happens, it is proper that some estimate of their religion, history, traditions and political and cultural achievements should be made by someone identified with them by faith and association." Gokul Chand Narang, a staunch Arya-Samajist, came out in 1960 with another self-fulfilling statement asserting that the "Sikhs have no political future as an independent community." Fourteen years later, another highly learned Sikh, Kapur Singh, stated while concluding his speech on 7th of October 1974 at Vancouver: "While as Canadian citizens, the Sikhs may look forward to a hopeful and bright future; in India, their historic homeland, they now face the basic problems of their identity and existence, since the control of their own history has been snatched out of their own hands and their historical potential has been submerged and throttled. And I add that the Sikhs want to live, as all living things do not want to die."

Only ten years after that last pronouncement, the Sikhs had to face still another holocaust in 1984, only thirty-seven years after the independence of India; for the attainment of which their sufferings, sacrifices and contribution far exceeded their numerical strength in their motherland. This too involved not only a multi-pronged attack on their historic shrines and institutions, but also a genocidal

campaign to slaughter thousands of innocent Sikhs, disgracing their women and burning their properties all over India, not accounted for till this date.

But in spite of such recurrent persecution and treacherous onslaughts perpetrated on this religion by the rulers and the foreign invaders as well as the ongoing challenges and intimidating prophesies about its absorption, assimilation or disappearance, Sikhism has stood its ground and withstood all tests of the time. All nefarious efforts made from time-to-time to suppress, subjugate or exterminate it have gone up in smoke. All prophets of doom who predicted its extinction had to bite their tongue and their prophesies have proven totally absurd. Even "the boa constrictor has failed to swallow it," The fact remains that Sikhism has not only survived, but is very much here to grow. Its followers are flourishing now in even larger numbers, not only in Punjab, its homeland, and in all other parts of India, but also in many parts of the world. Despite various limitations, such as their 'stateless status', the Sikhs have achieved far greater success in all walks of life, contributing much to the progress of the communities they live in and wielding "an influence much in excess of their numerical strength" everywhere in the world. So much so that according to the renowned historian Arnold Toynbee, "they are the burliest men on the face of the planet, tough and capable, if slightly grim. If human life survives the present chapter of man's history, the Sikhs for sure, will still be on the map."

This is so and shall remain thus; because the Sikhs, in spite of being about 2% of the population of India, their country of origin, profess one of the 'higher religions' of the World which is not only an original, distinct and independent faith, but is also an autonomous, complete and dynamic religion, born of a direct and definitive revelation like other major religions of the world. It is primary in its source and pure in its contents.

The authenticity of its dogmas, simplicity of its beliefs, exalted moral code, internal vigour, tenacity of purpose and sustained heroism together with the religious zeal, spiritual energy, unshakable faith and indomitable spirit as well as the enterprising and self-sacrificing nature of its followers have kept it intact and firm on its ground in many such crises during its 500 plus year-old history, raising it up again with greater strength and better prospects after every attempt to annihilate it.

Those who have not been able to study Sikhism properly or objectively, or have been unable to understand rightly its nature, origin, essence, psyche and spirit, have often described it wrongly or misleadingly.



Some of them, like Estlin Carpenter, have considered it not an original and distinct, but an eclectic and 'composed' religion, maintaining that "the movement of Nanak which culminated in the formation of a kind of church nation, was fed from two sources and attempted to establish a religion combining the higher elements of Hinduism and Islam alike." According to Rev. F. Heiler, too, it is "a pure and elevated religion in which the best of Hinduism and the best of Islam unite..... Many elements of the religion..... come near the central truths of Christianity, though these glimpses of revelation are indeed bluffed by the strong influence of Vedantic pantheism and Islamic fatalism. Above all, the element which robs the teaching of the Granth (its sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib) of any creative power is its eclecticism, its continued oscillation between theism and pantheism." In the words of Khushwant Singh, "Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam." It is "a synthesis of these two faiths." According to Bhattacharya, it may be described briefly as a Hinduized form of Mahomedanism or a Mahomedinized form of Hinduism, ..... is a mixture of Hinduism and Mahomedanism minus circumcision and cow-killing, and plus faith in the Sikh Gurus. Even in outward appearance, a Sikh with his short trousers, flowing beard, forehead free from paint and neck without beads, looks more like a Mohamedan than a Hindu. The only visible sign by which he may be distinguished is the iron ring which he wears on the wrist." The Time magazine has recently described the Sikh as "a member of a casteless religion that combines elements of Hinduism and Islam, but scorns the caste system of the Hindus and the historical expansionism of the Muslims."

Some others, like Frederic Pincott, have also tried to identify Sikhism with Muhammadanism. According to him, "the religion of Nanak was really intended as a compromise between Hinduism and Muhammadanism, if it may not even be spoken of as the religion of a Mohamadan." Concluding his article on Sikhism, included in the *Dictionary of Islam*, he observed, "It is enough for the purpose of this article to have established the fact that Sikhism, in its inception, was intimately associated with Muhammadanism; and that it was intended as a means of bridging the gulf which separated the Hindus from the believers in the Prophet." Tara Chand has even gone to the extent of asserting that "Nanak took the Prophet of Islam as his model and his teaching was naturally deeply coloured by this fact."

Sri Rajagopalachari has described the Sikhs as "no better than uncircumcised Mussalmans." Ascribing the theistic character of Sikhism to the influence of Islam, Monier Williams has stated, "Nanak was partially Islamised, to the

extent at least of denouncing idolatry." G.T. Battany has also mentioned this religion "having been largely influenced by the growing Mohammadanism." But the Muslim writers, like Maulvi Insha Ulla Khan, Maulvi Muhammad Ali, Khawaja Hasan Nizami, and Shaikh Muhammad Yasuf, have gone a step further even by claiming Guru Nanak as a great Muslim Fakir who, according to them, taught a religion which in itself was a form of Muhammadanism.

On the other hand, according to Ernest Trumpp, "Sikhism has only an accidental relationship with Muhammadanism. It is a mistake if Nanak is represented as having endeavoured to unite the Hindu and Muhammadan idea about God. Nanak remained a thorough Hindu according to all his views." "Although precipitated by Islam," asserts Gokul Chand Narang, "Sikhism owes nothing to that religion. It is, on the other hand, a phase of Hindu religious revival, and has in consequence retained all essential features of real Hinduism." Mahatma Gandhi has even claimed that the "Sikhs are a part of the Hindu community. The Granth Sahib is filled with the Hindu spirit and the Hindu legends, and millions of Hindus believe in Guru Nanak." Gandhi, records Archer, "acknowledged that he had met some Sikhs who held themselves distinct from Hindus, but intimated that he would be pleased to find that the separate tendency is confined to only a very few Sikhs and that the general body regard themselves as Hindus," thus paving the way for Sikhism to be labelled as an off-shoot of Hinduism.

There are still others who, like Muhammad Akbar, have even denied the distinct identity and separate entity of Sikhism by asserting that "Guru Nanak did not enunciate any new religion, but only wanted to reform Hinduism." According to Guru Datt also, it is difficult to say whether Sikhs have any separate or distinct religion of their own. The faith they profess is the basis of the present-day Arya-Samaj. Nirad C. Chaudhuri has also identified Sikhism with Hinduism and has described it as one of its different forms.

According to some others, like Marian Smith, Sikhism is a religious synthesis. She "finds a similarity between the reforms of Guru Nanak and those of Martin Luther. She calls Sikhism a religious synthesis, pointing out that Guru Nanak offered a doctrinal synthesis which answered the challenge of Islam, and aimed at the foundations of the top-heavy Brahminical social structure."

But those who have studied Sikhism and have understood its origin, growth and gospel have proclaimed, in the words of Duncan Greenlees, the celebrated author of the *World Gospel Series*, that "Sikhism is no disguised Hindu sect, but an independent revelation



of the Truth of all sects; it is no variant of Muslim teaching..... It too is a distinct religion like the other great religions of the world..... The Sikh is not a Hindu nor a Muslim; he is the disciple of the one Eternal Guru." According to Edward Bittencourt, "Sikhism is a wholly new, original and genuinely monotheistic religion. It is an independent religion which naturally may be said to have a background of Hinduism and Islam, much as Christianity has a background of Judaism, and Judaism has a background of Akhnatonism and Zoroastrianism and previous Semitic Paganism." M.A. Macauliffe, who devoted thirty long years to the study and research on Sikhism and produced a six-volume monumental work about its prophets, scripture and tradition, had already stated, while introducing to the West this religion and its founder as follows : "Guru Nanak was not a priest either by birth or education, but a man who soared to the loftiest heights of divine emotionalism, and exalted his mental vision to an ethical ideal beyond the conception of Hindu or Muhammadan. The illustrious author of *Vie de Jesus* asks whether great originality will arise again, or the world be content to follow the path opened by the daring creators of ancient ages. Now there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of the unity of God, it rejected Hindu formulations and adopted an independent ethical system, ritual, and standards, which were totally opposed to theological beliefs in Guru Nanak's age and country." Hence, he asserted, "It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system." According to R.C. Majumdar too, the founder of this new and distinct religion, "cut himself adrift from all associations with prevailing sectarian religions."

It even fell away from allegiance to their respective codes, and developed its own, as observed by Sir Lepel Griffin in 1870: "The Sikhs had abandoned the Hindu faith, and with it the system of law which is the basis of the faith and which was inseparable from it. For a hundred and fifty years they had been governed, as far as chiefships were concerned, by another code altogether, and it was as reasonable for them to refer to *Manu* and the *Shastras* as the source of legal authority, as it would have been for Muhammadans who had embraced Sikhism to appeal to the *shariat*." So much so, that, in the words of Prof. Indubhushan Banerjee, it "forged its own weapon, hedged itself behind newer forms and customs, in short, developed individuality of its own."

And this is what Guru Arjun Dev, the holy compiler of its sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, has himself stated in unambiguous terms in 1604 A.D.:

"I observe neither fasting (like a Hindu),  
Nor the month of austerity (like a Muslim).  
For I serve God alone,  
Who saves all at the last.  
Gosain of the Hindus and Allah of the Muslims are one to me.  
I have broken free from Hindus as from Muslims.  
Neither I go to Mecca to perform Hajj (like Muslims),  
Nor I perform worship at pilgrim places of Hindus.  
I serve only the sole Lord (i.e., God) and no other.  
I neither perform the Hindu worship,  
Nor say the Muslim prayer.  
I bow to the One Formless Lord in my heart.  
We are neither Hindus nor Musalmans,  
Our body and soul belong to the One Supreme Being,  
Who alone is both Ram and Allah for us."

A contemporary historian, Mobid Zulfiqar Ardistani (popularly known as Shaikh Mohsin Fani), who happened to stay with his son and successor, Guru Hargobind, at Kiratpur Saliib, and who had been the first non-Sikh writer to record an account of the Sikhs and Sikhism of those days, and that too based on first-hand information, has recorded his statement in his famous work on comparative study of religions, entitled *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, compiled in 1654. Opening his chapter on the subject, Mohsin Fani observes: "the Nanak Panthis who are known as the Sikhs of the Gurus, have no faith in idols and temples of idols." Proceeding further, he states "They do not read the *mantras* of the Hindus. They do not venerate their temples or idols, nor do they esteem their *avtars*. They have no regard for the Sanskrit language, which, according to the Hindus, is the speech of the angels." Indicating Guru Nanak's own attitude towards *avtars* and divinities, he tells that Guru Nanak did not believe in divinities and incarnations. "Just as he praised the Mohammadans, so has he praised the incarnations and the gods and goddesses of the Hindus. But, he considered them all to be the created (*makhluq*) and not the Creator (*khaliq*). He denied the doctrines of *Halool* (i.e. direct descent from or incarnation of God), and *Ittihad* (i.e., direct union of the All-pervading God with any particular body)."

Bhai Gurdas, the amanuensis who wrote the Holy Granth at the dictation of Guru Arjan, was himself a great scholar and writer, and his ballads and couplets are regarded as the 'key' to the understanding of the Sikh scriptures, tenets, practices, etc., has categorically stated : The Guru's *Panth* is distinct. And cannot be mixed with others.

Basing his conclusion on numerous references and statements contained therein, Owen Cole has, therefore,



observed, "Hinduism at all levels is rejected and replaced by the practices which have come to be the essential part of Sikh ceremonial use of the *Adi Granth* and celebration of the anniversaries of the Gurus (*gurpurbs*)."

Qazi Nur Muhammad who came to India from Baluchistan in the invader's train to record the events of the seventh (dt. 1764) invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and who completed his "invaluable"<sup>99</sup> *Jang Nama* in 1765, has also expressed similar views which are based upon his personal observations and close contacts. Speaking of the religion of the Sikhs against whom the said expedition had been organised, Nur Muhammad tells us that religiously they were absolutely separate from Hindus :

"The Sikhs are the disciples of the Guru, and that august Guru lived at Chak (Amritsar). The ways and manners of these people received their impetus from Nanak who showed those Sikhs a separate path (i.e., taught them a distinct religion). He was succeeded by Gobind Singh from whom they received the title of 'Singh.' They are not from amongst the Hindus, and have a separate religion of their own."

J.D. Cunningham (1812-1851), who happened to be the first-ever Westerner to write and publish (in 1849) the first full-fledged history of Sikhism after years of fierce and decisive battles, therefore, observed in 1849 : "The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty, although fitful, longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Gobind saw what was yet vital, and he relumed it with Promethean fire." The result of the miracle that the Tenth Master wrought, records Cunningham, is that, "A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of (Guru) Gobind (Singh) has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has also operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh Chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look which marks the fervours of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity." Asserting that the people marked by such high spirits and changed features belonged to a distinct faith, altogether different even from that of their other countrymen, Cunningham added : "Notwithstanding these changes, it has been usual to regard the Sikhs as essentially Hindus, and they doubtless are so in language and

everyday customs, for Gobind (Singh) did not fetter his disciples with political systems or codes of municipal laws; yet in religious faith and worldly aspirations they are wholly different from other Indians, and they are bound together by a community of inward sentiment and outward object unknown elsewhere. But the misapprehension need not surprise the public nor condemn our scholars, when it is remembered that the learned Greeks and Romans misunderstood the spirit of those humble men who obtained a new life by baptism. Tacitus and Suetonius regarded the early Christians as a mere Jewish sect, they failed to perceive the fundamental difference and to appreciate the latent energy and real excellence of that doctrine which has added dignity and purity to the modern civilization." Sir Charles Elliot acclaimed it, therefore, as "a religion of special interest (to mankind), since it has created not only a political society, but also customs so distinctive that those who profess it, rank in common esteem as a separate race." Guru Gobind Singh's "ordinances", he added, "were successful in creating a nation."

Recognizing and acclaiming this amazing fact of history, the Sage-Scholar of Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo, has similarly observed : "A more striking instance was the founding of the Sikh religion, its long line of Gurus and the novel direction and form given to it by Guru Gobind Singh in the democratic institution of Khalsa." Explaining it earlier, he has stated : "The Sikh Khalsa was an astonishingly original and novel creation, and its face was turned not to the past but to the future." Nirmal Kumar Jain has likewise asserted that those who consider this religion as an off-shoot of Islam "are as mistaken as those who think Sikhism to be an off-shoot of Hinduism. Like every original religion, it is born of a direct revelation. It is not based on any scripture. As it does not derive from any established creed, it does not fight any preceding religion." In the same vein, maintains Ishwari Prasad that "Guru Nanak declared that there was no Hindu or Mussalman. He set aside the Vedas and the Quran, and asked his followers to repeat the name of God." Hence, said Dorothy Field, "Pure Sikhism is far above dependence on Hindu ritual. A reading of the *Granth* strongly suggests that Sikhism should be regarded as a new and separate world religion, rather than a reformed sect of the Hindus.

It is similarly not a sect or a form of Muhammadanism. It is neither a mixture of both nor a compilation of good points selected from the Hindu and Muslim faiths. It has not been formed, as alleged above, by combining some rational and acceptable rituals, beliefs and dogmas of the Hindus and Muslims. "The teachings of Guru Nanak have," says Geoffrey Parrinder, the eminent author of the



*World Religions*, "commonly been represented as a syncretic blend of Hindu tradition and Muslim belief. This is a gross simplification, and when expressed in terms of a mixture of Hinduism and Islam, it must be totally rejected. The teachings of Guru Nanak do indeed represent a synthesis, but the elements which constitute the synthesis can never be defined, however loosely, as Hinduism and Islam." Thus, Sikhism can, in no way, be termed as an eclectic religion, composed of selections made from various systems, doctrines, sources, etc.

The order of the Khalsa "from its very birth has claimed the status of a new Way of Life, the Third *Panth*, a separate community, and distinct people from the two Ways of Life, already known and largely practised by the peoples of East and West and the inhabitants of India : the Way of the Aryans, represented by Hinduism and its heterodox forms, Buddhism and Jainism; and the Semitic Way of Life, represented primarily by the Christians and the Mussulmans." "That such was the unambiguous claim made for his new order of the Khalsa by the Guru (Gobind Singh) himself, cannot be in doubt, as the Guru's own assertions on this point amply support the testimony of the contemporary non-Sikh historians and writers."

This is also quite clear from the proclamation he made in the great gathering of the Sikhs at Anandpur Sahib soon after initiating the first five members of the Order of the Khalsa, knighting them as Singhs and calling them his Beloved Ones, on the historic Vaisakhi day of the 30th March, 1699. "According to the Persian historian Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din, the newswriter of the period, sent to the Emperor (Aurangzeb) a copy of the Guru's address (which) is dated the first of Vaisakh Samvat 1756 (A.D. 1699), and is as follows":

"I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, rising above all differences of the religions as now practised. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules laid down for them in the Shastras, abandon them altogether, and adopting the way of mutual help and co-operation, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganga and other places of pilgrimage which are considered to be holy in the Hindu religion, or worship the Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga; but all should cherish faith in the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism (of the double-edged Sword). Eat of the same vessel, and feel no aloofness from or contempt for one another."

The newswriter of the Mughal Court who was present there on the occasion, when forwarding this proclamation to his master, submitted his own report : "When the Guru had thus addressed the crowd, several Brahmins and Khattris stood up, and said that they accepted the religion of Guru Nanak and of the other Gurus. Others, on the contrary, said that they would never accept any religion which was opposed to the teachings of the Vedas and the Shastras, and that they would not renounce at the bidding of a boy, the ancient faith which had descended to them from their ancestors. Thus, though several refused to accept the Guru's religion, about twenty thousand men stood up and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission." About eighty thousand men, say Ahmad Shah Batalia and Bute Shah, received the Baptism of the double-edged Sword and joined the Order of the Khalsa during the first few days. Their names were changed, and "they were given one family name 'Singh' for thenceforth their father was Gobind Singh (so renamed after his own baptism), their mother Sahib Devan, and their place of birth Anandpur. The baptism symbolised a rebirth, by which the initiated renounced their previous occupations (*krit nash*) for that of working for God; severed their family ties (*kul nash*) to become the family of Gobind; rejected their earlier creeds (*dharma nash*) for the creed of the Khalsa; gave up all rituals (*karam nash*) save that sanctioned by the Sikh faith; and stopped believing in superstition (*bharam nash*) for belief in One God. Five emblems were prescribed for the Khalsa. They were to wear their hair and beard unshorn (*kesh*); they were to carry a comb (*kangha*) in the hair to keep it tidy; they were always to wear a knee-length pair of breeches (*kach*), worn by soldiers of the times; they were to carry a steel bangle (*kara*) on their right wrist; and they were to be ever armed with a sabre (*kirpan*). In addition to these five emblems, the converts were to observe four rules of conduct (*rahit*) : not to cut any hair on any part of their body; not to smoke or chew tobacco; not to eat an animal which had been slaughtered by being bled to death, as was customary with the Muslims, but eat only *jhatka* meat, where the animal had been despatched with one blow, and not to molest the person of Muslim women. At the end of oath-taking, the Guru hailed the converts with a new form of greeting

*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa*

*Waheguru ji ki Fateh*

"Hail the Khalsa who belongs to Lord God

Hail the Lord God to Whom belongs the Victory!"

The very first ordinance issued by the Founder of the Khalsa to the Sikh congregations throughout the subcontinent, confirms the above, and his definition of the Khalsa corroborates all that further as in his own words:



"He whose mind dwells, night and day,  
 On the ever-effulgent Light,  
 And never swerves from the thought of one God;  
 He who is full of love for God and faith in Him,  
 And believes not, even mistakenly,  
 In fasting and worship of the graves of Muslims  
 Or sepulchres of Hindus;  
 He who recognises the one God and not another,  
 And does not believe in pilgrimages,  
 Ceremonial acts of mercy  
 And charity, penances and austerities;  
 And he whose heart is illumined within  
 By the Light of the Perfect One,  
 He is to be recognised then  
 As a pure member of the Order of the Khalsa."

All that ushered in a complete break with the past of all those who joined the Order of the Khalsa. It also marked "the culmination which had crowned Guru Nanak's revelation." It also pronounced the complete independence and distinctiveness of the Sikh religion. "That such has been the stout belief, and the basic impulse of the Sikhs and their history can be readily ascertained by any dispassionate person who would take pains to enquire with an open mind." He or she would surely come to a similar conclusion.

Further authentication to this stance has been duly provided by John Clark Archer, who, after conducting a critical and comparative study of the Aryan and Semitic religions and recognising the separate entity and identity of Sikhism, has maintained that, "Indeed Sikhism in itself reveals something of what in the last analysis religion is....." It is "an independent and conspicuous order of its own, with a character worthy of comparison with that of Hinduism and Islam, and with Christianity in particular..... The five centuries of Sikh history provide many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value..... Sikhs may stand, therefore, as symbols and examples of all who search for God and Truth..... They preserve among themselves a hardy tradition of religious and political activity, and enjoy among Hindus, Moslems, Christians and other peoples, an extraordinary prestige." The dispassionate enquirer would also find like an American convert, Ralph Singh, that the followers of this distinct faith "have their own Prophets who brought a new divine revelation to earth which is enshrined in their own sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, regarded as the living Word of God." But, a biased enquirer, like Hew McLeod, who has, according to Justice Gurdev Singh "attacked most of the Sikh traditions, institutions and beliefs, questioned their validity and striven to create doubts about others,"

would, on the other hand, maintain on flimsy props and erroneous conclusions that "Sikhism does not deserve much consideration as it is only a rehash of a minor effete Hindu creed" and that Guru Nanak was not the founder of this religion "as he did not originate a new school of thought or set of teachings." McLeod has even gone to the extent of choosing not to accept the aforesaid account of the birth of the Khalsa and the five emblems and rules of conduct prescribed for it by Guru Gobind Singh himself on the Vaisakhi of 1699, "not because he finds any evidence to falsify it, but by simply refusing to believe it," saying, "Our knowledge of this (18th) century is still limited. Traditions abound, but so too do compulsive reasons for scepticism. What we do know, however, indicates that traditions relating to the period of Guru Gobind Singh must be, in some considerable measure, set aside. The slate must be wiped clean and must not be reinscribed until we have ascertained just what did take place during the eighteenth century."

But the history and tradition of a religion cannot, and should not be "set aside," "discarded" or "wiped clean" on the mere suspicions or unjustified scepticism of an ex-employee of a Christian Mission. Such scepticism is unwarranted particularly in the case of a religion, viz. Sikhism, which was born just about five centuries back and which has survived so gloriously through this eventful period of the modern world in full gaze of history. More so, when it has been duly recognised not only as an original and distinct, but also as an independent and autonomous higher religion of the world.

Besides, as already stated, this is a prophetic religion. It is born of a direct and definitive revelation like all other great and 'higher religions' of the world, "Instead of drawing authority and inspiration from any revealed scripture, such as the Hindu *Puranas* and *Smritis*, Guru Nanak depended on his own mystical experience." The revelation did not also come to him as an 'external inspiration' (called *wahi zahir*) which "was used for the production of Quran" during whose process "the mind of Muhammad was passive and the message, an external one, was brought to him by Gabriel." On the other hand, "It seems certain," says Duncan Greenlees, "that his (Guru Nanak's) views welled up from the depths of inspiration in his own heart and owed little or nothing to what he received from others, either through books or through their words." Guru Nanak himself vouchsafed this fact and has himself recorded those experiences and revelations, received directly from God Himself, in his own *bani* or revealed word, preserved till today in its original and undefiled form, singling out his religion, thereby, "from, most other great theological systems as regards the authenticity of its



dogmas." He has defined this as *Khasam-ki-Bani* ("Word of the Lord") in one hymn, and *Eh Bani Mahan Purakh Ki*, ("This Word of the Supreme Being") in another.

The spiritual and religious truths which Guru Nanak preached, had been revealed to him "through a direct encounter with God at some level of consciousness", and he preached what he had been told and taught by God Himself. He conveyed only those words to the world which God had wished him to give forth as His divine message, as stated by him in verses such as the following:

"As the Lord's Word descends to me  
So I express it, Lalo!"  
"I have uttered only what You, O' Lord!  
Have inspired me to utter."

Guru Nanak has also mentioned in another hymn that he was an ordinary minstrel who was commissioned and blessed by God with His service. Describing his first audience with the Supreme Being, the Guru sang aloud thus:

"I was an idle bard,  
God assigned to me a rewarding task,  
And commanded me to sing His praises night and day.  
He summoned me to His Eternal Mansion,  
Bestowed on me the robe of holy laudation,  
And feasted me on the holy Name ambrosial.....  
The Supreme Being is attained, says Nanak,  
By laudation of the holy Eternal."

As is well-known to students of comparative religion, contents of revealed religion are conveyed to the people by the Supreme Being through His special messengers, either by calling them to His presence, as in the case of Moses, or by communicating His messages to them, as in the case of Prophet Muhammad. As regards Sikhism, God is stated to have been pleased to use direct ways to convey His Words, Laws and Commandments, to its founder, as stated above by the first Sikh Prophet, Guru Nanak, himself in his own words.

His successors in the Apostolic Lineage have not only endorsed this fact, but have also recorded their own experiences and audiences, as under, in their respective writings, compiled in 1604 by the Fifth Master in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and preserved intact to this day :

#### BY COMMUNICATION:

- \* As stated by Guru Amar Das, the 'Mrd Master: "God is Sole and Supreme,  
None is His equal.  
I speak as and when He makes me speak,  
My utterance is directed by Him."

- \* As confirmed by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master:
  - (i) "To Nanak the Truth was revealed by the Lord.  
So he relates mysteries of the Divine Portal."
  - (ii) "Know the utterance of the holy Preceptor to be pure and true. Disciples of the Master :  
For, the Lord-Creator Himself makes him utter it."
  - (iii) "The Lord has appointed me, the unsophisticated, to His task."
- \* As affirmed repeatedly by Guru Arjun Dev, the Fifth Master :
  - (i) "Inaccessible, unperceivable, my eternal Lord, Nanak speaks as Thou inspire him to speak."
  - (ii) "By myself I do not know what to say;  
I have stated all by His command."
  - (iii) "His servant of the Lord while Conveying the Divine Word, Speaks as the Lord directs him."
  - (iv) "What can I utter ? I know nothing to utter;  
As the Lord Wills, so He makes me utter."

#### BY AUDIENCE:

- \* As stated by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master  
"I, a minstrel of the Lord-God,  
Came to the Divine Portal,  
The Lord inside listened to my supplication,  
And called me into His Presence.  
Addressing me, He asked,  
'What brings you here, My Minstrel'  
I prayed, 'Confer on me, O, Gracious Lord;  
The boon of your ever-abiding Name Divine.'  
The Bountiful Lord granted my prayer,  
Conferred on me meditation on the Name  
And blessed me with a robe of honour."
- \* As affirmed by Guru Arjun Dev, the Fifth Master:  
"As I have attained the sought-after Lord,  
Illumination and joy have filled me.....  
I have been fully blessed by the Perfect Lord  
Who has come, in His grace; to His servant."
- \* "The Lord-God called me into His Mansion  
Wherein I consumed nectar (of Immortality)."

Such important disclosures, solemn statements, persistent affirmations and firm conviction, in the existence and beneficence of God, prove beyond doubt that Sikhism is a revealed religion. It is so, because it has been directly revealed by God through a line of Ten Prophet-teachers, who, after receiving its contents directly from Him, presented it to mankind in word and deed. They reproduced it in exactly the same original form; and also recorded it in their sacred writings. It is so, because it still remains primary in its source, and pure in its contents. It is neither selective or elective in its nature; nor secondary



in its source; nor adulterated in its content. Hence, says M. Mujeeb, "the revelation that came to Guru Nanak, must have been as direct and immediate, and as independent of history and social circumstances, as the religious literature of the Sikhs show it to be."

That being so, Sikhism can in no way be called an admixture or juxta position of various doctrines gathered from this religion or that theological system by its Prophet-teachers who were genuine messengers of God. Its tenets and teachings have been borrowed neither from Hinduism nor from Islam, nor from any other such source, as has been alleged by those who have not been able to study or understand its essentials properly or dispassionately. It is true, in the words of R.C. Majumdar, that "his was the first and also the last successful attempt to bring together the Hindus and Muslims in a common fold of spiritual and social brotherhood." The first words he uttered when called to take up the mission of his life after the aforesaid Audience with God were:

"Nah ko Hindu Nah Mussalman."

"There is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman."

On the face of it, this cryptic phrase was "a simple announcement, and yet a significant one in the context of India of his day. To a society torn by conflict, he brought a vision of common humanity—a vision which transcended all barriers of creed and caste, race and country. He reminded men of their essential oneness. The terms, 'Hindu' and 'Mussalman', included Jainas, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and so on. Guru Nanak was asking men of all faiths and denominations to look beyond external divisions and distinctions to the fundamental unity of mankind. In proclaiming the unity which lay beyond particularisms, Guru Nanak was not overruling any existing religious designation or tradition. His intention was more radical: "he wanted to point men beyond their accepted condition to a new possibility—a human community with a true spirit of fellowship and justice, with that deep ethical and spiritual commitment which expresses itself in concern for fellowman. Nor was he seeking a syncretistic union between Hinduism and Islam, or striving to achieve in his teachings a judicious mixture of elements from both to be acceptable to all. His equal attention to Hindu and Muslim identities and use of some of their religious vocabulary have led some to depict him as the reconciler of the two faiths, and to see Sikhism as 'a deliberate mingling of Hindu and Muslim practices. To do so will mean missing much of his individual genius and misinterpreting the historical development issuing from his revelation." The beginnings of the Sikh faith, in fact, go back to this revelation which Guru Nanak brought to light around 1496, soon after his

enlightenment and just before his departure for his preaching odysseys in India and abroad.

Sikhism is, above all, a complete religion in all respects like all other original and revealed religions of the world.

\* It is *Ahl-al-Maqam*, having its own spiritual and political Capital, viz., the holy city of Amritsar (as Mecca is for Islam), with its world famous Harimandar (Golden Temple) and Akal Takht which are its focal point, and for its followers the highest seat of spiritual and temporal authority, besides being "the centre of a World religion, meeting ground of the various facets of the human-spirit, and a profound symbol of future confluence of the World cultures into a universal culture for mankind."

\* It is *Ahl-al-Kitab*, possessing its own holy book, viz., Guru Granth Sahib (as Quran is for Islam), which is not only the Guru Eternal of its adherents, but is also unique among the world's sacred scriptures. It has been acclaimed as "the only non-denominational scripture," the "scripture of universal religion" and "part of mankind's common spiritual treasure," which, according to Arnold Toynbee, "should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible" and which also "deserves close study from the rest of the world."

\* It is *Ahl-al-Milla* being a true religion revealed by Guru Nanak and having its own fellowship of faith and a cohesive community, called *sangat* and *Panth*. The Turkish and Persian connotations of the word will mean a 'nation', a 'people' and a 'state.' Sikhs are a casteless democratic society, assuring equal status and respect for all. It is for this society that Guru Gobind Singh, while expressing his great love and respect for it, declared:

"Whatever is available in my house, my wealth,  
My body, my mind, even my head  
Are ever at the disposal of my people."

Paying his tribute to their selfless services, contributions and achievements, he also stated without any reservation that:

"It is through their favour that  
I have won my battles,  
And have gifts been bestowed.  
It is through their favour that  
I have overcome my troubles  
And my stores are filled.  
It is through their favour that  
I have acquired knowledge



And have smothered my enemies.  
It is also through their favour that  
I am exalted and have attained this position;  
Otherwise, there are millions of  
Humble persons like myself going about."

After administering *Khande di Pahul* to the First Five, knighting them as Singhs, and proclaiming them as his *panj piare*, the inaugurator of that 'self-abnegating, martial and casteless' Fellowship of Faith, Guru Gobind Singh, himself besought to be initiated by them in the same way as he had initiated them. Having been initiated and admitted as such to their brotherhood, called Khalsa, he later announced that he had created the Khalsa in his own image under the direct command of God, the Timeless Being :

"The Khalsa is my alter ego, my own image,  
The Khalsa is my embodiment.  
In it I have my being.  
The Khalsa is my beloved ideal."

Hence, there was to be no difference between him, the Guru and the Khalsa, as created and initiated by him in his own image. All this is unheard of in the annals of the religious and spiritual history of the world.

- \* It is *Ahl-i-Kalam*, having firm faith in the doctrine of the *Shabad* the holy Word, and the *Shabad-Guru*, i.e., the Word is Guru and Guide.

"God permeates the celestial music of the Word."

"The Word is the essence of all meditation and discipline."

"God's Name is cherished in One's heart by means of the Word."

The supreme state, realization and liberation is attained by means of the Word."

"The Word alone can ferry us across the Ocean of Existence."

"The holy Word is the true Preceptor,

The Guide, the Mystery profound and inscrutable.

And it is the Word, the absence of which

Results in spiritual confusion."

- \* It is *Ahl-al-Zaban*, having its own language, viz., Panjabi (as Arabic is for Islam), with its own specific script called Gurmukhi, in which its scripture, annals and chronicles, etc., stand recorded right from the beginning.

- \* It is *Ahl-al-Nishan*, having its own distinct flag or banner, called *Kesri Nishan Sahib*, with *Khanda* (the Khalsa emblem) inscribed and or installed thereon (as the *parcham* is for Islam). It waves over all Sikh temples, the gurdwaras.

- \* It is *Ahl-al-Shahad*, cherishing a long and unique line of

great martyrdoms, like those of its two prophets (viz. the Fifth, Guru Arjun Dev and the Ninth, Guru Tegh Bahadur), the Sahibzadas (Babas Ajit Singh, Jhujar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh) and their followers (such as Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Mani Singh).

- \* It is *Ahl-al-Shamshir*, possessing the ceremonial sword called *kirpan*, as a symbol of power, sovereignty and weapon of defence and justifiable offence in time of need. This specific weapon is a significant part of the required uniform of a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood, being one of the Five Ks or symbols of the Sikh faith, obligatory for him to always keep on his body. "Since a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood is pledged not to accept any alien restrictions on his civic freedom, he is enjoined to insist on and struggle for his unrestricted right to wear and possess arms of offence and defence." According to a quotation attributed to Guru Gobind Singh :

"The political power and the State rest on armaments.

And without political sovereignty,

The good way of life cannot securely prevail in Society."

As he created the Khalsa "to establish the ever-persisting community of saint-soldiers," who could assist in the fulfilment of Guru Nanak's revelation and mission, it was considered essential to equip them with an "instrument of offence and defence and as an emblem of power and dignity which India had lost and which Guru Gobind Singh wanted to restore."

At the same time, he approved and allowed recourse to the sword as 'the last resort of a reasonable man for settling conflicts when all other means have failed in due course. In his letter to Emperor Aurangzeb, he, therefore, made it quite clear that,

"When an affair is past every other remedy,  
It is just and righteous to draw the sword."

It is obvious that the creator of the Khalsa created this new metaphor of the sword "to give a new orientation to the minds of men given to passivity."

- \* It is *Ahl-al-Sunnah* as well, having its own usages, customs and a distinctive code of conduct recorded in its scripture, compositions of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, various Rahitnainas and Rahit-Maryada.

Describing the Sikh way of life, these works cover not only the spiritual discipline and moral code, but also the



social behaviour of the community whose members "are required to observe a distinctive code of conduct, one which specifies normative behaviour, outward appearance, and social obligation."

Sikhism is, thus, a complete and perfect religion, not only because of its having such prominent features, elements and essentials of a 'higher-religion', but also because it was established, as its Founder stated, to carry out a specific command of the Lord-God, Who Himself is, as proclaimed by Him in the following couplet, All perfection or perfection-incarnate :

"All that the Perfect One has made is perfect.  
There is nothing lacking or excessive in its making."

It is dynamic, stable and eternal, too, as, according to the holy compiler of its sacred scripture,

"The holy Preceptor has laid the immutable  
foundation of the faith  
That never and in no way shall shake."

Rather, it becomes firmer and firmer with the passage of each day, as stated below :

"The eternal foundation laid by Guru Nanak, Is ever-  
ascendant."

According to the following assertion of the contemporary bards, Rai Balwand and Satta,

"Guru Nanak founded the True Dominion of God.  
He raised the citadel of Truth on firm foundations .

On these foundations was raised a glorious spiritual and temporal edifice by Guru Gobind Singh who imparted his "stern Olympian air" to the followers of his, who are recognizable till today by their distinctive appearance and are distinguished by their everpresent high spirits, particularly in a period of adversity and crisis. That is so because "His impress not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but contrary to the experience of ethnological experts, it also operated materially and gave amplitude to their physical frames. They came to be regarded as models of physical beauty and stateliness of manner. A tremendous change was affected in the whole tone of their national character. Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and distinctive. The sweepers, barbers and confectioners, who had never so much as touched the sword, and whose whole generation had lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called higher classes, became, under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who conquered fear, and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru."

This revealed, distinct and complete religion of such self-sacrificing saint-soldiers is a universal world faith with an all-embracing appeal and elevating message for all mankind. "It is the faith of the New Age," says Rev. Bradshaw, "It is the *summum bonum* for the modern man. It completely supplants and fulfils all the former dispensations of older religions. The other religions contain Truth, but Sikhism contains the fullness of Truth. The older faiths were good in their day, but that day is now past; and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak. Just as we appreciate the discovery of modern living and do not want to exchange our modern jet airliners, automobiles and electricity for the horse-drawn carriages and candles of the past, we do not want to exchange the New Age Faith of Guru Nanak for any of the old age systems and their antiquated philosophies. The Sikh faith is the universal religion for the now and future space age. The Sikh religion is truly the answer to the problems of the modern man." And it "is the only living faith," according to Bittencourt, "that gives the healing outlook on life."

As regards its potential and prospects in the religious domain of the world, it was Macauliffe who, while addressing the Quest Society in 1910 at London, stated : "The Sikh religion (as compared to other religions) presents no mysteries, and embraces an ethical system such as has never been excelled, if indeed it has ever been equalled. It offers fewer points of attack than any other theological system, and if patronised and cherished, as its religious and political importance deserves, by a powerful government, it might become one of the first religions on this planet."

Dorothy Field observed in 1914 that "Sikhism is capable of a distinct position as a world religion, so long as the Sikhs maintain their distinctiveness. The religion is also one which should appeal to the Occidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragmatist standpoint, which is a favourable point of view in some quarters, it would rank almost first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it had made a nation in so short a time. The religion of the Sikhs is one of the most interesting at present existing in India, possibly indeed in the entire world. That it should have transformed the outcaste Indian—a notoriously indolent and unstable person—into a fine and loyal warrior is little short of a miracle." It was Arnold Toynbee again who prophesied, therefore, as recently as in 1960 : "Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before in the days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all



branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion, and its scripture, the Adi Granth, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world."

This will indeed be so, because it will have the opportunity of sharing the sort of experience which the Nobel-laureate Pearl S. Buck had gained when she observed, after going through the 4-volume English translation (by Dr Gopal Singh) of the Guru Granth Sahib: "I have studied the scriptures of other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length, and are a revelation of the vast reach of the human heart, varying from the most noble concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body. 'there is something, strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzled me, until I learned that they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 15th century, when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe, upon which we all live, is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our own making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to persons of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind.' And they do speak in verses such as these which, indeed, indicate that unique concept of unity and universality:

"The One Lord is our Father,  
We all are His children."

"None is our enemy,  
Nor is anyone a stranger to us.  
We are in accord with all..

The one God is pervasive in all creation  
At the sight of which Nanak is in bloom of Joy."

These and many other hymns contained in the Guru Granth Sahib, clearly visualize and preach a religion which knows no ethnical, racial or regional limitations; recognises no distinction on account of birth, sex, caste, creed or colour, embodies universal respect and concern for all, and regards all as equals. This is testified by its first and last prophets, Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh, in the following words:

"There is Light among all  
And that Light is God's Own.  
Which pervades and illuminates everyone."

"Some one by shaving his head  
Becomes a *sanyasi*, another a *yogi*,  
And yet another passes for a monk or ascetic.  
Some call themselves Hindus,  
Other claim to be Muslims;  
Among these some are *Shias* and some are *Sunnis*.

Recognise all as belonging to the one race of humanity

God as Creator (for the Hindus) and God as Good (for the Muslims)

God as Sustainer and God as Merciful

Is all one and the same God.

Recognise not another even in error or in doubt.

Worship that One alone,

As He is the Supreme Lord of us all.

It is only His form, His Light

That is diffused in one and all."

Hence, the followers of this universal faith conclude their daily prayer to that One God, in the name of their founder, Guru Nanak Dev, with the following couplets:

"May Your holy Name,  
Be ever in ascendance.  
May peace and prosperity  
Come to all !!  
In Your Will  
By Your Grace !!

They, thereby, ask for God's blessings in favour not only of their own community, but also of the entire humanity, for the maximum good of each and every creature in the world.

Thus, apart from being such a distinct monotheistic faith, Sikhism is also a social and fraternal religion, standing equally for the common Fatherhood of God and universal Brotherhood of Man, guaranteeing equal status to all human beings and asserting that normal family life, lived with virtuous conduct and firm faith in God, surely leads to the path of salvation.

"Contemplation of the True Lord brings illumination,  
Which enables one to remain unattached in the  
Midst of evil.

Such is the greatness of the True Preceptor  
( That through His grace and guidance)  
One can attain fullness  
While living with one's wife and children."

Hence, Sikhism is the religion of our time, modern in outlook, scientific in analysis, rational in approach and practical in adaptability; suited to the needs, aspirations and conditions of the modern man and his social set-up. It is a religion which is concerned with the creation of a just social order, and is committed to social equality and peaceful co-existence, as proclaimed by its Fifth prophet, Guru Arjun Dev, in the following verse

"The Gracious Lord has now promulgated His ordinance;  
None shall dominate over others or cause pain;



All shall abide in peace and happiness.  
As the governance shall be gentle and affectionate."

Sikhism enjoins on its followers social responsibility involving both social service and social action :

"He who does dedicated service in the world  
gets a place at His Portal."

"They alone understand the right way  
Who eat the bread of their labour,  
And share it with others."

The above directives of Guru Nanak, (couched in his own pithy aphorisms : *Nam Japo, Kirt Karo, Vand Chhako*) are indeed "the foundation of a Spiritually oriented, dynamic social life." His frequent exhortations to follow the under-mentioned six-sided discipline cultivates and follows the virtues associated with it, and leads further to the enrichment and fulfilment of such an ideal life

- Naam* : Devotion to the Divine Name.
- Daan* : Giving to others, particularly to the needy.
- Isnan* : Purity of mind, body and environment.
- Seva* : Service of mankind.
- Simran* : Contemplation and remembrance of God.
- Satsang* : Fellowship or company of true believers : Association with holy men.

Sikhism is thus based on humanistic and universal values of the purest form. Human freedom and dignity, self-realization and self-confidence, service and sacrifice have been the essential elements of its ethos.

The history and heritage of this religion, whether in its principles, doctrines and sacred pronouncements, or in the practical lives of its founders and followers, "has been one of exhortation to liberation from all kinds of degrading bondage, mental, spiritual and social. Long before the modern idea of social freedom was evolved in the West, Sikhism had brought to mankind the message of freedom. In its social aspects, it was a movement of freedom from feudalism and caste tyranny. While socially, it brought to man liberation from feudalism and caste tyranny, spiritually it brought to man freedom from suppression and those false beliefs which enslaved man to a selfish or ignorant priest-craft, whether the priest was called Brahmin, Yogi or Mullah." The founder of the holiest Sikh shrine and the compiler of the Sikh Scripture, Guru Arjan Dev, has himself recorded the impact of this unique movement in the following verse:

"The eggshell of doubt has shattered,  
And the mind is illumined;  
The Master has freed us from bondage  
By cutting off fetters from our feet."

This is the verse which Macauliffe, while recognizing

its lasting significance, reproduced on the title-page of each of the six volumes of his *magnum opus*, *The Sikh Religion*, published in 1909 by the Oxford University. This is also the verse on the basis of which Banerjee stated, seventy years later : "The fetters of ritualistic religion were cut off and the captives were..... freed; and the foundations of the Spiritual Empire were laid. On these foundations was raised an imposing structure of Temporal Empire, blessed by Guru Gobind Singh's electrifying utterance: **RAJ KAREGA KHALSA.**"

### Prof. Dr. Harnam Singh Shan

Born in September 1923 at Dhamial, near Rawalpindi, the Professor's academic qualifications and field of study and research make fascinating history in themselves! After getting Honours in Punjabi (*Giani*) at University of Lahore in 1942, he gained Honours in Persian and Arabic (*Mumshi Fazil*) there and continued, with certificate in Hindi from the Punjab Government in Simla (1948), then MA in Punjabi from Chandigarh in 1953 and a course in *Braj Bhasha* from Dehra Dun in 1957, plus a course in linguistics from Coimbatore in 1959. The Ph.D in *Indian Lore & Literature* came from the University of London in 1962 and 35 years later, the D.Litt in *Punjabi, Sufi and Sikh Studies* from the Punjab University Chandigarh in 1999.



The prolific works of the Professor include 79 books, 182 research-papers and searching articles, innumerable book reviews, forewords and much else. He has travelled extensively on lecture tours to Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Iran, Germany, the United States and Egypt, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia, Mexico, China and Canada. He was the key speaker at the 36th International Congress of Asian & North African Studies at Montreal in August-September 2000 where he presented two papers, including "An Epoch-making Event in World History", being creation of the Khalsa in 1699.

Professor Dr. Harnam Singh Shan's academic career climaxed as being head of the Department of Punjabi & Sikh Studies at Chandigarh (1958-62 and 1972-84 respectively) during which time he started the preparation and publication of the *Punjab University Papers & Monographs on Sikh Studies Series*. He has been bestowed several other honours including *Saropas* (Robes of Honour) from the community and the *Sanad* in recognition of his contributions to the language, literature, culture and history of the united Punjab, *Land of the Five Rivers*.



*World Religions*, "commonly been represented as a syncretic blend of Hindu tradition and Muslim belief. This is a gross simplification, and when expressed in terms of a mixture of Hinduism and Islam, it must be totally rejected. The teachings of Guru Nanak do indeed represent a synthesis, but the elements which constitute the synthesis can never be defined, however loosely, as Hinduism and Islam." Thus, Sikhism can, in no way, be termed as an eclectic religion, composed of selections made from various systems, doctrines, sources, etc.

The order of the Khalsa "from its very birth has claimed the status of a new Way of Life, the Third *Panth*, a separate community, and distinct people from the two Ways of Life, already known and largely practised by the peoples of East and West and the inhabitants of India : the Way of the Aryans, represented by Hinduism and its heterodox forms, Buddhism and Jainism; and the Semitic Way of Life, represented primarily by the Christians and the Mussulmans." "That such was the unambiguous claim made for his new order of the Khalsa by the Guru (Gobind Singh) himself, cannot be in doubt, as the Guru's own assertions on this point amply support the testimony of the contemporary non-Sikh historians and writers."

This is also quite clear from the proclamation he made in the great gathering of the Sikhs at Anandpur Sahib soon after initiating the first five members of the Order of the Khalsa, knighting them as Singhs and calling them his Beloved Ones, on the historic Vaisakhi day of the 30th March, 1699. "According to the Persian historian Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din, the newswriter of the period, sent to the Emperor (Aurangzeb) a copy of the Guru's address (which) is dated the first of Vaisakh Samvat 1756 (A.D. 1699), and is as follows":

"I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, rising above all differences of the religions as now practised. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules laid down for them in the Shastras, abandon them altogether, and adopting the way of mutual help and co-operation, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganga and other places of pilgrimage which are considered to be holy in the Hindu religion, or worship the Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga; but all should cherish faith in the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism (of the double-edged Sword). Eat of the same vessel, and feel no aloofness from or contempt for one another."

The newswriter of the Mughal Court who was present there on the occasion, when forwarding this proclamation to his master, submitted his own report : "When the Guru had thus addressed the crowd, several Brahmins and Khatri stood up, and said that they accepted the religion of Guru Nanak and of the other Gurus. Others, on the contrary, said that they would never accept any religion which was opposed to the teachings of the Vedas and the Shastras, and that they would not renounce at the bidding of a boy, the ancient faith which had descended to them from their ancestors. Thus, though several refused to accept the Guru's religion, about twenty thousand men stood up and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission." About eighty thousand men, say Ahmad Shah Batalia and Bute Shah, received the Baptism of the double-edged Sword and joined the Order of the Khalsa during the first few days. Their names were changed, and "they were given one family name 'Singh' for thenceforth their father was Gobind Singh (so renamed after his own baptism), their mother Sahib Devan, and their place of birth Anandpur. The baptism symbolised a rebirth, by which the initiated renounced their previous occupations (*krit nash*) for that of working for God; severed their family ties (*kul nash*) to become the family of Gobind; rejected their earlier creeds (*dharma nash*) for the creed of the Khalsa; gave up all rituals (*karam nash*) save that sanctioned by the Sikh faith; and stopped believing in superstition (*bharam nash*) for belief in One God. Five emblems were prescribed for the Khalsa. They were to wear their hair and beard unshorn (*kesh*); they were to carry a comb (*kangha*) in the hair to keep it tidy; they were always to wear a knee-length pair of breeches (*kach*), worn by soldiers of the times; they were to carry a steel bangle (*kara*) on their right wrist; and they were to be ever armed with a sabre (*kirpan*). In addition to these five emblems, the converts were to observe four rules of conduct (*rahit*) : not to cut any hair on any part of their body; not to smoke or chew tobacco; not to eat an animal which had been slaughtered by being bled to death, as was customary with the Muslims, but eat only *jhatka* meat, where the animal had been despatched with one blow, and not to molest the person of Muslim women. At the end of oathing, the Guru hailed the converts with a new form of greeting

*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa*

*Waheguru ji ki Fateh*

"Hail the Khalsa who belongs to Lord God

Hail the Lord God to Whom belongs the Victory!"

The very first ordinance issued by the Founder of the Khalsa to the Sikh congregations throughout the subcontinent, confirms the above, and his definition of the Khalsa corroborates all that further as in his own words:



"He whose mind dwells, night and day,  
 On the ever-effulgent Light,  
 And never swerves from the thought of one God;  
 He who is full of love for God and faith in Him,  
 And believes not, even mistakenly,  
 In fasting and worship of the graves of Muslims  
 Or sepulchres of Hindus;  
 He who recognises the one God and not another,  
 And does not believe in pilgrimages,  
 Ceremonial acts of mercy  
 And charity, penances and austerities;  
 And he whose heart is illumined within  
 By the Light of the Perfect One,  
 He is to be recognised then  
 As a pure member of the Order of the Khalsa."

All that ushered in a complete break with the past of all those who joined the Order of the Khalsa. It also marked "the culmination which had crowned Guru Nanak's revelation." It also pronounced the complete independence and distinctiveness of the Sikh religion. "That such has been the stout belief, and the basic impulse of the Sikhs and their history can be readily ascertained by any dispassionate person who would take pains to enquire with an open mind." He or she would surely come to a similar conclusion.

Further authentication to this stance has been duly provided by John Clark Archer, who, after conducting a critical and comparative study of the Aryan and Semitic religions and recognising the separate entity and identity of Sikhism, has maintained that, "Indeed Sikhism in itself reveals something of what in the last analysis religion is....." It is "an independent and conspicuous order of its own, with a character worthy of comparison with that of Hinduism and Islam, and with Christianity in particular..... The five centuries of Sikh history provide many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value..... Sikhs may stand, therefore, as symbols and examples of all who search for God and Truth..... They preserve among themselves a hardy tradition of religious and political activity, and enjoy among Hindus, Moslems, Christians and other peoples, an extraordinary prestige." The dispassionate enquirer would also find like an American convert, Ralph Singh, that the followers of this distinct faith "have their own Prophets who brought a new divine revelation to earth which is enshrined in their own sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, regarded as the living Word of God." But, a biased enquirer, like Hew McLeod, who has, according to Justice Gurdev Singh "attacked most of the Sikh traditions, institutions and beliefs, questioned their validity and striven to create doubts about others,"

would, on the other hand, maintain on flimsy props and erroneous conclusions that "Sikhism does not deserve much consideration as it is only a rehash of a minor effete Hindu creed" and that Guru Nanak was not the founder of this religion "as he did not originate a new school of thought or set of teachings." McLeod has even gone to the extent of choosing not to accept the aforesaid account of the birth of the Khalsa and the five emblems and rules of conduct prescribed for it by Guru Gobind Singh himself on the Vaisakhi of 1699, "not because he finds any evidence to falsify it, but by simply refusing to believe it," saying, "Our knowledge of this (18th) century is still limited. Traditions abound, but so too do compulsive reasons for scepticism. What we do know, however, indicates that traditions relating to the period of Guru Gobind Singh must be, in some considerable measure, set aside. The slate must be wiped clean and must not be reinscribed until we have ascertained just what did take place during the eighteenth century."

But the history and tradition of a religion cannot, and should not be "set aside," "discarded" or "wiped clean" on the mere suspicions or unjustified scepticism of an ex-employee of a Christian Mission. Such scepticism is unwarranted particularly in the case of a religion, viz. Sikhism, which was born just about five centuries back and which has survived so gloriously through this eventful period of the modern world in full gaze of history. More so, when it has been duly recognised not only as an original and distinct, but also as an independent and autonomous higher religion of the world.

Besides, as already stated, this is a prophetic religion. It is born of a direct and definitive revelation like all other great and 'higher religions' of the world, "Instead of drawing authority and inspiration from any revealed scripture, such as the Hindu *Puranas* and *Smritis*, Guru Nanak depended on his own mystical experience." The revelation did not also come to him as an 'external inspiration' (called *wahi zahir*) which "was used for the production of Quran" during whose process "the mind of Muhammad was passive and the message, an external one, was brought to him by Gabriel." On the other hand, "It seems certain," says Duncan Greenlees, "that his (Guru Nanak's) views welled up from the depths of inspiration in his own heart and owed little or nothing to what he received from others, either through books or through their words." Guru Nanak himself vouchsafed this fact and has himself recorded those experiences and revelations, received directly from God Himself, in his own *bani* or revealed word, preserved till today in its original and undefiled form, singling out his religion, thereby, "from, most other great theological systems as regards the authenticity of its



dogmas." He has defined this as *Khasam-ki-Bani* ("Word of the Lord") in one hymn, and *Eh Bani Mahan Purakh Ki*, ("This Word of the Supreme Being") in another.

The spiritual and religious truths which Guru Nanak preached, had been revealed to him "through a direct encounter with God at some level of consciousness", and he preached what he had been told and taught by God Himself. He conveyed only those words to the world which God had wished him to give forth as His divine message, as stated by him in verses such as the following:

"As the Lord's Word descends to me  
So I express it, Lalo!"  
"I have uttered only what You, O' Lord!  
Have inspired me to utter."

Guru Nanak has also mentioned in another hymn that he was an ordinary minstrel who was commissioned and blessed by God with His service. Describing his first audience with the Supreme Being, the Guru sang aloud thus:

"I was an idle bard,  
God assigned to me a rewarding task,  
And commanded me to sing His praises night and day.  
He summoned me to His Eternal Mansion,  
Bestowed on me the robe of holy laudation,  
And feasted me on the holy Name ambrosial.....  
The Supreme Being is attained, says Nanak,  
By laudation of the holy Eternal."

As is well-known to students of comparative religion, contents of revealed religion are conveyed to the people by the Supreme Being through His special messengers, either by calling them to His presence, as in the case of Moses, or by communicating His messages to them, as in the case of Prophet Muhammad. As regards Sikhism, God is stated to have been pleased to use direct ways to convey His Words, Laws and Commandments, to its founder, as stated above by the first Sikh Prophet, Guru Nanak, himself in his own words.

His successors in the Apostolic Lineage have not only endorsed this fact, but have also recorded their own experiences and audiences, as under, in their respective writings, compiled in 1604 by the Fifth Master in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and preserved intact to this day :

#### BY COMMUNICATION:

- \* As stated by Guru Amar Das, the 'Mrd Master: "God is Sole and Supreme,  
None is His equal.  
I speak as and when He makes me speak,  
My utterance is directed by Him."

- \* As confirmed by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master:
  - (i) "To Nanak the Truth was revealed by the Lord.  
So he relates mysteries of the Divine Portal."
  - (ii) "Know the utterance of the holy Preceptor to be pure and true. Disciples of the Master :  
For, the Lord-Creator Himself makes him utter it."
  - (iii) "The Lord has appointed me, the unsophisticated, to His task."
- \* As affirmed repeatedly by Guru Arjun Dev, the Fifth Master :
  - (i) "Inaccessible, unperceivable, my eternal Lord, Nanak speaks as Thou inspire him to speak."
  - (ii) "By myself I do not know what to say;  
I have stated all by His command."
  - (iii) "His servant of the Lord while Conveying the Divine Word, Speaks as the Lord directs him."
  - (iv) "What can I utter ? I know nothing to utter;  
As the Lord Wills, so He makes me utter."

#### BY AUDIENCE:

- \* As stated by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master  
"I, a minstrel of the Lord-God,  
Came to the Divine Portal,  
The Lord inside listened to my supplication,  
And called me into His Presence.  
Addressing me, He asked,  
'What brings you here, My Minstrel'  
I prayed, 'Confer on me, O, Gracious Lord;  
The boon of your ever-abiding Name Divine.'  
The Bountiful Lord granted my prayer,  
Conferred on me meditation on the Name  
And blessed me with a robe of honour."
- \* As affirmed by Guru Arjun Dev, the Fifth Master:  
"As I have attained the sought-after Lord,  
Illumination and joy have filled me.....  
I have been fully blessed by the Perfect Lord  
Who has come, in His grace; to His servant."
- \* "The Lord-God called me into His Mansion  
Wherein I consumed nectar (of Immortality)."

Such important disclosures, solemn statements, persistent affirmations and firm conviction, in the existence and beneficence of God, prove beyond doubt that Sikhism is a revealed religion. It is so, because it has been directly revealed by God through a line of Ten Prophet-teachers, who, after receiving its contents directly from Him, presented it to mankind in word and deed. They reproduced it in exactly the same original form; and also recorded it in their sacred writings. It is so, because it still remains primary in its source, and pure in its contents. It is neither selective or elective in its nature; nor secondary



in its source; nor adulterated in its content. Hence, says M. Mujeeb, "the revelation that came to Guru Nanak, must have been as direct and immediate, and as independent of history and social circumstances, as the religious literature of the Sikhs show it to be."

That being so, Sikhism can in no way be called an admixture or juxta position of various doctrines gathered from this religion or that theological system by its Prophet-teachers who were genuine messengers of God. Its tenets and teachings have been borrowed neither from Hinduism nor from Islam, nor from any other such source, as has been alleged by those who have not been able to study or understand its essentials properly or dispassionately. It is true, in the words of R.C. Majumdar, that "his was the first and also the last successful attempt to bring together the Hindus and Muslims in a common fold of spiritual and social brotherhood." The first words he uttered when called to take up the mission of his life after the aforesaid Audience with God were:

"Nah ko Hindu Nah Mussalman."

"There is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman."

On the face of it, this cryptic phrase was "a simple announcement, and yet a significant one in the context of India of his day. To a society torn by conflict, he brought a vision of common humanity—a vision which transcended all barriers of creed and caste, race and country. He reminded men of their essential oneness. The terms, 'Hindu' and 'Mussalman', included Jainas, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and so on. Guru Nanak was asking men of all faiths and denominations to look beyond external divisions and distinctions to the fundamental unity of mankind. In proclaiming the unity which lay beyond particularisms, Guru Nanak was not overruling any existing religious designation or tradition. His intention was more radical: "he wanted to point men beyond their accepted condition to a new possibility—a human community with a true spirit of fellowship and justice, with that deep ethical and spiritual commitment which expresses itself in concern for fellowman. Nor was he seeking a syncretistic union between Hinduism and Islam, or striving to achieve in his teachings a judicious mixture of elements from both to be acceptable to all. His equal attention to Hindu and Muslim identities and use of some of their religious vocabulary have led some to depict him as the reconciler of the two faiths, and to see Sikhism as 'a deliberate mingling of Hindu and Muslim practices. To do so will mean missing much of his individual genius and misinterpreting the historical development issuing from his revelation." The beginnings of the Sikh faith, in fact, go back to this revelation which Guru Nanak brought to light around 1496, soon after his

enlightenment and just before his departure for his preaching odysseys in India and abroad.

Sikhism is, above all, a complete religion in all respects like all other original and revealed religions of the world.

\* It is *Ahl-al-Maqam*, having its own spiritual and political Capital, viz., the holy city of Amritsar (as Mecca is for Islam), with its world famous Harimandar (Golden Temple) and Akal Takht which are its focal point, and for its followers the highest seat of spiritual and temporal authority, besides being "the centre of a World religion, meeting ground of the various facets of the human-spirit, and a profound symbol of future confluence of the World cultures into a universal culture for mankind."

\* It is *Ahl-al-Kitab*, possessing its own holy book, viz., Guru Granth Sahib (as Quran is for Islam), which is not only the Guru Eternal of its adherents, but is also unique among the world's sacred scriptures. It has been acclaimed as "the only non-denominational scripture," the "scripture of universal religion" and "part of mankind's common spiritual treasure," which, according to Arnold Toynbee, "should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible" and which also "deserves close study from the rest of the world."

\* It is *Ahl-al-Milla* being a true religion revealed by Guru Nanak and having its own fellowship of faith and a cohesive community, called *sangat* and *Panth*. The Turkish and Persian connotations of the word will mean a 'nation', a 'people' and a 'state.' Sikhs are a casteless democratic society, assuring equal status and respect for all. It is for this society that Guru Gobind Singh, while expressing his great love and respect for it, declared:

"Whatever is available in my house, my wealth,  
My body, my mind, even my head  
Are ever at the disposal of my people."

Paying his tribute to their selfless services, contributions and achievements, he also stated without any reservation that:

"It is through their favour that  
I have won my battles,  
And have gifts been bestowed.  
It is through their favour that  
I have overcome my troubles  
And my stores are filled.  
It is through their favour that  
I have acquired knowledge



And have smothered my enemies.  
It is also through their favour that  
I am exalted and have attained this position;  
Otherwise, there are millions of  
Humble persons like myself going about."

After administering *Khande di Pahul* to the First Five, knighting them as Singhs, and proclaiming them as his *panj piare*, the inaugurator of that 'self-abnegating, martial and casteless' Fellowship of Faith, Guru Gobind Singh, himself besought to be initiated by them in the same way as he had initiated them. Having been initiated and admitted as such to their brotherhood, called Khalsa, he later announced that he had created the Khalsa in his own image under the direct command of God, the Timeless Being :

"The Khalsa is my alter ego, my own image,  
The Khalsa is my embodiment.  
In it I have my being.  
The Khalsa is my beloved ideal."

Hence, there was to be no difference between him, the Guru and the Khalsa, as created and initiated by him in his own image. All this is unheard of in the annals of the religious and spiritual history of the world.

\* It is *Ahl-i-Kalam*, having firm faith in the doctrine of the *Shabad* the holy Word, and the *Shabad-Guru*, i.e., the Word is Guru and Guide.

"God permeates the celestial music of the Word."

"The Word is the essence of all meditation and discipline."

"God's Name is cherished in One's heart by means of the Word."

The supreme state, realization and liberation is attained by means of the Word."

"The Word alone can ferry us across the Ocean of Existence."

"The holy Word is the true Preceptor,

The Guide, the Mystery profound and inscrutable.

And it is the Word, the absence of which

Results in spiritual confusion."

\* It is *Ahl-al-Zaban*, having its own language, viz., Panjabi (as Arabic is for Islam), with its own specific script called Gurmukhi, in which its scripture, annals and chronicles, etc., stand recorded right from the beginning.

\* It is *Ahl-al-Nishan*, having its own distinct flag or banner, called *Kesri Nishan Sahib*, with *Khanda* (the Khalsa emblem) inscribed and or installed thereon (as the *parcham* is for Islam). It waves over all Sikh temples, the gurdwaras.

\* It is *Ahl-al-Shahad*, cherishing a long and unique line of

great martyrdoms, like those of its two prophets (viz. the Fifth, Guru Arjun Dev and the Ninth, Guru Tegh Bahadur), the Sahibzadas (Babas Ajit Singh, Jhujar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh) and their followers (such as Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Mani Singh).

\* It is *Ahl-al-Shamshir*, possessing the ceremonial sword called *kirpan*, as a symbol of power, sovereignty and weapon of defence and justifiable offence in time of need. This specific weapon is a significant part of the required uniform of a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood, being one of the Five Ks or symbols of the Sikh faith, obligatory for him to always keep on his body. "Since a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood is pledged not to accept any alien restrictions on his civic freedom, he is enjoined to insist on and struggle for his unrestricted right to wear and possess arms of offence and defence." According to a quotation attributed to Guru Gobind Singh :

"The political power and the State rest on armaments.

And without political sovereignty,

The good way of life cannot securely prevail in Society."

As he created the Khalsa "to establish the ever-persisting community of saint-soldiers," who could assist in the fulfilment of Guru Nanak's revelation and mission, it was considered essential to equip them with an "instrument of offence and defence and as an emblem of power and dignity which India had lost and which Guru Gobind Singh wanted to restore."

At the same time, he approved and allowed recourse to the sword as 'the last resort of a reasonable man for settling conflicts when all other means have failed in due course. In his letter to Emperor Aurangzeb, he, therefore, made it quite clear that,

"When an affair is past every other remedy,  
It is just and righteous to draw the sword."

It is obvious that the creator of the Khalsa created this new metaphor of the sword "to give a new orientation to the minds of men given to passivity."

\* It is *Ahl-al-Sunnah* as well, having its own usages, customs and a distinctive code of conduct recorded in its scripture, compositions of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, various Rahitnainas and Rahit-Maryada.

Describing the Sikh way of life, these works cover not only the spiritual discipline and moral code, but also the



social behaviour of the community whose members "are required to observe a distinctive code of conduct, one which specifies normative behaviour, outward appearance, and social obligation."

Sikhism is, thus, a complete and perfect religion, not only because of its having such prominent features, elements and essentials of a 'higher-religion', but also because it was established, as its Founder stated, to carry out a specific command of the Lord-God, Who Himself is, as proclaimed by Him in the following couplet, All perfection or perfection-incarnate :

"All that the Perfect One has made is perfect.  
There is nothing lacking or excessive in its making."

It is dynamic, stable and eternal, too, as, according to the holy compiler of its sacred scripture,

"The holy Preceptor has laid the immutable  
foundation of the faith  
That never and in no way shall shake."

Rather, it becomes firmer and firmer with the passage of each day, as stated below :

"The eternal foundation laid by Guru Nanak, Is ever-  
ascendant."

According to the following assertion of the contemporary bards, Rai Balwand and Satta,

"Guru Nanak founded the True Dominion of God.  
He raised the citadel of Truth on firm foundations .

On these foundations was raised a glorious spiritual and temporal edifice by Guru Gobind Singh who imparted his "stern Olympian air" to the followers of his, who are recognizable till today by their distinctive appearance and are distinguished by their everpresent high spirits, particularly in a period of adversity and crisis. That is so because "His impress not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but contrary to the experience of ethnological experts, it also operated materially and gave amplitude to their physical frames. They came to be regarded as models of physical beauty and stateliness of manner. A tremendous change was affected in the whole tone of their national character. Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and distinctive. The sweepers, barbers and confectioners, who had never so much as touched the sword, and whose whole generation had lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called higher classes, became, under the stimulating leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who conquered fear, and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru."

This revealed, distinct and complete religion of such self-sacrificing saint-soldiers is a universal world faith with an all-embracing appeal and elevating message for all mankind. "It is the faith of the New Age," says Rev. Bradshaw, "It is the *summum bonum* for the modern man. It completely supplants and fulfils all the former dispensations of older religions. The other religions contain Truth, but Sikhism contains the fullness of Truth. The older faiths were good in their day, but that day is now past; and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak. Just as we appreciate the discovery of modern living and do not want to exchange our modern jet airliners, automobiles and electricity for the horse-drawn carriages and candles of the past, we do not want to exchange the New Age Faith of Guru Nanak for any of the old age systems and their antiquated philosophies. The Sikh faith is the universal religion for the now and future space age. The Sikh religion is truly the answer to the problems of the modern man." And it "is the only living faith," according to Bittencourt, "that gives the healing outlook on life."

As regards its potential and prospects in the religious domain of the world, it was Macauliffe who, while addressing the Quest Society in 1910 at London, stated : "The Sikh religion (as compared to other religions) presents no mysteries, and embraces an ethical system such as has never been excelled, if indeed it has ever been equalled. It offers fewer points of attack than any other theological system, and if patronised and cherished, as its religious and political importance deserves, by a powerful government, it might become one of the first religions on this planet."

Dorothy Field observed in 1914 that "Sikhism is capable of a distinct position as a world religion, so long as the Sikhs maintain their distinctiveness. The religion is also one which should appeal to the Occidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragmatist standpoint, which is a favourable point of view in some quarters, it would rank almost first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it had made a nation in so short a time. The religion of the Sikhs is one of the most interesting at present existing in India, possibly indeed in the entire world. That it should have transformed the outcaste Indian—a notoriously indolent and unstable person—into a fine and loyal warrior is little short of a miracle." It was Arnold Toynbee again who prophesied, therefore, as recently as in 1960 : "Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before in the days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all



branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion, and its scripture, the Adi Granth, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world."

This will indeed be so, because it will have the opportunity of sharing the sort of experience which the Nobel-laureate Pearl S. Buck had gained when she observed, after going through the 4-volume English translation (by Dr Gopal Singh) of the Guru Granth Sahib: "I have studied the scriptures of other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length, and are a revelation of the vast reach of the human heart, varying from the most noble concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body. 'there is something, strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzled me, until I learned that they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 15th century, when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe, upon which we all live, is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our own making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to persons of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind.' And they do speak in verses such as these which, indeed, indicate that unique concept of unity and universality:

"The One Lord is our Father,  
We all are His children."

"None is our enemy,  
Nor is anyone a stranger to us.  
We are in accord with all..

The one God is pervasive in all creation  
At the sight of which Nanak is in bloom of Joy."

These and many other hymns contained in the Guru Granth Sahib, clearly visualize and preach a religion which knows no ethnical, racial or regional limitations; recognises no distinction on account of birth, sex, caste, creed or colour, embodies universal respect and concern for all, and regards all as equals. This is testified by its first and last prophets, Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh, in the following words:

"There is Light among all  
And that Light is God's Own.  
Which pervades and illuminates everyone."

"Some one by shaving his head  
Becomes a *sanyasi*, another a *yogi*,  
And yet another passes for a monk or ascetic.  
Some call themselves Hindus,  
Other claim to be Muslims;  
Among these some are *Shias* and some are *Sunnis*.

Recognise all as belonging to the one race of humanity

God as Creator (for the Hindus) and God as Good (for the Muslims)

God as Sustainer and God as Merciful

Is all one and the same God.

Recognise not another even in error or in doubt.

Worship that One alone,

As He is the Supreme Lord of us all.

It is only His form, His Light

That is diffused in one and all."

Hence, the followers of this universal faith conclude their daily prayer to that One God, in the name of their founder, Guru Nanak Dev, with the following couplets:

"May Your holy Name,  
Be ever in ascendance.  
May peace and prosperity  
Come to all !!  
In Your Will  
By Your Grace !!

They, thereby, ask for God's blessings in favour not only of their own community, but also of the entire humanity, for the maximum good of each and every creature in the world.

Thus, apart from being such a distinct monotheistic faith, Sikhism is also a social and fraternal religion, standing equally for the common Fatherhood of God and universal Brotherhood of Man, guaranteeing equal status to all human beings and asserting that normal family life, lived with virtuous conduct and firm faith in God, surely leads to the path of salvation.

"Contemplation of the True Lord brings illumination,

Which enables one to remain unattached in the Midst of evil.

Such is the greatness of the True Preceptor  
( That through His grace and guidance)

One can attain fullness

While living with one's wife and children."

Hence, Sikhism is the religion of our time, modern in outlook, scientific in analysis, rational in approach and practical in adaptability; suited to the needs, aspirations and conditions of the modern man and his social set-up. It is a religion which is concerned with the creation of a just social order, and is committed to social equality and peaceful co-existence, as proclaimed by its Fifth prophet, Guru Arjun Dev, in the following verse

"The Gracious Lord has now promulgated His ordinance;

None shall dominate over others or cause pain;



All shall abide in peace and happiness.  
As the governance shall be gentle and affectionate."

Sikhism enjoins on its followers social responsibility involving both social service and social action :

"He who does dedicated service in the world  
gets a place at His Portal."

"They alone understand the right way  
Who eat the bread of their labour,  
And share it with others."

The above directives of Guru Nanak, (couched in his own pithy aphorisms : *Nam Japo, Kirt Karo, Vand Chhako*) are indeed "the foundation of a Spiritually oriented, dynamic social life." His frequent exhortations to follow the under-mentioned six-sided discipline cultivates and follows the virtues associated with it, and leads further to the enrichment and fulfilment of such an ideal life

- Naam* : Devotion to the Divine Name.
- Daan* : Giving to others, particularly to the needy.
- Isnan* : Purity of mind, body and environment.
- Seva* : Service of mankind.
- Simran* : Contemplation and remembrance of God.
- Satsang* : Fellowship or company of true believers : Association with holy men.

Sikhism is thus based on humanistic and universal values of the purest form. Human freedom and dignity, self-realization and self-confidence, service and sacrifice have been the essential elements of its ethos.

The history and heritage of this religion, whether in its principles, doctrines and sacred pronouncements, or in the practical lives of its founders and followers, "has been one of exhortation to liberation from all kinds of degrading bondage, mental, spiritual and social. Long before the modern idea of social freedom was evolved in the West, Sikhism had brought to mankind the message of freedom. In its social aspects, it was a movement of freedom from feudalism and caste tyranny. While socially, it brought to man liberation from feudalism and caste tyranny, spiritually it brought to man freedom from suppression and those false beliefs which enslaved man to a selfish or ignorant priest-craft, whether the priest was called Brahmin, Yogi or Mullah." The founder of the holiest Sikh shrine and the compiler of the Sikh Scripture, Guru Arjan Dev, has himself recorded the impact of this unique movement in the following verse:

"The eggshell of doubt has shattered,  
And the mind is illumined;  
The Master has freed us from bondage  
By cutting off fetters from our feet."

This is the verse which Macauliffe, while recognizing

its lasting significance, reproduced on the title-page of each of the six volumes of his *magnum opus*, *The Sikh Religion*, published in 1909 by the Oxford University. This is also the verse on the basis of which Banerjee stated, seventy years later : "The fetters of ritualistic religion were cut off and the captives were..... freed; and the foundations of the Spiritual Empire were laid. On these foundations was raised an imposing structure of Temporal Empire, blessed by Guru Gobind Singh's electrifying utterance: **RAJ KAREGA KHALSA.**"

### Prof. Dr. Harnam Singh Shan

Born in September 1923 at Dhamial, near Rawalpindi, the Professor's academic qualifications and field of study and research make fascinating history in themselves! After getting Honours in Punjabi (*Giani*) at University of Lahore in 1942, he gained Honours in Persian and Arabic (*Mumshi Fazil*) there and continued, with certificate in Hindi from the Punjab Government in Simla (1948), then MA in Punjabi from Chandigarh in 1953 and a course in *Braj Bhasha* from Dehra Dun in 1957, plus a course in linguistics from Coimbatore in 1959. The Ph.D in *Indian Lore & Literature* came from the University of London in 1962 and 35 years later, the D.Litt in *Punjabi, Sufi and Sikh Studies* from the Punjab University Chandigarh in 1999.



The prolific works of the Professor include 79 books, 182 research-papers and searching articles, innumerable book reviews, forewords and much else. He has travelled extensively on lecture tours to Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Iran, Germany, the United States and Egypt, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia, Mexico, China and Canada. He was the key speaker at the 36th International Congress of Asian & North African Studies at Montreal in August-September 2000 where he presented two papers, including "An Epoch-making Event in World History", being creation of the Khalsa in 1699.

Professor Dr. Harnam Singh Shan's academic career climaxed as being head of the Department of Punjabi & Sikh Studies at Chandigarh (1958-62 and 1972-84 respectively) during which time he started the preparation and publication of the *Punjab University Papers & Monographs on Sikh Studies Series*. He has been bestowed several other honours including *Saropas* (Robes of Honour) from the community and the *Sanad* in recognition of his contributions to the language, literature, culture and history of the united Punjab, *Land of the Five Rivers*.



# Letters to the Editor

Sir,

Your Issue No. IV/2000, has been quite fascinating, especially reproduction of the Coat of Arms of the Sikh State of Maharaja Ranjit Singh which was on the front cover. You have rightly described the emblem as "The Order of Guru Gobind Singh" since the Maharaja ruled over the Punjab and adjoining territories in the name of the 'Guru'.

This Coat of Arms was designed at the instructions of the Maharaja, when his forces had been victorious and took over the adjoining territories. The left side (in blue) depicts the annexation of Multan when General Diwan Mool Raj Chopra defeated the local Nawab, the top one in white depicts Kashmir, captured by General Zorawar Singh and the red on right depicts victory of General Hari Singh Nalwa in the territory of Attock and Peshawar. Although later the Maharaja also occupied Afghanistan, he did not annex this territory.

Yours etc.,  
*Hari Singh Bayond Ahluwalia*  
New Delhi

Sir,

Please refer to page 11 of your Issue I / 2001. There you have carried a photograph of Dr.Kharak Singh, with the caption announcing, "he founded the Institute of Sikh Studies in 1989"

Both Sardarni Surinderpal Kaur and I are members of the Institute of Sikh Studies and have been associated with it from its very inception. We know that the actual founder of the Institute was Sardar Daljeet Singh (IAS). If we make a more liberal assessment then perhaps we can say that Sardars Daljeet Singh, aforementioned, and Jagjit Singh of *Sikh Revolution* fame, were its founders.

On March 8, 2001 there was a general body meeting of the IOSS at which I put this question to the seven founder members present. They were of the opinion that Sardars Daljeet Singh and Jagjit Singh were the actual founders of the IOSS.

By way of abundant precaution, I also checked up the proceedings of Sardar Daljeet Singh Memorial Seminar held by the IOSS. Proceedings of the seminar were edited and published by Dr.Kharak Singh on behalf of the IOSS in 1966, as *Current Thoughts on Sikhism*. In his welcome address to the delegates Dr.Kuldeep Singh the then President, talking of Sardar Daljeet Singh says, "the most notable work he did along with our respected S.Jagjit Singh was to found

the IOSS at Chandigarh"

Those who have been more intimately connected with the IOSS from its very inception know that Sardar Daljeet Singh was its real founder. Popular perception is that S.Jagjit Singh was the co-founder.

I wonder who gave you the information that you have published ?

Just to put the record straight, I request you to either publish my letter or a detailed note inclusive of the evidence cited by me.

Yours etc.,  
*Gurtej Singh*  
Professor of Sikhism  
742, Sector 8, Chandigarh

Sir,

Thank you very much for the beautiful and illustrated journal *Nishaan*. It is very upto date and the name is very appropriate – a shining and bright *Nishaan* for the 21<sup>st</sup> century ! The idea to include some biographical articles is a very great one and unique what I like the most is living history which is very encouraging for our young generation.

I have some more photographs from the *Jang Akbar* of Maharaja Bhupinder Singh which you may like to use for an article about the Sikh troops in a different tone, but we regard this as a service to the British Government which was a foreign ruler.

The article by Bhai Ardaman Singh Bagrian, propagating non-vegetarianism is very against the philosophy of the Gurus. The meaning of *Guru Parshad* and "Grace towards the being" is the basic philosophy of the Gurus.

Yours etc,  
*Surjit Singh 'Jeet'*  
Research Scholar  
H.H.Shri Satguru Jagjit Singh Jee Library  
Forest Gate, London E7 9JY

[The following article, "Khaana Peena Pavitar Hai" would be of interest to our readers, including S. Surjit Singh Jeet whose letter we have received some months back and have since reviewed the aspect with several learned scholars of Sikhism]



# "KHAANA PEENA PAVITAAR HAI"

(Vaar Aasa M.1)

The above saying of Guru Nanak Dev is that "All foods and drinks which He has bestowed on mankind for sustenance, are pure".

The oaths of Amrit for the Khalsa enjoin upon the Guru's Sikhs only not to partake 'kutha' i.e. meat of an animal killed under the practice of *halal*. Amongst the Sikhs, the distinct practice has been to consume 'jhatka' meat. While elaborating this point, the learned Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha in his book *Gurmat Martand* Vol. I page 305, and written in 1938, describes that "to kill with a single stroke of a sharp instrument" is called *jhatka*. In the footnote on page 306 he states "I agree that the eating of meat is not a principle of Sikhism, but renunciation or abjuring meat is also not an ingredient of it". He further observes that "those who deliberate on the Gurbani and Sikh history with a discerning intellect, very well understand these principles" (translation Ed.).

In line with the above, we reproduce extracts on the matter from Max Arthur Macauliffe, an indisputed scholar of Sikhism who though a foreigner, became a practising Sikh (better than many of us today) and according to historical record, passed away while reciting the Japji Sahib.

In his book on "The Sikh Religion", he writes about Guru Nanak's visit to Kurukshetra. The Guru, on hearing of a religious fair at Krukshetar (near Thanesar, in the present district of Ambala), on the occasion of a solar eclipse, desired to visit it with the object of preaching to the assembled pilgrims. Needing refreshment, he began to cook the meat of a deer which a disciple had presented to him. The Brahmans expressed their horror at his cooking of flesh, upon which he replied :

"Man is first conceived in flesh, he dwelleth in flesh.

When he quickeneth, he obtaineth a mouth of flesh; his bone, skin, and body are made of flesh.

When he is taken out of the womb, he seizeth teats of flesh.

His mouth is of flesh, his tongue is of flesh, his breath is in flesh.

When he groweth up he marreith, and bringeth flesh home with him.

Flesh is produced from flesh; all man's relations are made from flesh.

By meeting the true Guru and obeying God's order, everybody shall go right.

If thou suppose that man shall be saved by himself, he shall not ; Nanak, it is idle to say so."

The following also on the same subject :

"Fools wrangle about flesh, but know not divine knowledge or mediation on God.

They know not what is flesh, or what is vegetable, or in what sin consisteth.

It was the custom of the gods to kill rhinoceroses, roast them and feast.

They who forswear flesh and hold their noses when near it, devour men at night.

They make pretences to the world, but they know not divine knowledge or medication on God.

Nanak, why talk to a fool? He cannot reply or understand what is said to him.

He who acteth blindly is blind ; he hath no mental eyes. Ye were produced from the blood of your parents, yet ye eat not fish or flesh.

When man and woman meet at night and cohabit, A foetus is conceived from flesh ; we are vessels of flesh. O Brahman, thou knowest not divine knowledge or medication on God, yet thou callest thyself clever.

Thou considered the flesh that cometh from abroad bad, O my lord, and the flesh of thine own home good.

All animals have sprung from flesh, and the soul taketh its abode in flesh.

They whose guru is blind, eat things that ought not to be eaten, and abstain from what ought to be eaten.

In flesh we are conceived, from flesh we are born ; we are vessels of flesh.

O Brahman, thou knowest not divine knowledge or meditation on God, yet though callest thyself clever.

Flesh is allowed in the Purans, flesh is allowed in the books of the Musalmans, flesh hath been used in the four ages.

Flesh adorneth sacrifice and marriage functions; flesh hath always been associated with them.

Women, men, kings, and emperors spring from flesh. It they appear to you to be going to hell, then accept not their offerings.

See how wrong it would be that givers should go to hell and receivers to heaven.



Thou understandest not thyself, yet thou instructest others;

O Pandit, thou are very wise !

O Pandit, thou knowest not from what flesh hath sprung.

Corn, sugar-cane, and cotton are produced from water; from water the three worlds are deemed to have sprung.

Water saith, 'I am good in many ways'; many are the modifications of water.

If thou abandon the relish of such things, thou shalt be superhuman, saith Nanak deliberately."

Again, Macauliffe describes the first visit of (Guru to be) Amar Das to Guru Angad at Goindwal.

"One day the Guru had a meat dinner prepared. Amar Das said, 'If the Guru is a searcher of hearts, he must know that I am a *Vaishnav* and do not touch flesh'. The Guru, knowing this, ordered that dal should be served him. Amar Das then reflected, 'The Guru knoweth that meat is forbidden me, so he hath ordered that dal be served me instead'. Amar Das then quickly arrived at the conclusion that any disciple, whose practice differed from that of the Guru, must inevitably fail. He therefore told the cook that if the Guru were kind enough to give him meat, he would partake of it. The Guru, on hearing this, knew that supersition was departing from Amar Das's heart, and he handed him his own dish. When Amar Das had partaken of it, he for the first time felt peace of mind, and, as he became the Guru, celestial light dawned on his heart. Thus did he break with the strictest tenet of *Vaishnavism* and became a follower of the Guru (emphasis added).

Another day the Guru, in order to further remove Amar Das's prejudices, thus began to instruct him : 'The meats it is proper to abstain from are these : others' wealth, other's wives, slander, envy, covetousness, and pride. If any one abstaining from a meat is proud on the subject and says, 'I never touch meat', let him consider that the infant sucks nipples of flesh, that the married man takes home with him a vessel of flesh'. Guru Angad then repeated and expounded Guru Nanak's *slokas* on the subject. He also related to Amar Das the story of Duni Chand and his father, given in the 'Life of Guru Nanak'.

'If you think of it', continued the Guru, 'there is life in everything, even in fruits and flowers, to say nothing of flesh; but whatever thou eatest, eat remembering God, and it shall be profitable to thee. Whatever cometh to thee without hurting a fellow-creature is nectar, and whatever thou receivest by giving pain is poison. To shatter another's hopes, to calumniate others, and to misappropriate their property is worse than to eat meat'.

The last vestige of Amar Das's supersition had by this time departed."

The above mentioned episodes and incidents in the lives of Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Angad are also established clearly in Kavi Chudamani, Bhai Santokh Singh's magnum opus *Sri Guru Partap Suraj Granth*, written in the early nineteenth century, which is considered as one of the earliest chronicles of authority on Sikh history.

To quote:

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰ ਕਹੈ 'ਕਰਹੁ ਅਸ ਰੀਤੀ । ਕੋਰੋ ਮਟਿਕਾ ਆਨਿ ਸਪ੍ਰੀਤੀ ।  
ਇਸ ਮਿਥ ਕੇ ਸਭਿ ਮਾਸ ਸਵਾਰਹੁ। ਲੱਖੀ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਤਾਹਿ ਮਹਿ ਡਾਰਹੁ ॥  
ਮਾਰਣ ਸਰਬ ਪਾਇ ਇਸ ਮੰਗੀ । ਅਗਨਿ ਬਚ ਰੀਧਹੁ ਅਥ ਤਾਂਹੀ ।  
ਇਸ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰ ਕੀ ਆਇਸੁ ਸੁਨਿਕੈ । ਕਰਤਿ ਭਏ ਤਸ ਸਭਿ ਬਿਧਿ ਗੁਨਿਕੈ ॥  
ਚੁਲ੍ਹੇ ਕੇ ਕਰਿ, ਮਟਕਾ ਧਾਰਜੇ । ਮਾਸ ਮਿਰਗ ਕੇ ਸਰਬ ਸਵਾਰਜੇ ।  
ਤਾਂ ਮਹਿ ਪਾਇ ਹੁਤਸਨ ਬਾਚਾ । ਬਹੁਤੇ ਬਿੰਨ੍ਹ ਜਬਹਿ ਨਿਹਾਰਾ ॥

Guru Partap Suraj Granth page 820

Again while narrating the incident in Guru Amar Das's life:

ਆਇ ਰਸੋਈਆ ਬਿਤਿ ਭਯੋ ਕੀਨਸਿ ਅਰਦਾਸੁ ।  
'ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਜੀ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਹਾਰ ਹਰਿ' ਸੁਨਿ ਚੁਠਿ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਲੁ ।  
ਬੁਢੇ-ਆਦਿਕ ਸਿੱਖ ਸਤਿ ਆਏ ਤਿਸ ਕਾਲੁ ।  
ਪੰਕਤਿ ਬੈਠੀ ਮਿਲਿ ਤਬਹਿ ਗੁਰ ਬੀਚ ਸੁਹਾਏ ।  
ਮਿਲਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਮਹਿ ਅਮਰ ਜੀ ਬੈਠਿ ਤਿਸ ਬਾਏ ।  
ਪਹਿਤ ਭਾਤ ਬਰਤਜੇ ਪ੍ਰਥਮ, ਪਨ ਅਮਿਖ ਆਵਾ ।  
ਇਕ ਦਿਸ਼ਾਪੰਕਤਿ ਮਹਿ ਦਯੋ ਤਬ ਇਨ ਦਰਸਾਵਾ ।  
ਬਹੁ ਗਿਲਾਨ ਠਾਨੀ ਰਿਦੈ ਇਮਿ ਕਰਤਿ ਬਿਚਾਰਾ ।  
ਮੈਂ ਅਮਿਖ ਖਾਯੋ ਨ ਕਥਿ ਕਰਿ ਅੰਨ ਅਹਾਰਾ ।  
ਪੰਕਤਿ ਮੈਂ ਅਥਿ ਬੈਠਾ ਕਿਮਿ ਹੋਹਿ ਬਚਾਵਾ ।

G.P.S.G page 315

In the Sikh way of life, there are no edicts (commandments) of do's and don'ts. It is a unique faith in which Akal Purakh is simultaneously called darkness (ਅੰਧਕਾਰ) and also infinite radiance (ਅਨੰਤਰੂਪ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼). The Satguru has created the world and sent onto it human form to live life remembering Him, do duty to Him, remember Him, serve His creation and rejoice in it. This is the field of operative truth and conduct (ਧਰਮਸਥਲ). There are no restrictions or bars on what to eat because

ਖਾਣਾ ਪੀਣਾ ਧਰ੍ਮਿਕੁ ਹੈ, ਦਿਤੇਨੁ ਜਿਜਕ ਸੰਬਹਿ

"All foods and drinks are pure,

That He hath bestowed for sustenance.

Were there to be any taboos, how then could one drink water, for in Asa Di Vaar, the Guru says:

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਪਾਣੀ ਜੀਉ ਹੈ

Water is the primal life

Guidelines of conduct in this regard are clarified by Guru Nanak himself.

ਬਾਬਾ ਹੋਰ ਖਾਣਾ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਖੁਆਰੁ ।

ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਧੇ ਤਨੁ ਪੀਤੀਐ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਚਲਹਿ ਵਿਕਾਰੁ

O man, such foods and pleasures are vain

That corrupt the mind and pain the body

In the Gurbani, there is no sanctity or ban on anything to be consumed by a Sikh. The mandates of the oaths of *amrit* are well defined – tobacco and *kutha* alone are prohibited as two major *kurahats*.



*Amritdhari* Sikhs are forbidden *Kutha* (*Halal*) where the killing is done slowly and deliberately, to the recitation of the Qurenic Kalma. ("a torturous sanctified act; an appeasement to God"). Instead, consumption of 'Jhatka' meat has been an article of faith with the Khalsa. Obviously *Jhatka* can be of meat only and it is abundantly clear that if the Gurus wished to ban meat eating such an edict would have been included in the oath of Amrit just as tobacco is expressly prohibited.

Such facts may not be compatible with the thinking of those who do not believe in the finality of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib's edicts, the Guruship of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and who practice **ਭਾਭ**. In this regard, we reproduce Mata Sundriji's observation and edict to one of Bhayee Ardaman Singh's ancestors where the finality of Guruship is reaffirmed :

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਸੁਚੇਤ ਬਿਬੇਕ ਬੁੱਧ ਰਾਹੀਐ। ਜੋ ਸਿਵਾਇ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਦੂਜੇ ਨੇ ਜਾਣੇ ਨਹੀ। ਦਸਾਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ ਤਕ ਜਾਮੇ ਬੋਧੇ ਯਾਰਵੀ ਬਾਰਵੀ ਬੰਦਾ ਚਰ੍ਹਿਬੰਦਾ ਅਜੀਤਾ ਵਰ੍ਹੇਰੇ ਤੇ ਐਤਕਾਦੁ ਲੈ ਆਵਣਾ ਹਤਿਆ ਹੈ। ਹੋਰ ਹਤਿਆ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਪਣ ਨਲਿ ਦੂਰ ਹੋਸਨਹ ਪਰੁ ਏਹ ਹਤਿਆ ਗੁਨਹ ਬਖਸ਼ੀਐਗਾ ਨਹੀ। ਜੋ ਮਨੁਖ ਕੇ ਜਾਮੇ ਉਪਰਿ ਐਤਕਾਦ ਕਰਨਗੇ। ਮੁਖ ਫੇਰੇ ਮੁਖ ਜੁਣਾ ਹੋਇ। ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਤੁਸਾ ਸਿਵਾਇ ਅਕਾਲ ਦੂਜੇ ਨੇ ਮੰਨਣਾ ਨਹੀ। ਸਬਦੁ ਦਸਵੀ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਤਕਿ ਧੋਸਣਾ।

“Khalsa of Sri Wahguru ji ought be alert and discerning, who does not recognise any other person (as divinity) than the Akal Purakh. The ten Gurus were in human (ਦੇਹਧਾਰੀ ਭਾਵ) form. To believe that Banda or Ajita and others were to follow is a criminal offence. Other offences can be atoned by supplicating to the real Guru. But this crime (of regarding one in human form as a Guru) is not to be forgiven.

"Khalsa ji's thou shalt not be in anyone except the Akal Purakh".

Bhayee Sahib Bhayee Ardaman Singh's observation that Sikhs are essentially non-vegetarian were based on the three hundred plus years old tradition of *Gur Sikhi*, its study and *Parchar* and an outcome of the heritage and the continued association of his ancestors with the Sikh tradition and practices from the times of the Sikh Gurus and also based on the instructions which his ancestors directly received from the Gurus concerning *Maryada*. He has reiterated the views of Principal Teja Singh and Bhai Kahan Singh of Nabha whose credentials of authority are unquestioned.

Diverse practices and pollutants in the Sikh and Khalsa traditions entered the *Panth* in the post-*Ghalooghara* period (1735 onwards) and some of these practices of Vaishnav and Brahmanical traits resurfaced after the fall of the *Sarkar Khalsa*. Correctives however were applied in the early twentieth century by the Panthic institutionary, such as during the Singh Sabha movement, Chief Khalsa Dewan and others.

In his composition, *Bachitar Natak*, Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, describes the sport and pastime of a *Shastardari* (weapon wielding) Singh that he himself was when he says:

## ਮਾਏ ਦੀਫ਼ ਰੈਤ ਛੰਕਾਰਾ

Hunted bear, blue bull and deer

Proficiency in the use of arms was a must for the Sikhs, hence the sport of *Shikar* in which the Sikhs and the Gurus from the Sixth Master onwards were proficient. Traditional image of the later Sikhs shows the Guru supporting a falcon on this hand while is another symbol associated with hunting.

Nowhere in Sikh practices, in their scriptures or lore, is it stipulated that "thou shall not kill" or, "shall not eat meat". On the contrary, the two incidents in the lives of Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Angad, referred to earlier affirm that for the Sikh to make a total and demonstrative break from *Vaishnav* and *Brahmanical* practises, meat eating was used by the Gurus as a means for initiation into the new way of life. These incidents also affirm that meat was cooked in the *Guru Ka Langar*. It may be mentioned that once the Sikhs got over these age-old biases in branding some food as sacred and some as polluted, but in deference to non-Sikhs who as social brethren (not necessarily religious kins) ate in the *Langar* (and since it had acquired universal acceptance), preparation of "neutral foods" (call it vegetarian) became the common practise, but not to be a religious compulsion. The earlier Gurus used these means to make a total break from the ancient redundant thoughts and practices. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib affirmed this in positive manner and put his Sikhs on notice when he said :

ਜਥਾ ਫਿਰ ਗਏ ਬਿਪ੍ਰਨ ਦੀ ਗੱਲ , ਮੈਂ ਨ ਕਰੇਂ ਫਿਰ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰਤੀਤ

When they (the Khalsa) embrace Brahmnical practices,  
I shall not 'care' for them any longer.

Let us try and understand the Sikh religious ethos (*Sikhī*) and desist from re-interpreting it.

[illegible]

*Photocopy of Mata Sundriji's hukamnama.*





# V A I S A K H I

*Vaisakhi is here  
Everything is in bloom  
Yet a sadness descends  
As I look within.*

*How many Vaisakhi's  
Will come and go  
Before I find the courage  
To walk the Path of Truth*

*What is this fear  
Why do I hesitate  
Why should I care  
What the world thinks*

*With reverence in my heart  
And Japji on my lips  
I turn to you, my Guru  
To guide me through this dilemma*

*The air has a fragrance  
The silence is ethereal  
I wave the chowri  
And bow before You.*

*The akars glow  
Their radiance is blinding  
Tears flow unceasingly  
To the Hukam I receive*

*There are no words  
To describe what I've received  
Only a wonderful silence  
The bond has been sealed*

*I no longer care  
What the world says  
My journey has begun  
To walk the Path of Truth*

*Inni Kaur*