

NISHAAN

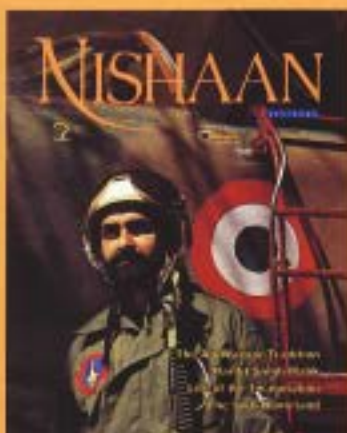
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The Air Warrior Tradition
Hardit Singh Malik
Life of the Imagination
The Sikh Homeland

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The Clouds of War

Prefence and Postures

During the summer of 2002, when an armed clash between India and Pakistan appeared imminent, and one heard all manner of noises on either side of the dividing line, I wrote an edit-page article entitled "The Scourge of War and War Rhetoric" for the *Tribune* (June 1, 2002) in which I pooh-poohed the whole drama or *tamasha* on our borders, for despite the appearance of things, I was convinced of its phoniness – at least at that time. And now I stand vindicated, as the hounds of war are no longer barking. In that piece, I used Aldous Huxley's essay on "War" in his *Ends and Means* (1936) to explore the dark heart of war rhetoric, as also the nimbus or the miasma surrounding that rhetoric. Here in this editorial, my principal concern is with the strange and inexplicable silence of the Sikhs of Punjab, and the wantonness of the Akali Establishment. The Punjab is a front-line state (on both east and west), a watchful sentinel since the times of the Greek Alexander and it has almost always risen to the defence. And even when Hindustan lay prostrate after the repeated Moghul marauders had devastated our lands, the Sikh spirit of defiance and honour was never in doubt. So, "the political indolence" of the Punjabis, of the *Panth*, has now "become our vice", to use Hardley's phrase.

But before I enlarge the argument in respect of the sullen indifference of the Sikhs and Akalis,

in particular, I would like to state something on the lethal potentials of war rhetoric. Sociologists and linguistics have examined in detail the knives that diplomatic phrases hide. In sum, when you distort the meaning of a word or sabotage its essence, you are guilty of a great human lapse which in an ideological framewrok – fascism or *jehadi janoon* – can cause massive conflagrations. We are long past the stage of bow-and-arrow battles, and the terrifying spectre of nuclear bombs, missiles and such other means of mad (and mutual) destruction do not permit us to use words carelessly, or in a mood of bravado. Aldous Huxley also wrote an essay long ago entitled "Words and Behaviour" and later George Orwell examined pitilessly the hollowness of abstract political phrases in relation to the Stalinist tyranny and to the jingoism of the Anglo-American rulers. The cold war rhetoric (the Soviet Union as "the iron curtain" and "the evil empire" described by the Western imperialists, for instance) led to many a horrifying consequence: *McCarthyism* in the United States, above all. Thus the moral health of a nation could be directly related to the health of its language. Foul words and provocative phrases could only produce evil results.

A word about the "nukes" before I proceed to the heart of the problem. It may be noticed that ever since their first use in Japan by the U.S. warplanes, there has never been any instance of

a nuclear clash even on a minor scale. In other words, "the balance of terror" was maintained even as the nuclear arsenals were being stocked with new and newer nuclear technologies. And since both India and Pakistan are now nuclear-weapon states, you may be sure that "the paper tiger" will remain a diabolical image, and that the nature of the nuclear chain of command is likely to militate against rogue states and their generals. And for two poor and developing countries, the costs of such a "deterrence" are mind-boggling. So, you may sleep in peace where the question of a sudden nuclear strike is concerned. Only a "dirty bomb", crudely prepared by some desperados could possibly be used in a limited way.

On the borders, both sides have already started making nominal movements of disengagement under American pressure, if you like. But the Western powers, our suppliers of sophisticated war weaponry, will keep the situation on the boil from time to time if only to keep their huge armament industry in full business. Thus, there will be periods of jinjoism and stasis, of war threats and "thundering silence". The cat-and-mouse story will continue to bedevil relations.

And, so, I return after this longish detour to the predicament of the Punjab. In the past whenever a foreign invader or enemy attacked India, the Punjab, and more particularly, the Sikhs, were the first to brave the onslaught and stand up, firm and resolute. But in the summer of 2002, a curious lassitude of spirit is painfully evident. A highly dynamic people, with a history of heroic deeds are today in a state of "indifference", as it were. No visible stir, no war fever, no suitable response. A deadening silence. The reasons are not far to seek.

The Akalis in their last tenure of power showed all the signs of decay and decadence – from staggering corruption, sleeze and jobbery to ruination of the state's institutions and, too, the bureaucracy. The mere return of a decimated

Congress to power shows how the Sikhs have been alienated from the Akali *jathedars* and politicians. They voted them out of power, for the elders and betters had lost all sense of shame. Imagine, two of the biggest money-scandals in recent times – the misdeeds of the PPSC Chairman, which stunned the nation and the depths to which a Vice Chancellor had fallen in pursuit of both power and pleasures. And both Sikhs of considerable standing. After such deeds, what role models indeed !

So what is the way out of this *cul-de-sac*? Clearly, the disowned Akalis who are mired in corruption to the gills and dragged into the courts to face scores of charges have neither the energies, nor the will to stage a recovery. In the year of the tercentenary in 1999, there was a marked upswing in the spirit of the Khalsa and we expected some kind of 'renaissance' (as I wrote in the inaugural issue of the *Nishaan*), but all that roused sentiment was dissipated in 3 years time or so. Meanwhile, the *Akal Takht* high priests, always squabbling, have damaged the dignity of that August institution. Who is then to pull the community out of the mire?

Yes, it is the prerogative of the youth to dream and if that dream is also the dream of politics in the best sense of the word, a politics of *sewa* and just governance, why, then, we could yet see some hope. But alas, we see no such signs at the moment. Hedonism and lavish living seem to have sapped their inner vitalities. I suggest then that from amongst the hundreds of competent, dignified and disciplined retired Sikh military officers, we create a "third force" to take up the challenge and drive out today's "Pharisees" from our temples of prayer and temples of temporal power

Meanwhile, Captain Amarinder Singh, the new Chief Minister and also one of the retired military men, has a whole lot of things to do on the ground before the pride and spirit of the Punjab is restored.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY*

Tensions are again rising on the Kashmir border between India and Pakistan. A million soldiers, armed to the teeth, face each other in a show of mutual hostility that could, by design or accident, easily erupt into armed conflict and the horror of nuclear war.

At a time of similar tension in the first weeks of the New Year, I was contacted by a national newspaper, with almost eager anticipation, about the possibility of conflict arising between the Indian and Pakistani communities in the United Kingdom. My obviously disappointing response was that it was unlikely, because people here were too busy in trying to establish themselves, and in looking to the education and future of their children.

While it would be clearly wrong for people of Indian or Pakistani origin settled here, to get involved in the politics of the sub-continent, it's my view that both communities can, and should, help the peace process. Geographic distance and distance from emotional involvement, provides us with a fuller perspective to identify common interests and focus on ways of reducing tension.

At a distance we can see, with compelling clarity, that both subcontinent neighbours have a largely similar way of life and a shared cultural heritage. Those of us involved in inter faith dialogue have come to recognize, often to our surprise, how much our different religions have in common. Here it is much easier, than in the charged atmosphere of the sub continent, to recognise the truth of Guru Gobind

Singh's words written some three centuries ago:

*Some call themselves Hindus
Others call themselves Muslims
Yet man is of one race, in all the world*

Those of us living abroad can see, all too clearly, that armed conflict between the two countries would be disastrous for both nations and how ratcheting up of tension for factional political gain, can have dangerous long term consequences.

In short, far from mirroring sub-continent tensions, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in this country have a clear responsibility to urge and even broker dialogue and some of us from different faiths have made a start in this in a combined letter of concern to the Presidents of both India and Pakistan.

The Sikh teaching that *'False is all love that divides men into warring factions'*, is a timely reminder that the route to peace is to focus on that which unites us with our neighbour.



Dr. Indarjit Singh, OBE

**On Radio Four, Britain
May 2002*

Extracts of the message to the
"Network Of Sikh Organisations"
from Prime Minister Rt Hon Tony Blair MP

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa. Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.

These are troubling times for everyone in our country. We would all much rather have peace than conflict. But the choice has not been ours. We have been forced to act by the terrorists who murdered thousands of innocent people in the barbaric attacks in the United States (in September 2001) and we know threaten more atrocities in the future.

These attacks united decent people of all ages and all communities in shock, sorrow and revulsion. I have been touched by the messages of sympathy and support from Sikh leaders on behalf of their community.

I am heartened by the forthright Sikh condemnation of 'reprisal' attacks on innocent Muslims both in the US and here at home in Britain.

I am aware also of the harassment of turban-wearing Sikhs and their families, mistaken for Muslims. I totally condemn the abuse and attacks we have seen. Preventing these crimes and catching those responsible is, I promise, a high priority for the police. Those behind these attacks are playing into the hands of the terrorists who want to set communities against community. We must work together to counter ignorance on which mindless violence thrives.

It was why I was so pleased to host a meeting of leaders of all the main faiths in our country - including Indarjit Singh OBE - at Downing Street and to hear their shared determination to continue working together to foster

Open letter

to the Presidents of India and Pakistan

In the course of a recent national inter faith meeting, there was a discussion on common issues affecting our different religious communities in the light of the changed world following the September 11 terrorist acts in the USA. A number of us were particularly concerned with the increase in tension between India and Pakistan in view of our common links with the subcontinent. In line with these concerns, we the undersigned, would like to address you on the following points:

- We condemn the action of all people who seek to make political statements by harming innocent civilians.
- We welcome recent initiatives aimed at defusing tensions between India and Pakistan.
- Any war between India and Pakistan would be against the interests of both countries. The people of India and Pakistan share much in common in culture, hopes and aspirations. Increasing cultural exchanges, freer movement of people and greater economic cooperation is to the benefit of both India and Pakistan.
- We recognise that India and Pakistan have different views on the future of Kashmir. We believe that with goodwill, these different perceptions can be reconciled in a way that ensures greater religious freedom and economic prosperity for the people of Kashmir.

We would welcome your views on the above points and offer our unstinted support as a leaders of sub-continent faiths in Britain, to any attempt to enhance peace, stability and economic prosperity in the subcontinent.

Signed:

Indarjit Singh

Dr. M Vajiragnana

Paul Seto

Bimal Krishnadas

Nitin Palan

Ayub Laher

Dr. Manazir Ahsan

Imam Dr. Abdul Sajid

Dr. Elizabeth Harris

Director Network of Sikh Organisations UK

Chief Sangha Nayake of Great Britain

Secretary Network of Buddhist Organisations UK

Secretary National Council of Hindu Temples

Swaminarayan Hindu Mission

Association of Muslim Scholars

Director General The Islamic Foundation

Brighton Islamic Mission

Secretary Methodist Conference UK



tolerance and understanding.

It is heartening to know that the Sikh charity "Khalsa Aid" is ready to engage in this work in the true spirit of Sikh teaching.

In the longer term, we will work together to rebuild Afghanistan and create the stability and peace, which will allow millions of refugees to go home. This is important not just for Afghanistan and its people but also for the whole region.

We live now in a world that is more interdependent than ever. To overcome the challenges we face, we must work together. And that is what I am determined we will do.

JAP(U) JI SAHIB

Mannai Kee Gat Kahi Na Jaie

ਮੰਠੇ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਕਰੀ ਨ ਜਾਇ

Pauri XII

No one can tell what practice does effect, the practice of the Word.
He who dares to say has always to repent afterwards.
No paper, no pen would serve the purpose, there are no writers,
Who could sit down and thrash out the question.
Such is the Word immaculate!
O, if one knew how to obey it with all the heart and soul !

Pauri XIII

By acting on the Guru's word the mind awakes to higher consciousness, and right reason comes.
With it the disciple's knowledge extends to all the spheres of life;
And he does not seek the way of Death.
Such is the Word immaculate!
O, if one knew how to obey it with all the heart and soul!

Pauri XIV

When a man is thus trained by practice, there is nothing that can obstruct him on the way.
He goes openly and with honour,
And does not walk astray into by-lanes;
For, the practice of the Word has found for him a relationship with Duty.
Such is the Word immaculate!
O, if one knew how to obey it with all the heart and soul!

Pauri XV

The way of obedience brings him at last to the door of salvation.
First he becomes the spiritual support of his family;
Then as a teacher, who has saved himself, he also saves his followers.
Nanak, the man who obeys the Word shall not wander begging from door to door.
Such is the Word immaculate!
O, if one knew how to obey it with all the heart and soul!

Translated by Prof. Teja Singh

On

Mannai (Reflecting)

From Sense to Psyche

The four stanzas relating to *suniai*, in Jap(u) ji Sahib, are followed by another four relating to *mannai*. 'Mannai' is a term beset with semantic complexity. If we have chosen to translate it simply as 'reflecting', it is because that is the meaning it carries by virtue of its original root in Sanskrit. However, in the Punjabi language, it yields a number of other connotations. These include:

(a) Believing, as in

ਜਪੁ ਰਪੁ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਅਵਰਿ ਸਭਿ ਥਾਦਿ । -SGGS p.954

Everything like meditation and austerity come through believing

All other actions are vain.

(b) Having faith, as in

ਨਾਦਿ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਦੁਖ ਭੁਖ ਗਈ ਜਿਨ ਨਾਮ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ ।

-SGGS p.1241

With faith in Naam, pain and hunger disappear,
If one attaches one's mind to the Naam

(c) Submitting to authority, obedience, and surrender, as in

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚੈ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਸਚੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਦੇਇ । -SGGS p.1089

Says Nanak, if one submits to His True Command,
One is blessed with true glory.

(d) Reconciliation, as in

ਏਕਸ ਸਿਉ ਮਨੁ ਰਹਿਆ ਸਮਾਏ ਮਨਿ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਮਨਹਿ ਮਿਲਾਵਣਿਆ ।

-SGGS p.122

Immersed in the one Lord, my mind is reconciled with Him,
So in my mind I meet with Him.

In the context in which it has been used in the Japu ji Sahib, each one of these meanings seems to be relevant. It would therefore be of advantage to go over the import of these connotations in the context of the relevant four stanzas.

Reflecting

After hearing, one must ensure that what one hears also soaks down to one's soul. If it doesn't, the spiritual journey doesn't proceed. We often neglect God and his Word 'for the noise of a fly, for the rattling of a coach, for the whinnying of a door'. We can profit by paying attention to it and reflecting on it. We are advised, "If thou may not continually gather thyself together, do it at least in the ambrosial hour before morning."

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲਾ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਉ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ । - stanza 3

In the ambrosial hours of the morning,
contemplate thou on the magnificence of the True Naam.

Contemplation fills immensity, and reflection is the doorway to it. Earnest contemplation is effort of the soul to keep the open independence of her universe. That is how reflection brings forth 'knowledge of all the realms':

ਮੰਨਿ ਸਗਲ ਭਵਨ ਕੀ ਸੁਧਿ । - stanza 13

Reflection is the means to recapture reality. By space, the universe swallows us; by reflection, we comprehend the heart of the universe. It opens up all of our faculties:

ਮੰਨਿ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਮਨਿ ਬੁਧਿ । - stanza 13

Reflection brings forth awareness into the mind and the intellect. It is the foundation of spiritual advancement. Without it no motion becomes an action, and no change becomes a progress. Hence it is that 'reflection' is the crucial sequel of 'hearing'.

Believing

Believing is not a static state in human life. First there is a time when we believe everything without reason. Then for some time we believe with discrimination. Then a time comes when we believe nothing at all. Then comes a time when we believe everything again; and this we do without giving ourselves any reason for doing so. It is natural for the mind to believe, but a spiritual man requires supreme belief. Marianne Moore said:

You're not free
until you've been made captive by supreme belief.

That is why every one of these four stanzas ends with the stamp of such a supreme belief.

ਐਸਾ ਨਮੁ ਨਿਕੰਜਨੁ ਹੋਇ ।
ਜੇ ਕੋ ਮਨਿ ਜਾਣੈ ਮਨਿ ਕੋਇ । - stanzas 12-15

Such is (the Lord's) Naam immaculate,
One who believes, his mind alone knows its state.

Yet there are some who refuse to believe. Far from being captives of 'supreme belief', they stoop down to becoming captives of doubt.

Here one is reminded of the story of Lord Orrey who had an atheist friend who did not believe in God and had an utterly

materialistic outlook and believed that the universe was just an immense system of natural machinery that somehow coasts along blindly, maintaining itself automatically without any consciousness or intellect of any Creator. Lord Orrey had a castle in Southern Ireland in which he set up a working model of the solar system—a dynamic and up-to-date piece of clockwork with a brass sun in the center and smaller globes representing the various planets orbiting around it. When his atheist friend heard of the model that Orrey had set up, he visited his castle to see it. As he entered the great hall where the model was in operation, the atheist's eyes widened with awe and wonder. The first question he asked Lord Orrey was: "Where did you get this magnificent thing? Who made it?" Orrey remembered his friend's argument with him about Creation and surprised him by replying, "Nobody made it. It just happened." "How could that be?" the surprised atheist said, "Surely somebody must have made this intricate thing." But Orrey stood his ground and insisted that the system just happened by itself. Meanwhile, the atheist worked himself into a state of hysterical frustration. Judging that the time was ripe, Orrey smiled wryly and said, "Let us have a bargain. I promise to tell you who made my little model of the solar system as soon as you tell me who made the infinitely bigger, more wonderful and more beautiful real sun and planets up in the heavens." The atheist turned pale and, for the first time, wondered if the universe could really have made itself and run unguided. This was the origin of what in science, is known as the *Orrey Theorem* which says, "If the model of any natural system requires intelligence for its creation, the real natural system requires at least as much intelligence for its own creation and working." Unbelief, then, not only doubts what it doubts, but when put to reflect on its own veracity eventually begins to doubt its own self.

Faith

Belief and faith are often considered to be synonymous. However, a distinction can easily be seen between the two. Belief, primarily, is an intellectual act though produced by will and emotion. In other words, it is a mental act. Faith, however, is a spiritual creation. It is firm and living confidence. Faith never falters, Swinburne has said:

Faith speaks when hope dissembles;
Faith lives when hope dies dead

Faith can see the invisible, believe the incredible, and undertake the impossible because it is the manifestation of the Spiritual Presence. To it alone the spiritual path is revealed. Guru Ram Das says:

ਨਾਇ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਪੰਥ ਪਰਗਟਾ ਨਾਮੇ ਸਭ ਲੋਈ । - SGGS p.1241

With faith in the Naam, the Path is revealed;
Through faith in Naam one is fully enlightened.

Faith is the foundation of every religion. "Unless you have faith", says the Old Testament, "you will not be established" (Isaiah 7.9). Jainism holds: "Without faith there is no knowledge, without knowledge there is no virtuous conduct, without virtue there is no deliverance, and without deliverance there is no perfection" (Uttaradhyayana Sutra 28.30). Buddhism asserts: "By faith you shall be free and go beyond the world of death" (Sutta Nipata 11.46). In Quran (49.7), it is said, "God had endeared the Faith to you, and has made it beautiful in your hearts". Rig Veda affirms:

Faith is composed of the heart's intention.
Light comes through faith.
Through faith men come to prayer,
Faith in the morning, faith at noon and at the setting of the sun.
O Faith, give us faith! (10.151.4-5)

Guru Nanak emphasizes the ineffability of faith thus:

ਮੰਨਿ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਕਹੀ ਨ ਜਾਇ ।
ਜੇ ਕੇ ਕਹੈ ਪਿਛੈ ਪਛੁਤਾਇ ।
ਕਾਹਾਇ ਕਲਮ ਨ ਲਿਖਣਹਾਰੁ ।
ਮੰਨਿ ਕਾ ਥਹਿ ਕਰਨਿ ਵੀਚਾਰੁ ।
ਐਸਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਨਿਰੰਜਨੁ ਹੋਇ ।
ਜੇ ਕੇ ਮੰਨਿ ਜਾਣੈ ਮਨਿ ਕੋਇ । - stanza 12

Inexpressible is the state of faith.
He regrets who tries that to state.
Where is the pen or paper or scribe
Who can the depth of faith describe?
Such is His Naam immaculate -
Knows he who's fixed in faith.

So ubiquitous is *faith* in religious literature that religion itself is designated as faith.

Obedience and Surrender

Manana is accepting authority, or supremacy of another. Guru Nanak says:

ਜਿਨੀ ਸੁਣਿ ਕੈ ਮੰਨਿਆ ਹਉ ਤਿਨਿ ਵਿਟਹੁ ਭਰਥਾਣੁ । - SGGS p.790

Says Nanak, I am a sacrifice unto those who hear and accept.

Accepting another's counsel is accepting the superiority of his wisdom. Following his advice and obeying his command is an act of wisdom on the part of one who receives the counsel. Unquestioning obedience calls for complete surrender. When we know that His writ alone prevails, what other choice have we than to surrender and obey? Guru Nanak, in the very first stanza of Japu ji tells us:

ਸੋਚੈ ਸੋਚਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਸੋਚੀ ਲਖ ਵਾਰ ।
ਚੁਹੈ ਚੁਪ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਜੇ ਲਾਇ ਰਹਾ ਲਿਵ ਭਾਰ ।
ਭੁਖਿਆ ਭੁਖ ਨ ਉਤਰੀ ਜੇ ਥੰਨਾ ਪੁਰੀਆ ਭਾਰ ।

ਸਹਸ ਸਿਆਣਪਾ ਲਖ ਹੋਰਿ ਤ ਇਕ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਨਾਲਿ ।
ਕਿਵ ਸਚਿਆਰਾ ਹੋਈਐ ਕਿਵ ਕੂੜੈ ਤੁਟੈ ਪਾਲਿ ।
ਹੁਕਮ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਨਾਲਿ । - stanza 1

He, by thinking can't be known
Though one thoughtful ever remains.
Nor through silence is He found
Constant trance though one maintains.
Craving greed is sated never—
Worlds of wealth though one may gather.
Hundred thousand rationalizations
Are, in the end, of no avail.
How can we, the, Truth attain?
How to rend illusion's veil?
Ever we must obey His Will.
That's the writ that shall prevail.

The virtue of obedience to God is particularly significant in religions that envision God as a person who acts in history and in the lives of Individuals. The old testament says, "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15.22). Submission or surrender to God is a theme especially prominent in Islam, whose very name means submission. The Quran impresses, "Whoever submits his will to God, while doing good, his wage is with the Lord, and no fear shall be upon them, neither shall they sorrow" (2.112). Even in Eastern religions passages are found calling upon people to conform to the will of Heaven and to the will of Ultimate reality. In Confucianism, it is held that "The superior man, taking his stance as righteousness requires, adheres firmly to Heaven's decrees" (1 Ching 50: Sacrificial Vessel). Surrender is also an important theme of Vaishnavite Hinduism. The core teaching of Bhagavad Gita is, "Abandon all supports and look to me for protection. I shall purify you from the sins of the past; do not grieve" (18.66). Here is a witticism from Ugo Betti: "The free will business is a bit terrifying. It is almost pleasanter to obey."

In Sikhism, submission to the Will of God opens the doorway to His Grace and earns for man divine approval. In Var Asa, Guru Nanak says:

ਹੁਕਮ ਮੰਨਿਐ ਹੋਵੈ ਪਰਵਾਣੂ ਤਾਂ ਖਸਮੈ ਕਾ ਮਹਲ ਪਾਇਸੀ ।
- SGGS 471

Through obedience to His Will one receives approval, and is admitted to His Abode.

In Japu ji, the Guru says:

ਮੰਨੈ ਪਤਿ ਸਿਉ ਪਰਗਟ ਜਾਇ । - stanza 14

The faithful shall depart with honour and fame.

But, says Guru Amar Das, "If one does not obey the Divine Commandment, then, within one's own home, the Lord seems far away."

ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਮੰਨਈ ਤਾ ਘਰ ਹੀ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਦੂਰਿ । - SGGS p.560

"Those who obey the Lord's Will get connected directly with divine righteousness; they do not follow any other path or by way," says Guru Nanak:

ਮੰਨੈ ਮਗ ਨ ਚਲੇ ਪੰਥ ।
ਮੰਨੈ ਧਰਮ ਸੇਤੀ ਸਨਥੰਧ । - stanza 14

It is said, if you follow a way to find God, you find the way but lose God.

Reconciliation

Man's existential situation is egocentric and so he is in a state of estrangement from his essential spiritual nature. His unbelief spells his estrangement from God. Such a state is ever filled with anxiety and threatened by meaninglessness. An alienated man, being the center of himself and of his world, functions outside his essential spiritual center and estranged from it. Man, therefore, needs to be reconciled. The establishment of primacy of faith is *reconciliation* with God.

Reconciliation has the character of 'in spite of', since it is God who wants us to be reconciled with Him. Bhai Gurdas tells us

ਚਰਨ ਸਰਨਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਏਕ ਪੈਡਾ ਜਾਏ ਚਲ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਕੋਟਿ ਪੈਡਾ ਆਰੀ
ਹੋਇ ਲੋਭ ਹੈ । - kabit 111

It is God's innate nature to reunite the alienated back with Him. Guru Arjan Dev, in Sukhmani, assures us:

ਦੁਟੀ ਗਾਢਨਹਚ ਰੋਪਾਲ । - SGGS p. 282

The Lord of the universe restitutes severed relations.

Of the four stanzas that we are considering, the expression employed in the first one is *mannei* (ਮੰਨੈ), while in the remaining three, it is *mannai* (ਮੰਨੈ). While both are often translated as 'having faith', the meaning of the former is closer to 'reconciliation' (Punjabi *maneva* ਮਨੇਵਾ).

It is clear, then, that in these stanzas all the above connotations seem to be employed together. It is as if the seeker is taken through the entire spectrum of devotional intentionality. One who passes through the portals of faith and submission, finds himself reconciled with the Lord.



Gatka at Hyde Park Corner

Demonstration of the Sikh martial arts during the weekends on the lawns surrounding Wellington Arch in London.





A photographic exhibition honouring the part played by Sikhs in two world wars was opened in London by Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales on May 1st 2002. "From Jawans to Generals" will be on show at the Wellington Arch, the famous architectural landmark at Hyde Park Corner near Buckingham Palace, for six months. The Roll of Honour of Sikhs who died in the two wars includes 83,005 names; 109,045 others were wounded. Sikh units fought with distinction on the German and Turkish fronts in the 1914-18 war, and in Europe, Africa and Burma between 1939 and 1945. Thousands won awards, ten of them the Victoria Cross – Britain's highest award for gallantry.

During the First World War, Sikhs made up over 20% of the British Indian Army, despite being only 2% of the population. At the end of the Second World War the British Indian Army had a total strength of 2.5 million, and again the Sikhs made up a disproportionately large part of it. They were regarded as the mainstay of the undivided Indian Army.

The exhibition at the Wellington Arch seeks to convey the story of how the Sikhs fought for the Allies and for freedom and won glory in doing so. Six million photographs stored in the archives of the Imperial War Museum were sifted through to find those most telling. Together with video presentations, they provide a fascinating insight into a sector of military history that is not widely appreciated.

The exhibition, said Prince Charles, "does demonstrate graphically the extent of the relationship there was between the Sikhs and this country, and the sacrifice made by so many in the two world wars."

The preservation of that relationship is one of the aims of the *Maharajah Duleep Singh Centenary Trust*, whose initiative lies behind the exhibition. The Trust was formed to mark the centenary of the passing of the last Sikh monarch,



Prince Charles
opens
Exhibition
Honouring
Sikh Soldiers
of the
Two World Wars

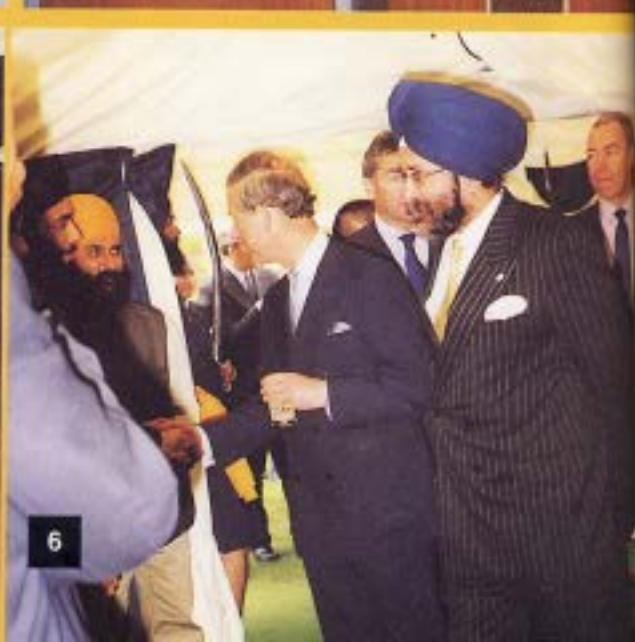
who came to Britain as a youth following annexation of the Sikh kingdom by the British in 1849 and lived the remainder of his life in this country, becoming a well known figure in British society. The Trust's main aim is to promote an appreciation of the heritage shared by Britain and by the Sikhs; the exhibition is one of several initiatives on its agenda.

The settings of the photographs range from Gallipoli, Mesopotamia and the battlefields of the Somme and Flanders in the First World War, to Burma and the Middle Eastern and Western Fronts in the Second. It is intended that the exhibition will tour the U.K. in 2003. The photographs will help to keep the memory of those soldiers, and their heroism against all odds, alive. As General Sir Frank Messervy said: 'Finally, we that live can never forget those comrades who, in giving their lives, gave so much that is good to the story of the Sikh Regiment. No living glory can transcend that of their supreme sacrifice. May they rest in peace.'

There is close co-operation between the *Trust* and the *Victoria and Albert Museum*, where there is a special Sikh Heritage Desk. The Museum houses many exhibits reflecting the Sikhs and Sikhism, notably the golden throne of Ranjit Singh, founder of the Sikh kingdom. *English Heritage*, whose function is to promote an appreciation of England's past, also works closely with the *Trust*, and the exhibition opened by Prince Charles provided an excellent platform for the Imperial War Museum which exists to commemorate Britain's part in the two world wars of the twentieth century.

Within 200 yards of the Wellington Arch, work is near complete on the Memorial Gates which are to commemorate the part played by troops from Commonwealth countries - mainly troops of the sub-continent - in the two World Wars. Straddling Constitution Hill, which runs alongside the gardens of Buckingham Palace, these will be opened later this year as part of the celebrations to mark the Golden Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II.

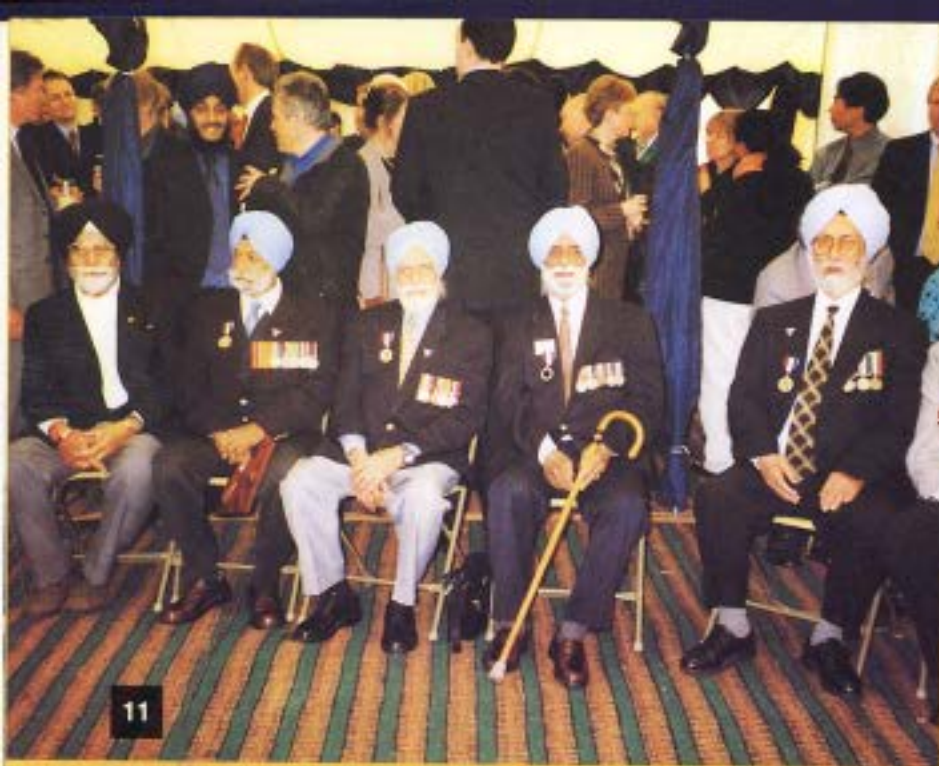
May 1st 2002



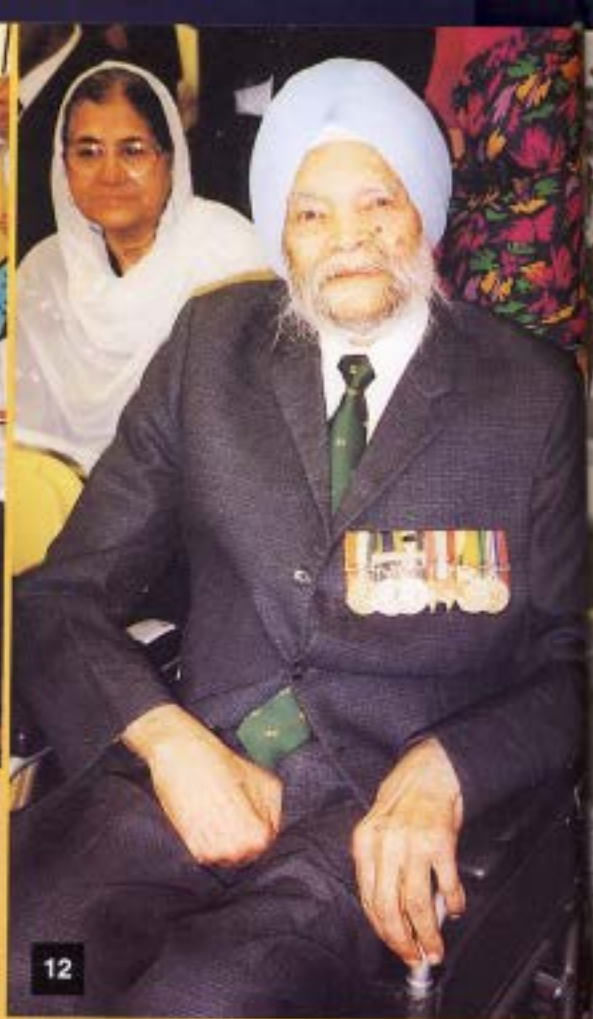


May 1st 2002

1. *The Wellington Arch, one of London's most distinctive landmarks.*
2. *The Exhibition, "From Jawans to Generals" inside the monument.*
3. *Thousands of visitors, both British and from abroad, continuously visit the Exhibition.*
4. *English Heritage organised the continuous showing of the film "Khalsa 300", produced by The Nagaura Trust (publishers of the Nishaan).*
5. *HRH The Prince of Wales arrives to inaugurate the Exhibition*
6. *.... escorted by Harbinder Singh Rana of the Maharaja Duleep Singh Centenary Trust.*
7. *Amongst the special invitees was Navninder Kaur Sunray-Roots of the Kent Constabulary.*
8. *The eminent industrialist of London, Kartar Singh Lalvani.*
9. *Khalsa Warrior on guard duty at the special reception.*
10. *Sardar Indarjit Singh OBE and Dr.Kamwaljit Kaur with distinguished Members of Parliament and the Defence Ministry.*



11



12



13



14

- 11. *Highly decorated Sikh war veterans at the reception.*
- 12. *The venerable Lt.Col. Asa Singh Johal, now in his 90s, who was with the 2nd Royal Sikhs during the campaign in Italy during 1944-45.*
- 13. *S.Kuldip Singh playing the santoor with Surinder Singh Atwal on the tabla.*
- 14. *Sikhs of the British Army today : Warrant Officer Makand Singh (left) and Lt.Amupreet Singh Amole of the Territorials.*



15

World War Two

15. *Prime Minister Winston Churchill greets JCOs of the 3 /11 Sikhs (45th Rattay's) who formed the Guard of Honour at the Allied Summit Conference in Tehran in 1943.*
16. *With camouflaged netting on their turbans, Sikh troops train for war.*
17. *Naik Nand Singh of the 1/11Sikhs (XIV King George V's Own) was awarded the Victoria Cross for incredible gallantry in Burma, 1944. Seen here is the welcome home by his mother and sisters.*



16



17



May 2nd to November 3rd 2002 Wellington Arch, London

A programme of gallery talks and Sikh swordsmanship displays accompanies the exhibition. Call Wellington Arch for more details.



Wellington Arch, Hyde Park Corner, London W1J 7JZ. Telephone: 020 7930 2725

Nearest tube: Hyde Park Corner, adjacent

Opening Times: Wed-Sun & Bank Holidays, 10am-6pm (5pm Oct, 4pm Nov)

Admission: Adults £2.50, Concessions £1.90, Children £1.30

Facilities: Access to all floors via lift

A project of the Maharajah Duleep Singh Centenary Trust
"Bringing History & Cultures Together"

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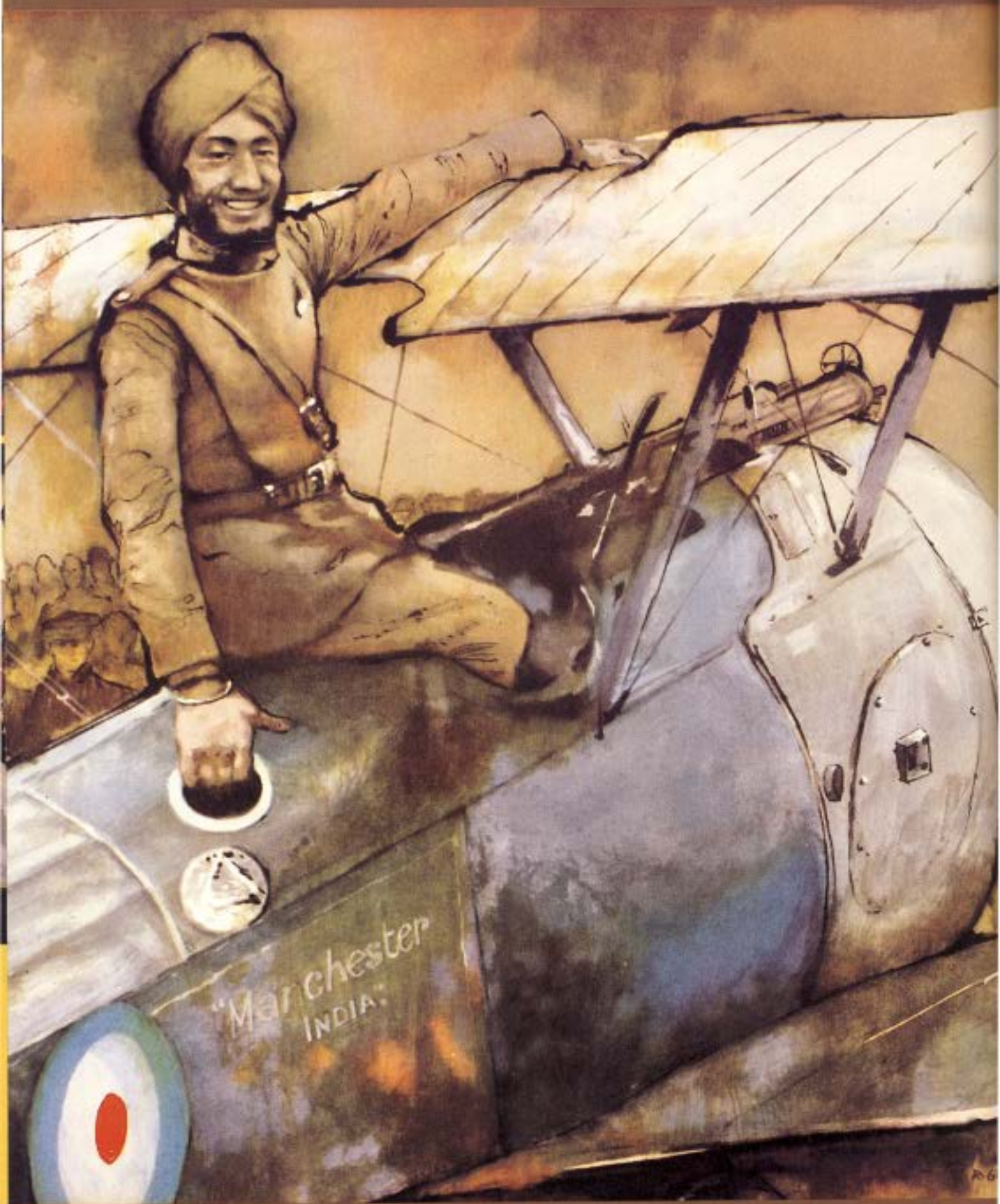


ARMY
OF THE BEST



BRITISH
MUSEUM





Hardit Singh Malik and Sopwith Camel: Painting by R. Goswami.



*With President
Coty of France
after receiving the
Legion d' Honneur,
Paris 1956.*

A Many Splendoured Life

Sardar Hardit Singh Malik

Soldier and sportsman, administrator and statesman, scholar and diplomat, Sardar Hardit Singh Malik CIE, OBE, ICS was one of the most accomplished and versatile of Indian public men of his times.

He was born on November 23, 1894 at Rawalpindi where he received part of his early education. When he was 14, he was sent to the English public school Eastbourne College and in 1912 passed out with the highest honours in the classical languages (Greek and Latin). Later he went to Oxford and in 1915 graduated with honours in modern history. During his scholastic days in England he captained the cricket team at Eastbourne College and represented Oxford University at both cricket and golf.

World War One broke out when he was only 20. In 1916 he served with the French Army on the Western Front, and subsequently joined the Royal Flying Corps (which later became

the Royal Air Force) and saw operational service in France with the famous No. 28 Squadron. Wounded in air combat over France he returned to England and later served with No.141 Squadron at Biggin Hill for the air defence of London. (See accompanying article on his flying years with the Royal Flying Corps during the Great War).

After the war he entered the prestigious Indian Civil Service (ICS) and served in the Punjab from 1922 to 1930 as Assistant Commissioner and later as Deputy Commissioner.

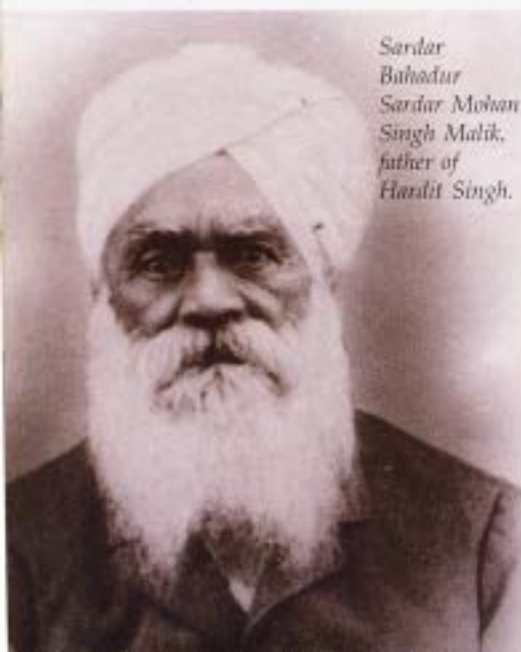
In 1931 he was appointed Deputy Trade Commissioner in the Office of the High Commissioner for India in London and served there till 1933. After serving for a year as India's Trade



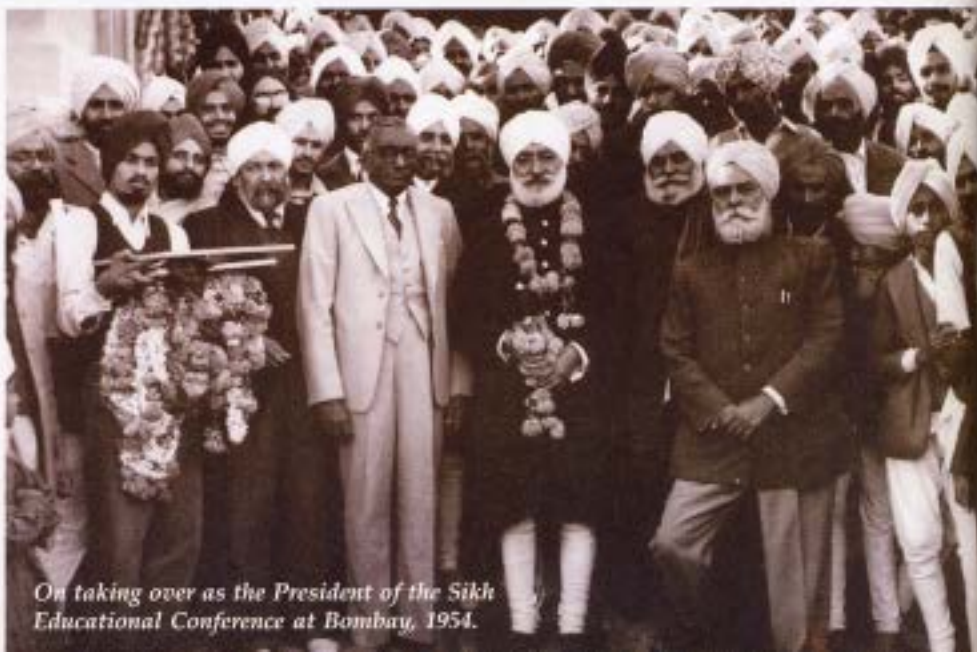
H.S. Malik (right), with wife Prakash and brother I.S. Malik, at Oxford, 1920.



As High Commissioner to Canada, during the Trade Fair at Ottawa, 1948.



Sardar Bahadur Sardar Mohan Singh Malik, father of Hardit Singh.



On taking over as the President of the Sikh Educational Conference at Bombay, 1954.

Commissioner in Hamburg he returned to India to become Deputy Secretary in the Commerce Department.

Three years later he was promoted to Joint Secretary and, in 1938, was sent abroad again as India's first Trade Commissioner to the USA and Canada. While there, he represented India at the International Cotton Conference at Washington, the International Labour Conference, New York, the U.N. Food Conference at Hot Springs, Virginia and the UNRRA Conference at Atlantic City in the USA (1943). He also represented the Government of India at the first and second sessions of the U.N. Preparatory Committee on trade and employment in Havana. In 1949 he was a member of the Indian delegation to the U.N. General Assembly.

Sardar Hardit Singh Malik, who was also an

accomplished administrator of Princely India, was from 1944 to 1947, the Prime Minister of Patiala State. In this capacity he brought about many administrative reforms, thus paving the way for the State's seamless integration with the Union.

As leader of the Indian States Industrial Delegation to the U.K., the USA and Canada he rendered signal service by establishing valuable contacts with industrial magnates and laid the foundation for industrialisation projects in the States. Himself an ideal "public relations man", he foresaw early the importance of public relations and created the Directorate of Public Relations in Patiala, the first of its kind amongst the States of India.

His early association with the French and his ability to speak their language fluently stood him in good stead



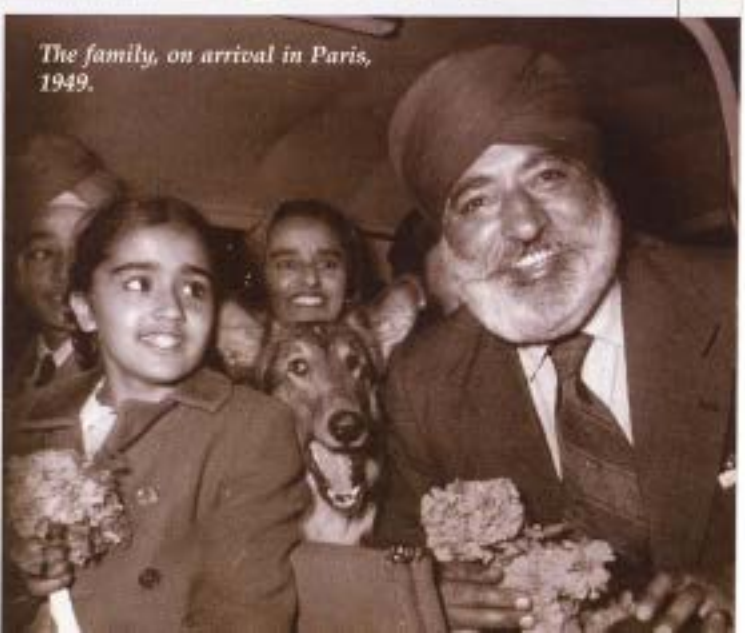
As Prime Minister of Patiala State, with Maharaja Yadvindra Singh at the Fort, 1944.



The family: Hardit Singh, daughter Harji, wife Prakash, daughter Veena and son Harmala.



Bombay, 1954.



The family, on arrival in Paris, 1949.

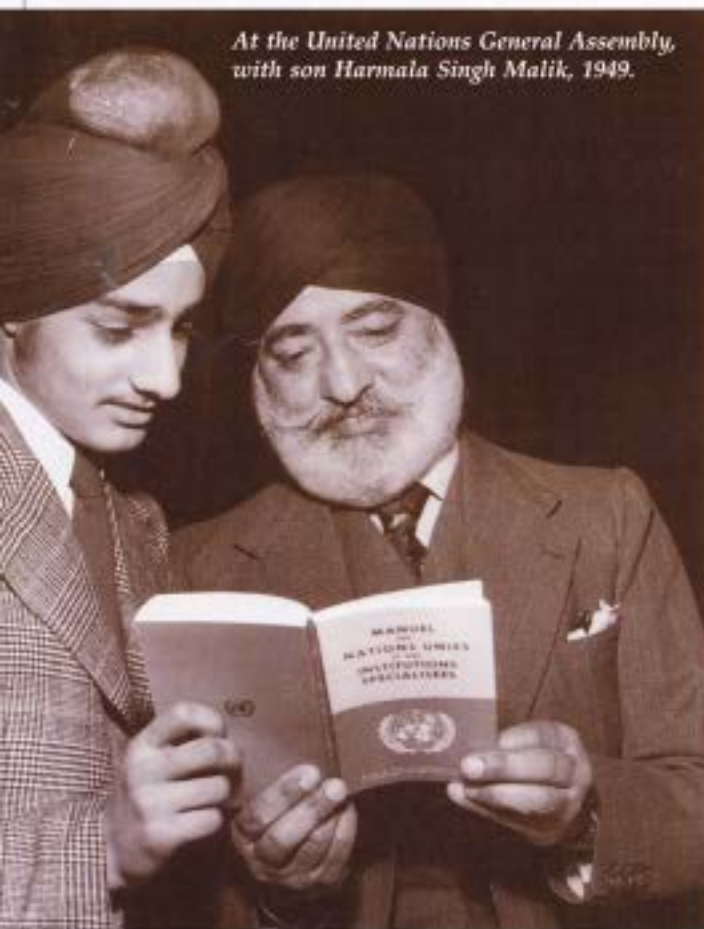
when he was appointed as India's High Commissioner in bi-lingual Canada (August 1947-July 1949) and later, when he was Ambassador to France.

Hardit Singh Malik's was a very splendoured life, and after retirement he spent the last two decades of his life concerned with industrial developments in India and when he passed away at the age of 91, devotion to his faith—and the game of golf—remained paramount.

S.Khushwant Singh, writing about S.Hardit Singh

Hardit Singh Malik had been an ardent admirer of the Nehru's but his faith in the Nehru-Gandhi family was torn apart by the storming of the Golden Temple by India's Army in 1984. He was never the same man again and a mood of deep depression set in. By strange coincidence, he suffered a stroke the day Indira Gandhi was shot. At great risk from marauding groups out for Sikh blood, his son Mala took him to hospital. He passed away after a year, on the first anniversary of Mrs.Gandhi's end.

At the United Nations General Assembly, with son Harmala Singh Malik, 1949.



Malik after his passing in 1985, wondered "whether there were many people who packed so much in them in their lives as he did: played cricket and golf for Oxford University; enlisted in the French Foreign Legion; was the first Indian to fly fighters, became a fighter ace (9 victories); join the Indian Civil Service; become Prime Minister of Patiala State; High Commissioner to Canada; Ambassador to France; finally be one of the best golfers of India."

He was as handsome a Sikh one could see, and the most immaculately dressed. He was a connoisseur of good wines, gourmet cooking and, above all, a devoutly religious person.



Singing Shabads with Sardarni Prakash Kaur Malik.

S.Hardit Singh Malik's funeral was as unique as had been his life. At his wife's behest, the *ragi's* sang hymns of joy and hope, not of mourning. In the room where his body lay, Sardarni Prakash Kaur Malik prayed while the tape recorder played recitations from the Granth Sahib in Hardit Singh's own voice. When the funeral van moved out, there were triumphant *jaikars* of *Sat Sri Akal*.

When he was to be cremated, a golf club and golf ball were placed besides him. "If there are good golf courses in paradise, Sardar Hardit Singh Malik should be playing with the finest golfers, for infinity."

The autobiography of Sardar Hardit Singh Malik is being published shortly by his daughter Harji. Extracts from his memoirs are reproduced with permission of his family.

Air Warrior Extraordinaire

INDIA'S FIRST FIGHTER PILOT ACE

There are people who from their early childhood are interested in flying, making model planes etc. I can claim no such early interest unless a passion for flying kites along with the kite battles that went on, one kite diving on another, attempting to cut off the cord with the glass coated cord of one's kite, can ever be called an interest in flying. This passion I shared as a youngster with a number of my contemporaries during the kite flying season.

Certainly when I arrived in England, at the early age of 14 to enter school there, I had no thoughts of ever being a pilot myself, although, along with a lot of other people, I was fascinated by Louis Bleriot's crossing of the English Channel and seeing the monoplane in which he had achieved this historical landmark, exhibited at Selfridges, one of the big stores in London at that time.

When the First World War came in 1914 I was in my second year at Oxford. Practically all of my British colleagues who were physically fit volunteered to join the fighting services and it was not long before I also caught the fever. I had a strong feeling that this was going to be a unique adventure in which every young man should participate.

There was one problem which as an Indian I was immediately conscious of. This was said to be a war for freedom. How could I, a native of a country that was itself not free, engage in a struggle in which I might well lose my life when its outcome, one way or the other, would have no effect on my freedom since my country would continue to be under foreign rule? However, my wish to join my friends and fight alongside them got me over this hurdle.



After first solo flight in Avro 504.



Playing cricket for Oxford, 1914.

For an Indian student, however, getting into the war was not easy in those days. My attempts to get a commission in the fighting services as most of my British friends had done were not successful and all I was offered was a job as orderly in one of the hospitals in England where the wounded soldiers of the Indian Army who had joined the British Expeditionary Force were being looked after. This was not my idea of active service.

Eventually, with the help of my tutor at Balliol, "Sligger" Urquhart who was also a good friend I succeeded in getting out to France as an ambulance driver with the rank of an officer in the French Red Cross.



Golf at Oxford, 1915.



As ambulance driver with French Red Cross, 1916.

It was during this period of service on the Western Front that I made up my mind that I would be a fighting pilot. The exploits of Guynemer the famous French pilot who was worshipped by the French as a great national hero and who seemed to be like a Knight in shining armour of the days of my boyhood when I was fascinated by Henty's Tales of Chivalry and Romance, thrilled me and fired my imagination. I was determined to fly.

As luck would have it, I was able, by pestering some of my French friends whom I got to know at that time, to arrange for admission to the French Air Force as a Volunteer. In the meantime I had kept up regular correspondence with "Sligger" who had got me into the French Red Cross and when he heard of the possibility of my being taken into the French Air Force he called on General Henderson, who was commanding the Royal Flying Corps at that time and who was a friend of his, and expressed his indignation at the possibility of my being taken into the French Air Force when I, as a British subject should by all rights be in the Royal Flying Corps (RFC).

General Henderson was over and I was before long called to London for a personal interview with him. To my great delight and



French Nursing Staff with ambulance.



Hardit and ambulance at the Front.



With the Royal Flying Corps.

excitement the General, after a brief interview offered me a cadetship in the R.F.C. as soon as I could secure my release from the French Red Cross. This did not take long and early in 1917 I joined the R.F.C. as a cadet. It seemed almost like a dream and I shall never forget the thrill of putting on the prestigious uniform—the famous old "maternity jacket"—for the first time!

All the excitement was dampened somewhat by my start as a Cadet at Aldershot. The camp in which we cadets were located to start our life in the R.F.C., military drill and exercises with which I was already familiar during my cadet's life in the Officers Training Corps at school—P.T. early morning etc.—had been hastily organized and was most inadequate. We slept on the floor, on mattresses, there were no washing facilities indoors and we had to wash in the early morning with ice cold water from the taps outside our barracks. As it was bitterly cold, there were quite a few pneumonia cases, some fatal, as this was the pre-penicillin era.

I have often been asked if as a Sikh - with my *keshas* and turban - I did not have problems in the R.F.C. Well, on my very first parade the Sergeant Major in charge of the parade pulled me out of the ranks and said "Why are you not wearing a hat? You are not in uniform". I tried to explain that as a Sikh with my long hair I had to wear a turban and this was a part of my uniform. He would have none of it and



At Vendome in central France, flying the Sopwith Pup.

would have ordered me off parade, but, fortunately for me, the Adjutant who was watching the parade, noticing the incident, came up. I explained the position to him and he told me and the Sergeant Major to carry on adding that the matter would have to be referred to the War Office. Presumably the War Office gave me a special dispensation as I heard no more about it.

The only other problem of this nature that cropped up was over the question of my flying helmet. This was very important in those days of open cockpits and I got over this one by having a specially large one made to fit over my turban.

I confess that while I thoroughly enjoyed the period of preliminary training, first at Aldershot - despite the physical discomfort already referred to - and later at Reading, learning all about the theory of flight and rigging etc. of the flying machines of those days which were mostly wood fabric and wire and about aero engines, and realised that all this was basically essential, I was impatient actually to get into the air.

I did not have long to wait, for on the successful completion of my course at Reading I was posted to the Preliminary Flying Training Station at Vendome in central France which was run by the R.N.A.S. (the Royal Naval Air Service) but where both R.F.C. and R.N.A.S. cadets did their preliminary flying.

It was here that the cadets were sorted out, those who were considered fit to fly the single seater fighters of those days, the Sopwith "Camel", the Sopwith "Pup", the S.E.5 etc. which required a lighter touch and more skilful handling than the heavier machines, the R.E.8 etc. mostly

used for artillery observation and others. The heavier-handed pilots whose reflexes were supposed to be slower were put in this category while those who failed in the various tests were declared unfit for flying and relegated to ground duties. All these of course had their important roles to play in war but human nature being what it is, the fighter pilots were considered the elite in a Corps which itself was considered elite.

Great was my delight therefore when, after successfully going through the various tests I was put into the first category and picked for further training as a fighter pilot. I was fortunate in picking up the knack of flying an aeroplane very quickly - being allowed to go "solo" after only 2½ hours "dual" - and what a thrill, truly unforgettable, it was to be allowed to go up alone to pilot the "Caudron" in which I had received my dual instruction for the first time.

The time at Vendome was comparatively short, only a month or so, but very enjoyable as the Loire country in which Vendome lies is very beautiful and I was a member of a small group who became close friends as we had been together at Reading. Besides I thoroughly enjoyed the flying and happy that I had taken to it so easily.

I was fortunate in having as my Instructor a man who not only took a real interest in his pupils but became a good friend and it was due to his special interest that I learnt to pilot a plane so quickly. His name was Carr and he later came out to India as Air Officer Commanding the R.A.F. there.

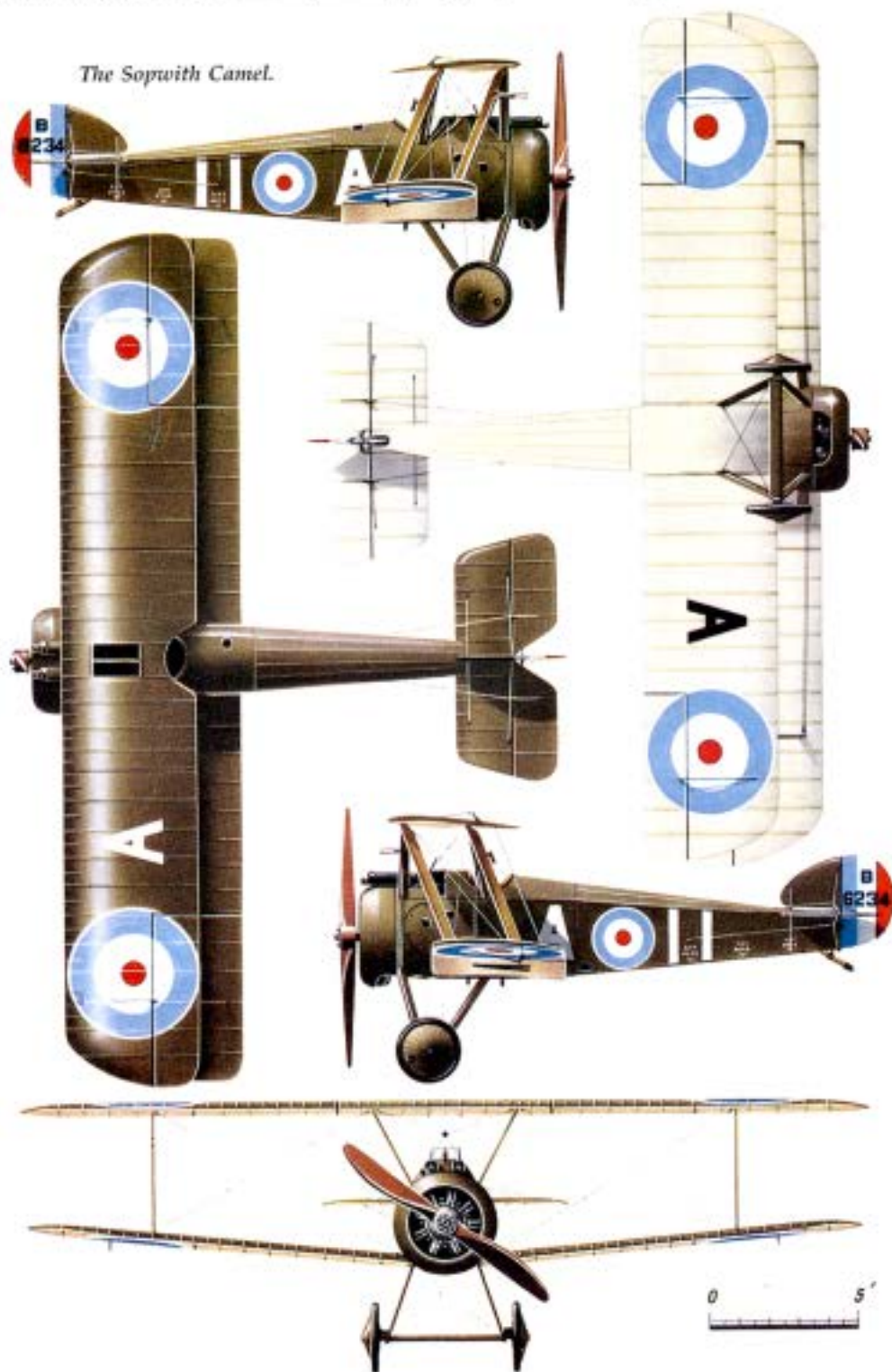
At my next posting which was at Filton near Bristol, well known as the location of the Bristol Aircraft Co. who

brought out the well known "Bristol Fighter", probably the best fighter plane, on either side, in the closing months of the war and which I had the good luck to pilot in France in 1918 with No.11 Squadron. Again I was fortunate in having an excellent Instructor, a regular Army officer who had joined the R.F.C., Captain Chadwick who also became a good friend. Here at Filton we had our secondary flying and our preliminary training as fighter pilots. Starting with B.E.2C's which had a stationary engine and was a stable plane, we learnt to fly the unstable planes with rotary engines. Beginning with the Avro 504 which was the most popular training plane at that time for fighter pilots we moved on to planes like the Sopwith "Pup" the "Nieuport" and so on, ending up with the Sopwith "Camel" the most sophisticated fighter plane at that time—and the trickiest to fly.

At Filton we were taught aerobatics, the famous "Immelmann" turn named after the renowned German ace, looping the loop, rolling, spinning, steep diving etc., all of which were so vital for the fighter pilot of those days whose life literally depended on his ability to manoeuvre his plane. Under Chadwick's expert and sympathetic instruction I soon got the knack of flying these sensitive planes and doing aerobatics in them and I won my "wings" and became a full-fledged pilot inside a month of my posting at Filton.

It so happened that Berkeley Castle, one of the most famous country homes in England and the seat of Lord Berkeley whom I had known during my Oxford days and who had become a good friend was only about 40 miles or so from Filton and I wanted as soon as I felt I could handle a plane properly to give my friends a surprise and arrive there by plane. So one fine day I flew over the castle in my B.E.2C and landed it in the meadow near the castle as of course there was no recognised landing ground there. Soon after I landed, Lord Berkeley and his step-

The Sopwith Camel.



daughter turned up and it was not long before a crowd of people including the Mayor of the village of Berkeley complete with ceremonial top hat arrived. There was much excitement as no plane had ever landed there and much friendly interest. I could not linger too long however as my landing there was completely unauthorised and I felt if I stayed too long I would get into trouble with my Instructor. So, I persuaded one of the villagers who said he thought he could do it to "swing" my propeller which one had to do to start the engine of a plane in those days before the age of self-starters just as one had to start an automobile by "cranking" the engine, and saying good-bye to my friends, took off and flew back to Filton. Chadwick was waiting anxiously for me as I was long overdue and asked me what had happened. I told him I had lost my way. However, there was some hay on my tail skid, which he spotted and he said "I see that you had a forced landing in an hay-field." I then told him about my escapade. He pretended to be very angry with me but I was able to pacify him and eventually persuaded him to come with me on my next visit



Twin-engine fighter on the Western Front.

which he did and we had a very pleasant cup of tea at Berkeley castle with Lord Berkeley and his stepdaughter. Chadwick who himself came from a good family thoroughly appreciated the visit to this historic place redolent with the memories of Edward the Second (who was murdered there) and Queen Elizabeth I who stayed at the time when Sir Francis Drake lived there.

From Filton I moved on to Yatesbury where after further flying various kinds of "Scouts" as the single seater fighter planes were called we finally formed a Sopwith "Camel" Squadron, No. 28, and it was from here that we flew out to France. We were stationed at an airfield in Flanders near the village of Droglant. This was really a marsh as most of the land in Flanders is which had been made into an airfield by putting cinder tracks on it. As the field was comparatively small, landing on these cinder tracks was quite tricky, but most of us knew how to handle our "Camels" and had no difficulty. It was a different story however when a Squadron of D.H.4s which were heavier, and ran more after landing than a "Camel" did. The first four planes ran into the hedge at the end of the runway and the plan to have the D.H. 4 squadron stationed at Droglant was abandoned.

In No. 28 Squadron the only pilot who had any active service was our C.O. Major Glanville, a nice enough person but very shy and retiring, certainly not the man to command a fighter squadron. The role of leader in our Squadron was soon taken over by Barker, a Canadian, who had served in the Infantry in France and then changed over to the R.F.C. Barker made it his business to master flying and particularly the business of aerial warfare. He became a first class pilot, complete master of his aeroplane and spent days and nights studying enemy planes, their performance, their manoeuvrability, the tactics of German fighter pilots like Immeleman and Richtofen. Realising the vital importance of shooting in the air, by sheer hard work and perseverance he made himself a first class shot. He ended up, I believe, as the most successful fighting pilot of all who fought in the First World War both in the Allied Forces and the enemy, having won the Victoria Cross, the D.S.O. with three Bars, the M.C. with three bars, the D.F.C. and various foreign decorations.

Barker was my flight commander and initiated me into the art of aerial combat. A great many pilots were shot down very early in their careers through sheer inexperience. Many never saw the enemy plane until they were hit and I was fortunate in being guided during my first flights over the lines by Barker who would fly close to me and often indicate by pre-arranged signals, as there was no such thing as aerial telephoning in those early days where enemy planes were and which direction they were coming from.

I recollect during one of these early flights that Barker signalled to me and before I realised what had happened saw a Fokker diving on Barker and opening fire but before he got within shooting range Barker did a climbing turn and got on to the tail of the diving German shooting him down in flames. It all happened in a few seconds, almost before I realised what was going on.

On another occasion our Squadron joined up with two other squadrons to do a massive patrol against the German fighter squadrons posted across the lines not far from us including Richtofen's - the legendary *Red Baron* - who had been playing havoc with our artillery observation planes and balloons. It was an unforgettable sight when our three squadrons, 54 planes in all, Sopwith Camels, S.E.5s, Sopwith Two Seaters, assembled to cross over to

the German lines. We soon ran into the enemy fighters and a regular dog fight ensued. In such a battle in those days each pilot had to look after himself and I soon found myself engaged in combat with a German Fokker. I was able to get into a position finally to dive on him and shoot him down. During the excitement of the combat, however, I had lost nearly 6000 ft of height without knowing it, and after the German went down I looked around for the rest of our formation. Not a plane to be seen! I became rather anxious, but then I looked up and saw a lot of our planes. Barker, after the battle, looked around for our planes, some of which had been shot down, and spotted me five or six thousand feet below. He brought the entire formation down to where I was, thus probably saving my life because alone in enemy country with plenty of German planes around, my chances of survival would have rather dim. This indeed was one of the ways in which the inexperienced lost their lives.

Barker who became a good friend, was associated with probably the most vital and unforgettable experience of my life. The incident is well worth describing in some detail.

We had had a spell of very bad weather, preventing all flying and as happens at such times we were all feeling rather bored and restless. In those days without any navigational aids except the compass and one's own sense of direction and observation we did no flying when the sky was completely clouded and visibility at 1000 ft or less was practically nil. Barker got particularly impatient and, weather or no weather, had made up his mind to fly. He told the C.O. that even in the prevailing bad weather he felt that he could find his way to Richtofen's Squadron who were just across the lines from us and his plan was to fly over there with three other pilots, who would volunteer to go with him, and shoot up the Germans. Glanville told Barker that he was crazy and categorically refused to give his permission. Barker, however, persisted and he was finally able to persuade Glanville to call up Headquarters and see if the General would give permission. The General who knew Barker said that he had no objection to Barker's plan.

Three of us, Fenton, Cooper and I volunteered to go with Barker and almost immediately on taking off in our respective Camels we flew into thick cloud and as planned started to fly a compass course to the German airfield. I kept as close as I dared to Barker but we lost touch both with Fenton and Cooper. Barker and I realised that we were lost when we suddenly flew into a clear patch of sky in the clouds. A large number of German planes had flown into the same gap and before we knew what had happened

we were engaged in a dogfight. We were completely outnumbered of course and both of us, I am sure, felt that we had had it. However, there was no time for such thoughts as I saw a German coming straight for me with his machine guns blazing. I fired back at him but we both missed. At the same time I felt a sting in the lower part of my right leg and smelt petrol which meant that the main tank, which was below my seat, had been pierced. At the same time the German who had hit me continued in his dive - foolishly - and presented an easy target. I automatically pressed both the triggers of my Vickers guns and riddled him with bullets and he went down in flames. At the same time my engine began to splutter and I realised that there was no longer any petrol coming from my main tank which fed the engine by pressure and which had been shot through. (It was discovered later that the two bullets which had lodged in the lower part of my right leg must have come through the tank and it was a lucky break for me that they had come through the lower part which still had some petrol because if they had come through the petrol vapour in the upper part of the tank the plane would have caught fire and that of course would have been the end).

I realised immediately that my chances of survival were dim. I was about 40 miles over the lines in enemy territory, crippled, as without my pressure tank I could not do a climbing turn (so important in those days for aerial combat), completely isolated and exposed both to attack from the air and from the ground as I had to fly very low. At the same time I was not sure if I had enough fuel to be able to fly the distance to our lines. I felt sure that I would either be killed or taken prisoner. Almost immediately four German fighter planes caught up with me and began shooting at my Sopwith Camel one after the other. They hit my plane several times but never hit me nor any vital part of my plane (afterwards it was reported that my plane had over 400 bullet marks on it!) I was scared at first but after the first few minutes when I felt the bullets hit the plane or ricochet over my head after hitting the wooden part of the plane immediately behind my head, I felt absolutely calm as if I was protected somehow and would not be shot down.

In due course the four planes left me, having presumably exhausted their supply of ammunition and I continued my "hedge hopping" westwards, being shot at and shooting such objects as I could spot on the ground, trucks, camps, groups of troops etc.

Great was my relief when I saw the Zillebake lake, a familiar landmark just on our side of the lines. And, just as I saw this, my engine began to splutter showing that my fuel supply had given up. I landed almost immediately

and as that part of the front was nothing but craters and shell holes, the result of constant fighting in the same area over about three years, I crashed without, however, hurting myself. I must have fainted however because I had been bleeding from my leg wound for about 45 minutes and the only thing I remember after the crash was lying in a stretcher by the side of my plane along with some other wounded soldiers, mostly Canadians.

There was an amusing sequel to this incident because when I rejoined my Squadron about four months later, after recovering from my wounds, I saw the report that Barker, who had got back unhurt from this escapade, had submitted which was almost identical with the report I had sent in from hospital. Both reports, after describing the flight ended up "The last I saw of Malik (Barker's report)/ Barker (my report) was that he was surrounded by Huns, fighting like hell, but I did not think there was any chance of his getting back"!

This miraculous escape (for I should have been killed a hundred times) had a profound effect on my subsequent life as it convinced me that we die only when our time has come and this bred in me a kind of fearlessness, a most valuable asset in dealing with such crisis as I had to often in my subsequent careers.

The R.F.C., later the R.A.F., were unique in one respect in those days among the fighting services. Discipline there was, of course, because without that no Service can survive but there was comparatively little "hot air" and "red tape" associated with the older fighting services and so long as one did one's job, much was overlooked.

I had two vivid experiences of this. The first occasion was in the early summer of 1918 when I was with the famous No. 151 "Bristol Fighters" Squadron at Biggin Hill, my C.O. Squadron Leader (later Air Marshal retired) Brian Baker put me in charge of a flight of our planes that were being flown over to replace the planes lost at that time through some intensive bombing by the Germans. We flew over to St. Omer in northern France as per our instructions and handed over our planes. While waiting to fly back to England by the ferry plane, which was to fly me and my fellow pilots back we saw the transport, a large Handley-Page come in and land but we did not like the way the pilot handled the plane. After consulting the other pilots with me I informed the C.O. that we would not fly with that particular pilot. He was very angry and threatened to take action against me for insubordination. I persisted, however, and he finally arranged, under protest, to have us go back by a ferry boat which was fortunately available. As I was in charge of our little party the C.O. at St. Omer had no control over me. He knew it and I knew it and that was why he could do nothing.

When we got back to Biggin Hill, however, Baker told me that I was to consider myself under arrest as these were the orders he had received from the General Commanding the area, who had no doubt received the report from the C.O. at St.



At Biggin Hill, for the air defence of London in 1918.

Omer. And then Baker added with a twinkle in his eye "Technically you are under arrest but you can go away for a week and do what you like, for news has just come in that the Handley Page you were supposed to fly back in, crashed on landing at Lympne (in England) and every one on it was killed. Thank God you refused to fly with that pilot!" I spent that week of my "arrest" very pleasantly with some old friends.

The other example of getting away with a breach of discipline was after the armistice in November 1918 when I was posted with No. 11, Squadron again a "Bristol Fighter" Squadron at Nivelles near Brussels. As the war was over, flying was severely restricted and we were ordered to fly only when it was necessary for testing etc. We were all rather restless at this forced idleness and I got the brilliant idea of using this opportunity to visit an old friend of mine whom I had known in the old days at Eastbourne. She was the daughter of a great Alsatian patriot who died in a German prison during the war and she also had been persecuted by the Germans for her strong condemnation of German behaviour towards the Alsatis. For her courage she had been awarded the *Croix de Guerre*, a rare decoration for a civilian, particularly a woman, by the President of France.

When I asked my C.O. for leave to fly over to Colmar where my friend lived some two and a half hours flight from Nivelles, Heath said "No I can't let you fly, but you can have as much leave as you want and go by train".

As a journey by train from Nivelles to Colmar at that time was completely impracticable I foolishly made up my mind to fly, whatever the consequences. And, at the earliest opportunity, on the excuse of testing my plane I took off and headed due south for Colmar! All would have been well if the flight had succeeded. I could have flown to Colmar and got back after seeing my friend, saying I had lost my way and nothing would have been said.

Unfortunately however one of the oil pipes in my engine broke and I had to come down when I was only about half an hour from my destination. To cut a long story short I was able to hand over my damaged machine to the R.A.F. at Nancy and so got back to my Squadron after about ten days absence without leave mainly by getting lifts from various people.



*RFC reunion, caricature of the World War One "greats".
(Hardit Singh Malik on top wing).*

I fully expected to be court-martialled for having deliberately disobeyed the General orders and particularly my C.O.'s instructions and was reconciled to this mentally as I knew I deserved to be punished.

However, Heath, my C.O. was absolutely wonderful about it. He pretended to be very angry with me but no action was taken and I am sure that he must have persuaded the General to overlook this lapse on my part in the spirit "Well the lad has done his bit in the war so what the hell, the war is over anyhow. Forget it!" Talk about being magnanimous!

What about racial feeling? From what I have already written it will be clear that I was not the victim of any racial feeling. My fellow officers, superiors and also the airmen, mechanics, riggers etc. who worked under me never showed any signs of racial prejudice. I got

along very well with them and I believe that on the whole they respected me for being loyal to my own faith and traditions.

The only exception was an incident when I was serving with No. 11 Squadron in the summer and autumn of 1918. Among the pilots in this Squadron was a South African. Previously I had known a number of South Africans and got along well with them. One or two of them had particularly become good friends. This man, however, was a thoroughly unpleasant fellow, foul-mouthed, dirty, obscene, a thoroughly nasty piece of work. When I joined the Squadron, he was often heard speaking about "natives" being in the R.A.F. One night, in mess when we were all at dinner, he made a very rude remark about me which was heard all over the room. Before there could be any reaction to this, my observer "Jock" Crighton jumped across the table, got hold of him by the neck saying "Apologise, you bastard, or I will wring your neck!" He apologised and I had no further trouble. Our C.O., Major Heath, realising that this man was a misfit, had him transferred immediately.

The other incident was of a different kind. After the war I got 8 months leave and came back to India with the intention of joining the R.A.F. in India at the end of my leave. Among the officers on the military transport on which I was travelling was a Captain Keene of, I think, the 28th Punjabis. We became quite friendly and one day after he had had several drinks he said to me "Malik, I advise you not to serve in the R.A.F. in India". I was taken aback by this remark and asked him to explain himself. He said "You know we don't want Indians in the R.A.F. All the mechanics and riggers in the Squadron will be Britishers and one fine day you will find that your plane will break up in the air and that will be the end of you."

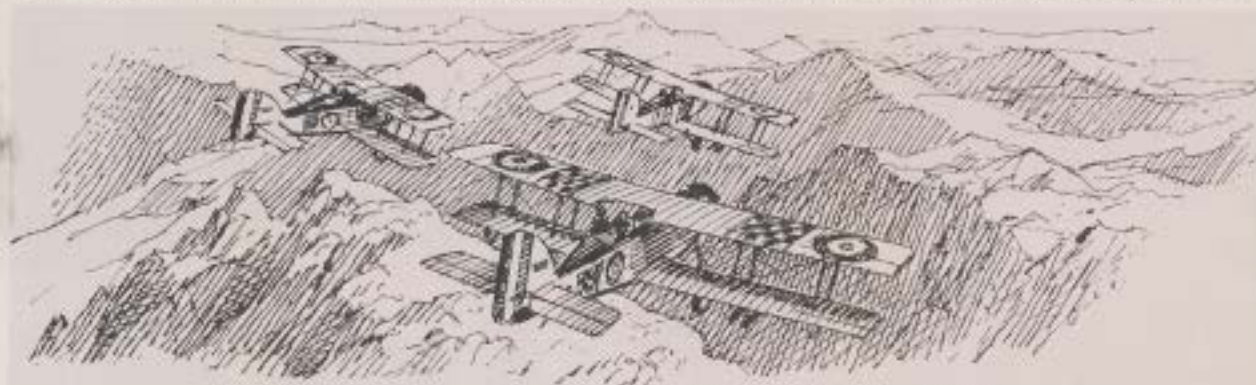
In those days, of course, the Indians in the Indian Army were only in the Infantry and Cavalry.

I was furious at what Keene had said particularly as I realised that he was being sincere and friendly, and I was determined more than ever to stay on in the R.A.F. However, I could never try this out as soon after I returned to India, I got married and decided to get out of the R.A.F. and get into the Indian Civil Service.

THE TRADITION ESTABLISHED



The very first aeroplanes in India, actually Asia, were the three brought in to Patiala by Maharaja Bhupinder Singh, in 1910



Air patrol over the North West Frontier : Flying Officer "Babu" Mehar Singh leads Wapiti IIA army co-operation biplanes of "A" Flight, Indian Air Force in 1936



Patrolling the western shorelines of India from Juhu airstrip in Bombay all along the Malabar coast in 1940, de Havilland Dominie flown by Flt. Lt. Shivdeo Singh, later to become Air Marshal and Vice Chief of Air Staff.



Flt. Offr. Prithipal Singh in Lysander army co-operation aircraft, improvised as a bomber, attacking Japanese shipping in Rangoon dockyards, 1942

THE TRADITION CONTINUED

In dramatic contrast with the flying gear of World War One and now kitted as the 21st Century air warrior, this Sikh fighter pilot is seen with MiG-23MF swing-wing air defence fighter, capable of speeds twice that of sound.



(Above): Flg. Offr. Murat Singh returning from a sortie in Vultee Vengeance dive bomber during the Arakan campaign in Burma, May 1944

(Above middle): Sqn Ldr. Dalip Singh of No. 4 Squadron with Hurricane Mk.IIC in the Burma campaign.

(Above right): Air Chief Marshal Dillbagh Singh was Chief of Air Staff IAF during 1982-85 and had earlier raised and commanded the IAF's first Mystere IVA transonic and MiG-21 supersonic squadrons.



(Below): Squadron Commanders of the infant Indian Air Force meeting RAF station commander at Palam in late 1944. Shaking hands is Sqn.Ldr. Prithipal Singh on whose left are Mehar Singh, Arjan Singh and Surjit Singh Majithia commanding Nos. 3, 6, 1 and 2 Squadrons respectively.





(Far Left): Air Vice Marshal Surjit Singh Mulhotra commanded the IAF's premier VIP Communications Squadron for several years.



Air Commodore Iqbal Singh Bindra became a fighter ace in December 1971 when, flying a MiG-21, he shot down a F-104 Starfighter during air combat.



In the same tradition, Flt. Offr. Manjit Singh and his MiG-21 of the "Battleaxes" Squadron.



As Deputy Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Tirlachan Singh inspects No. 7 Squadron, with Mirage 2000 bi-sonic multi-role fighters.



(Above): The tradition goes on : Air Marshal Ranjit Singh Bedi with son, Flying Officer Sartaj Singh Bedi before flight in supersonic MiG-21U of No. 21 Squadron.

(Right): Sqn. Ldr. Baldev Singh is presently HAL's Chief Test Pilot, seen here with HAL's latest jet trainer, the HJT-36, whose first test flight is programmed for early 2003.



SPACE

IS THE LIMIT



An interview with BSNL's Chairman S. Prithipal Singh

Connecting India

Along with a new office address, Bharat Sanchar Nigam Ltd, the country's leading basic service operator, has also acquired a new chief. And the chosen one was none other than its very own home-grown Prithipal Singh. In a freewheeling session soon after he was appointed Chairman/MD, Prithipal Singh talked about the challenges he faces and his plans for BSNL. He also gave a glimpse into his personal life ...

For Prithipal Singh, being appointed CMD of BSNL - the corporate avatar of the erstwhile DTO and DTS, formed as part of the liberalisation process - was just a move out of the wings and on to centre stage. For, as Director Operations, he had already been spearheading all the operational activities of the corporate, the main focus of which was customer relationship.

An alumni of the Punjab Engineering College at Chandigarh (incidentally the current chairmen of MTNL and the Railway Board are also alumni of the same college), Prithipal Singh belongs to the 1965 batch of the Indian Telecom Services. He did not waste any time after completing his graduation in 1964 and appeared for the telecom services exam the same year so that he "would have age on his side".

During his career, Prithipal Singh has been exposed to different aspects of the telecom industry and in diverse areas of the country and abroad. From project management to maintenance, from materials management to consultancy services, Singh's responsibilities have kept growing with his professional ladder.

Prithipal Singh was one of those handpicked for a place on the board of directors when BSNL was formed on October 1, 2000. As Director Operations, Singh was given a clear mandate to improve the quality of telecom services in the country, to expand the telecom network, to introduce new telecom services in all the villages and instill confidence amongst its customers. To achieve this, during his tenure as director, emphasis was laid on customer satisfaction and customer service centres were

opened in each SDCA throughout the country; the number of ISDN connections almost doubled; there was focus on computerisation; and the concept of call centres was initiated. His recent appointment as the Chairman/Managing Director bears testimony to the fact that he has lived up to expectations.

In his new role, Prithipal Singh has a clear idea of what his mission for the company will be - to provide world-class telecom services on demand using state-of-the-art technology for customers at affordable prices. "Value addition is," Singh feels, "what customers are really looking out for."

Talking about trends in the telecom sector, Prithipal Singh says, "Telecom is the talk of the town. Telecom is something everyone wants and everyone talks about now." However, the popular perception of the people, that of getting better services at lower costs, he feels is very impractical and a grey area that needs to be made

Prithipal Singh,

Chairman & MD, BSNL

Prithipal Singh graduated in Electrical Engineering from the Punjab Engineering College, Chandigarh. He belongs to the 1965 batch of the Indian Telecommunications Service. He has held positions in all branches of the Department of Telecommunications such as project, maintenance, management of districts, material management and consultancy services. He has visited more than 40 countries all over the world during his tenure in T.C.I.L. and in various positions at the Department of Telecommunications. He carried out a prestigious project in Botswana, South Africa. He has worked as General Manager with Chandigarh Telephones where he introduced modern telecommunication facilities in the network in addition to bringing about telephones on demand. He was promoted to Principal General Manager, Chandigarh and later on promoted as Chief General Manager, Rajasthan Telecom Circle. He joined as Director (Operations) on the BSNL Board on 1st October, 2000. During his tenure, emphasis was laid on customer satisfaction and Customer Service Centres were opened in each SDCA throughout the country. ISDN connections were almost doubled during his tenure as Director (Operations). Computerisation was given the focus and the concept of "Call Centres" was also initiated.

S. Prithipal Singh took over as Chairman/Managing Director of the Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited on 1st April, 2002.

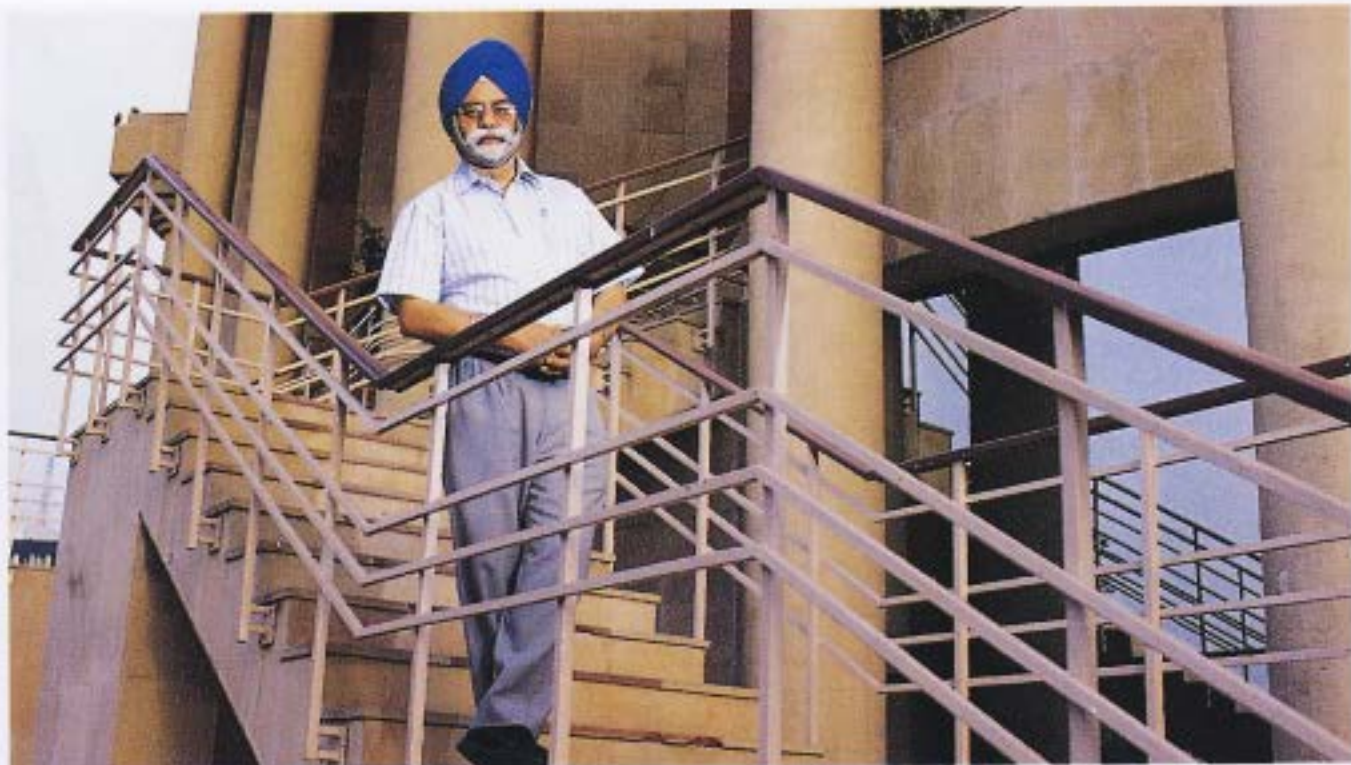


With Jagmohan, the Cabinet Minister for Tourism.

transparent. "We have to tell the people that everything has a cost attached to it and we, as a company, spend on whatever facility we offer. Gone are the days when the government granted subsidies."

A seasoned hand, Prithipal Singh is aware of all the macro issues too. "We have to keep in mind the regulations, the competition, and the challenges. There is immense competition out there, but we have the advantage of a vast network," he says. The need of the hour, Singh feels, is "to bring about a change in attitude, in mindset and to become more customer friendly." Equally important is the need to put procedures, which are commercially viable, in place. "Finally we all need to have healthy bottomlines." Of course, there are some areas such as rural telephony, which are very important yet not financially viable, that the government should subsidise, says Singh. For this, he has already initiated a dialogue with the government.

Prithipal Singh has ambitious plans for BSNL. This involves moving from fixed line telephony to wireless telephony, which would include both mobile telephony as well as limited mobility. According to the projections made by him, BSNL should add at least 2.4 million subscribers to its mobile services; around 1 million subscribers to its WLL services; and another 3 million or so to its fixed line services in the coming year. On the whole, he expects to be able to provide about 6-6.4 million new lines in 2002.



At the BSNL Head Quarters, in the "Statesman House", New Delhi.

In the urban areas, since the waiting list situation is almost over, Singh is planning to add new facilities in order to attract more users. In rural areas, where the waiting list is still long — over 1.5 million — he plans to clear the backlog so that by the end of the year telephones are available on demand.

What Singh would ideally want is an increase in usage. In his effort to induce people to "talk more", Singh has been instrumental in the setting up of more than 2,500 customer service centres in the country. He wants customers to have easy access to information and help over the phone. And work on that front has begun in real earnest — computerisation of all records, trunk exchanges, call control, special information services have been worked out already. Singh avers that the increase in volume after tariffs were lowered in January is compensating for the reduced tariffs, and is confident that same will be the case when tariffs for ISD are reduced.

When asked about his working style, he says, "I would like to allow people to work. I always feel that one should not do another person's job. It is easier for a person to do a lower man's job; so they are not able to do their own jobs and that is what stunts growth." Having been in the "pits" himself, he can relate to all the people in the office. His open and easily accessible work style, he feels, is his greatest strength. His patience is another. But the compulsion to say yes to anything that people might ask

of him stretches him beyond the limit sometimes and this is one weakness that he would like to overcome.

Some of the posts that Prithipal Singh has held in a career spanning over three and a half decades in the telecom sector are General Manager, Chandigarh Telephones; Principal General Manager, Chandigarh Telephone Circle; and Chief General Manager, Rajasthan Telecom Circle, before being Appointed Director, operations, at BSNL. Singh says he has travelled all over the world in connection with his work except Latin America. That too was on his agenda - he was all set to go to Cuba but a phone call from there on the eve of his departure put paid to all his plans. "The Cuban delegates decided that they would prefer to come to India rather than us going over," he says with a rueful smile.

Nevertheless, Prithipal Singh has had some fantastic stints that have a special place in his heart and memory. He remembers one project that he was pitching for in Botswana, in the early 1990s. It was a challenging task since it meant building the project from the grass roots. However, when he reached there he was given a really tough time by the consultants to the project. Singh was on the "verge of being driven away from the country" when suddenly they underwent a change of heart and decided to award the project to him. By that time, word about Prithipal Singh's style of working had spread and, in addition to the task he had gone for, he got many additional projects as well.



A fine family: The grandson, six year old Manmeet Singh, is flanked by his grandfather, Prithipal Singh and grandmother Satnam Kaur, who is the home maker and the strength behind the success of her husband, and family. Standing behind are elder daughter Kirandeep Kaur who is an Information Analyst, younger daughter Simrandeep Kaur who is a training executive with NIIT, and Harinder Singh, the son-in-law who is Managing Director of UniStyle and the creative mind behind Traditional Value, a concept to preserve the Sikh Heritage. Both Kirandeep and her sister Simrandeep do keertan in classical maryada while young Manmeet Singh, who speaks Punjabi fluently, is learning the tabla to accompany them at keertan.

The other tough posting he had was in the Agra Telecom Circle in the late 1980s. And though he desisted initially, "my predecessors there had created a lot of very difficult situations, both for the staff and the customers", he finally accepted the challenge to clean up the department's image there. On his very first day at the office, a rowdy-looking group comprising leaders of various unions and groups surrounded him with a list of forty-plus demands. He was sobered at first but then realised that it was up to him to find the solution. He had an open discussion with them and over the next two years that he was there, he got them around to his way of thinking. His happiest moment there, he recalls with pride, was when all these unions and groups threw a combined farewell party for him.

Born into a musical family — both his parents are trained singers — Singh has a natural propensity for music.

And though he himself does not sing, he has ensured that both his daughters received formal training in classical music. "Wherever I have been posted, no Indian cultural event was complete without my daughters taking part in it," he says, with evident pride.

Religious by nature, Prithipal Singh says that he visits the gurdwara everyday. He follows the basic tenet of being a good human being. In fact, all that he believes in personally is summed up in the words that stare out of the solitary frame (a constant companion that Prithipal Singh has had for years) that adorns his desk:

I shall pass through this world but once

Any good therefore that I can do or any kindness that I can show to any human being, let me do it now

Let me not defer it, or neglect it for I shall not come this way again.

A Life of the Imagination

Prof. Darshan Singh Maini
as a Man of Letters



Any effort to circumscribe a myriad-minded multifaceted individual in words runs the risk of incompleteness and it is more so when the individual happens to be so vibrant and dynamic a personality as Professor Darshan Singh Maini. Some aspect of his personality may give a dodge despite one's best efforts to catch him in words. Nevertheless, here is an effort to capture Professor Maini—the Maini in whom the teacher, the poet and the critic stand in a symbiotic relationship, from the perspective of our individual responses to him. The subjectivity of such an exercise may stand in the way of achieving neutrality and objectivity, but authenticity of perception and felt observation are the real advantages in a venture of this nature and dimension.

Born in 1919—the year that promised world wide peace and the year that prompted W.B. Yeats to write the poem '1919'—in the sleepy city of Jhelum (now in Pakistan), Darshan Singh had his first brush with political struggle in the company of his father who was himself actively participating in India's struggle for freedom. In a way politics turned out to be a live force in his formative years when his father was imprisoned by the British during the Civil Disobedience Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi in

1930. No wonder politics or political affairs occupied a paramount position in his later life allowing him more than a peep into its intricacies and exigencies. This childhood interest culminated in his doctoral dissertation *The Political Novel in England, 1920-50'* leading to the award of Ph.D. Degree by the Punjab University Chandigarh in 1961.

Darshan Singh Maini decided to take up teaching as his profession even before he got his Master's Degree in English in 1942. No other profession fired his imagination except teaching. His fond wish to be a teacher turned into reality in 1943 when he joined Khalsa College, Lyallpur (now in Pakistan). Consequent upon the storming of Stalingrad by the Nazi

armies when chaos, cruelties and violence rocked the world, it was then that Darshan Singh got initiated into the study of human nature rendered through the corridors of creativity. With half a century of teaching to his credit, Professor Maini has never had any Frostian regrets about the road that he took - a 'road much travelled by' and yet it made all the difference, more to the one's who were privileged to be his students. But for his inspired and inspiring teaching, the world would have been a poorer

This article is reproduced by the Nishaan in acknowledgement of Professor Darshan Singh Maini's services to the Journal since its inception in 1999. Considering his work in English and American literature enjoys a wide international reputation, this article would give the Nishaan readers some perspective of his versatility.



(Far left) : As an
NCC Officer in 1948.



(Left):
When Head of the
English Department,
Punjabi University,
Patiala in 1964.

place to live in. Teaching gave him from the very start not only intellectual, satisfaction, but also a sensuous pleasure and a 'spiritual' dimension. It gave him his identity, his insights and his world-view. Professor Maini writes in *Fifty Years in Love, Labour and Dream* (published in *The Tribune* of July 4, 1999): "I do feel some benevolent providence did intervene to turn me into a teacher and thus brought my deepest desires and sleeping energies to the boil." Commenting upon the therapeutic nature of this noble profession, he further remarks "... pleasures of teaching ... help lighten the blows of fate, ill-health and age."

By the time he received his Ph.D. in 1961, he had already worked as Lecturer at prestigious institutions like the Khalsa College, Amritsar; Government College, Ludhiana; National Defence Academy, Kharakwasla and Mahindra College, Patiala. With establishment of the Punjabi University at Patiala in 1963, Dr. Maini joined the Department of English as Reader and two years later in 1965 was elevated as Professor and Head, a position he occupied till his retirement in 1979. During a three-year extension to his distinguished career, he also lectured in other parts of India and abroad. As a Visiting Professor at New York University in 1988-89 Dr. Maini taught graduate courses in American Literature.

His visit to Harvard on a Fulbright assignment in 1969 resulted in the publication of *Henry James: The Indirect Vision* (Tata Macgraw-Hill, 1973). This firmly established his reputation as the foremost Indian scholar of James with an international recognition accruing to him as a member of the Honorary Editorial Board for the *Henry James Review*

since its inception in 1979. The revised and enlarged edition of the indirect vision termed as "the best overview of James since F.W. Dupee's in the early 1950s" by William E. Stafford, was brought out by UMI Research Press, Ann Arbor Michigan in 1988.

He had the distinction of being a UGC National Lecturer in 1979-80. He was also a member of the organising committee of the 12th World Congress of World Poets held in Seoul. His honours include a *Festschrift* entitled *Essays in Honour of Darshan Singh Maini* (1989) edited by such eminent scholars as Dr. Amritjit Singh and Ayyappa Paniker and a special award at a national meet organised jointly by the USIS and the British Council in connection with the 150th birth anniversary of Henry James in April 1993.

His professional engagement with English literature has never hampered his interest in Punjabi literature. No wonder, he is credited with an exceptionally well-orchestrated sensibility chiseled over the decades by striking a fine balance between English and Punjabi literature.

Dr. Maini's creative talent as a poet surfaced with a vengeance at an age when most academics simply retire and lead a sedentary life as tired individuals. After his retirement he experienced the dawn of creativity in the form of three collections of poems published in 1987, 1995 and 1999. But before this abundant poetic flowering he had devoted himself to essays, periodical pieces and book reviews ranging from his abiding passion for Henry James

Annual Dinner,
"B" Squadron
at the National
Defence
Academy,
Kharakvasla.



to V.S. Naipaul, Nissim Ezekiel and George Lamming, not to talk of numerous light-hearted write-ups and down the memory lane "middles". His critical genius revelled in the realms of Sikh history and Punjabi poetry when he was asked to edit two manuscripts by poet Puran Singh. This inspired him to do a book *Studies in Punjabi Poetry* which is recognised even by Punjabi scholars as the best book so far on the subject. The command over and understanding of Punjabi poetry that this book demonstrates far surpasses any such attempt even by vernacular critics.

Events of 1984 and their tragic developments in the State of Punjab and Northern India brought out an altogether new dimension of Dr. Maini's personality. Dr. Maini felt brutalised at the "Blue Star" Operation in Amritsar. His bruised psyche and bleeding heart could be seen reflected in the seared imagination that found expression in *Cry, The Beloved Punjab*. In his introduction to this book Rajni Kothari hits the target when he says: "(This volume) seeks to go beyond and probe the psychic, metaphysical and philosophical underpaintings of a vast human tragedy, a tragedy that has witnessed millions of lives being turned upside down by forces wholly beyond their control." The compelling force of this collection of essays on Punjab truly brings out the 'heart of darkness' as well as darkness that descends at noon unleashing the naked brutalities of Orwell's 1984. The curiously personal yet detached tone of his writings on the above subject is simply charismatic and unbelievably authentic. Mohammad Vazeeruddin's words "the writings are so exquisitely fashioned as to remind one of scabbard of

medieval craftsmanship, one which holds a sword" evoke Yeatsian 'sato's sword' in *A Dialogue of Self and Soul*.

His book-length studies, *Henry James : The Indirect Vision* (1973), *The Portrait of a Lady: An Assessment* (1977), *Studies in Punjabi Poetry* (1979), *Walt Whitman and the Sikh Inspiration* (1981), *Cry, The Beloved Punjab* (1986), *The Spirit of American Literature* (1990), bring out the depth and width of his involvement in American and Punjabi literature.

He is also the Chief Editor (Punjabi) for the series *Modern Indian Novels in Translation* (Macmillan India). His essays, criticism, articles and reviews have appeared in *The Tribune*, *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, *The Hindustan-Times*, *The Times of India*, *The Indian Express*, *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, *The Sunday Observer*, *Span*, *Gentleman*, *Imprint*, *The Literary Criterion* and *The Christian Science Monitor* among others.

His critical work on Indian writers in English, his cultural criticism, his travelogues and autobiographical writings, light literary essays, etc. published in Indian periodicals and foreign volumes have added up to a sizeable corpus now. The range and sweep of these is simply phenomenal. His latest achievement is the appointment as Editorial Director of the *Nishaan*, the prestigious quarterly started by *The Nagaara Trust* in 1999.

Teaching has been more of a passion and religion for him. In his own words "For here is" a vocation which, like the church, draws you, if you have the inclination and the



With the celebrated Indian novelist, Anita Desai at the Department of English, Punjabi University.

energies, compulsively into an expanding orbit of relationships, understandings and commonalties. And as the spirit of teaching and learning grows upon you, and the mind and the imagination rise to the challenges and encounters enroute one gradually begins, to create a sentiment of belongingness and gets drawn into an abiding "Community of honour", to recall a felicitous phrase from Henry James... Cognition comes as the epistemology of experience is vindicated in the great classics and one begins to realise the truth of W.B. Yeats's beautiful line "In dreams begin responsibilities."

Even if he had not written the above, those of us, who have been privileged to be his students, know the passion with which he engaged his classes; his committed self, his sincerity and authenticity could be felt in the classroom atmosphere. Teaching for him has a spiritual dimension and it carries not only intellectual satisfaction, but also a sensuous pleasure. His amazing facility with the English language has earned him praise of the highest order; it has also made him appear elitist to quite a few of his readers who find his idiom and literary references beyond their ken. The last of the above quoted passage could just be cited as an instance of his 'difficult' style.

One has to be his student to know what an intellectual giant he is, and what an academic treat it is to be there when Professor Maini is on. One literally savours each word, each phrase as it comes from him. So engrossing and enlightening used to be his ponderings into literary subtleties that his classroom performances were always a

pleasure. His ability to distil the spirit of the text while centering its location in a historical, political, ideological and cultural matrix was simply remarkable. The fire, the energy and the sheer involvement that Professor Maini demonstrated as he performed in the class could be anybody's envy. He alone could stimulate his students into asking the right kind of questions; he initiated them into those secret and hidden chambers of the writers and their texts to which he alone could provide the key. The authors and the texts that he taught somehow became our lifetime favourites. He could hold a class spellbound almost like the ancient mariner. He used to weave a web of words which left us wondering at those numerous interpretations that he could handle with such ease and proficiency. His provocative and intellectually stimulating lectures simply teased us out of thought. Attending his classes became our psychic compulsion as it was there that we could drink deep and to our fill.

If one's personality is to be measured by the response one evokes, then the following extract is self-explanatory:

One does not know where to begin one's praise of Darshan Singh Maini, so let me begin, first of all, with his lovable self—his charm, his humanity, his kindness, his verve, his perennial youthfulness—all factors which make him beloved by students and colleagues, even before they are aware of his genius, for as a world-class critic of our own literature, he has been inspired by pure genius. And as genius will always locate early in life the matter on which its devouring force can act, Professor Maini's genius, at the age of 10, pounced on the English language and made it his own. Genius has its own whims and all we can do is to be grateful it was the English language and not French or Italian that the little boy fell in love with, and doubly grateful that as he matured it was our own American literature, that special branch of the English language, that was the material with which his genius was happiest.

This constitutes part of the address by Adeline R. Tintner, herself the doyen of Jamesian fraternity, at the inauguration of *The Magic Circle of Henry James: Essays in honour of Darshan Singh Maini*.

Commenting upon Dr. Maini's command over the English language Tintner goes on to state further: "... his absolute delight in using our language with a luxuriance ... his mysterious possession of the secrets of our language has made this unique contribution possible." It is high praise indeed when she concludes: "We certainly take our hats off to this great mind and talent which has so easily been able to swallow, digest and represent our own literature perhaps better than many of our own critics."

To enlist such wonderful praise even from those who are born into English language is incredible indeed.

We shall be failing in our endeavour if we do not mention what Dr. Amritjit Singh and Professor K. Ayyappa Paniker, themselves eminent scholars, state about Dr. Maini: "A large soul housed in a medium-sized body, he projects his restlessness and uncompromising integrity into his environment making hypocrisy, insensitivity and moral evasion wince in his presence." (*The Magic Circle of Henry James; Essays in Honour of Darshan Singh Maini*, eds. Amritjit Singh and K. Ayyappa Paniker, p. 342).

Behind such enviable encomiums one can see the ceaseless effort of a whole lifetime since this *festschrift* was dedicated to Darshan Singh Maini on his seventieth birthday.

Spurred late into song by a complex of tormenting experiences including the sensitive recoil of his soul on the happenings in Delhi and Punjab in 1984, his failing health and the disenchantment that invariably sets in during senility, Dr. Maini's talent shows a tremendous resurgence with no looking back whatsoever.

His *On Target* a signed column for *The Tribune*, initially aimed at "lifting the veil from the face of reality...and of affirming my faith in the regenerative power of moral life in the midst of terror, evil and absurdity" goes beyond the immediate reality by allowing Dr. Maini to put his finger on the nerve that hurts. This *raison d'être* of this column involves an adversary position, and that is why he packed as much powder into his pieces as possible to hit the target. And this, anyone can see, involves guts, a boldness of spirit and moral earnestness in addition to 'courage to be true to the imperatives of the self'. This 'ordering of reality towards a human civilized society' requires irony and ambiguity as tools and instruments of indirect understanding.

This column simply opened the flood gates of Dr. Maini's creative journalism. Week after week, month after month, year after year, *The Tribune* readers simply became addicted to *On Target* since it made them weigh and measure their own perceptions vis-a-vis Dr. Maini's. A mere glance at the subjects chosen for *On Target* is so bewildering that one is forced to admit the enormity of sheer physical, mental and spiritual labour that must have gone into these articles as these gushed forth in a superbly copious manner.

Creative journalism became his favourite forte as it provided him an opportunity to air his strongly held views on important issues, personalities, places and things. Truth

tastes bitter but Dr. Maini knows no compromises with it. He has the honesty to call a spade a spade even at the risk of being branded as a cynic, egoist and even a pessimist. If his passionate and forthright writings have made him appear somewhat effete, with some other intellectuals he remains a dear darling. There is some truth in the fact that his style stipulates an elite readership as it seems to be consciously cultivated. The use of highly charged words and at times esoteric, literary and difficult terminology make his writing an unusually delightful affair meant only for the select few. But for one married to literature for so long the literary hues and artistic and literary echoes come as naturally as leaves to a tree. He is so widely and so deeply read that making forays into various other fields becomes an instance of artful ease. His grasp over ideas is so strong and so overpowering that the expression becomes compulsively rich and complex. *Kehte Hain Ki Ghalib Ka Hai Andaz-e Bayan Aur*. He may not be a Ghalib, but his



With Maharaja Yaduvindra Singh at the wedding of his elder daughter, Anita Maini at Patiala, October 1970.

best poetry, paradoxically enough, is to be found in his prose. For lovers of literature and for those who care for imaginative and inviting expressions the finesse of Professor Maini's style is highly commendable and enjoyable. The careful selection of words, deeply felt and cogently argued views reflect a peculiar royalty of thought and expression. Who else but a seasoned mind and a polished sensibility could have spawned words so illuminatingly? What Coleridge said about poetry being the best words in the best order is valid even for Dr. Maini's prose. Quite a few of his expressions taste so rich that one feels like relishing them again and again so as to enjoy even the last ounce of meaning condensed into them. If style, as Buffon says, is the man, then probably the best way to know the man in Professor Maini is to ravenously feed on the rich texture, highly wrought verbal delight that his writings offer.

sprouts and acquires astonishing proportions when he is roused.

Much in the manner of the 'Master' - Henry James - Dr. Maini loves the lords and ladies of life. Those who have the riches of the imagination and are fed on higher reaches of life endear themselves to him almost instantly. He feels contempt for those who are merely mediocrities. He is also known for his on-the-spot love for beauties with brains. Always a vibrant presence, Dr. Maini's dynamism forces attention anywhere and everywhere. No one dare ignore him. His awesome erudition invariably leaves its imprint while words dance like fairies on his finger tips.

The worldview that gets projected through his writings is so insightful and so all encompassing, that given a chance, it might prove to be a panacea for what ails the world. His best pieces appear to be the ones which are based on violated and broken human, relationships. May



Professor Darshan Singh Maini being honoured at the release of Festschrift, New York University, 1989.

As surmised earlier, the teacher, the poet and the critic in him stand in a symbiotic relationship. A casual glance at the biographical details might suggest otherwise since the poet in him came of age long after he ceased to be teacher. But the point is that even while he was a teacher, the poet in him was silently taking shape and it surfaced only when actual teaching came to a halt. The critic must have been his constant companion. How else does one account for the excellent views that he brings to bear upon almost everything that he undertakes to touch upon? There is certainly an extraordinary grain in his genius; this grain

one also venture to say that the ones concerned with fulfilled desires and longings are not even half so appealing. Maybe it is because a crack or a break ignites one's imagination more than a satisfied or a satisfying experience.

The last couple of years have been rather unkind to him. His intractable disease has failed all doctors and their diagnostic ventures. But hats off to the man who refuses to be deterred by his failing health. This appears to be one of the miracles of nature that a man so harried and bowed

down by sheer physical infirmities should not allow his talent and his skill to be impaired in any way. It is intriguing indeed that his genius should follow a Yeatsian curve. Paradoxically, his mind and creativity get an added impetus from his physical disabilities. Phoenix-like he rises to write more and more as long as his hand can hold the pen and it is these writings which sustain him even when he is virtually at the end of the tether. He says in one of his letters dated August 23, 1998. "As my poor stricken body loses its force and direction my imagination in that proportion seems to drive me harder and harder." Drawing upon the latent reservoirs of energy even now he continues to churn out some piece or the other, thereby making his presence felt every now and then. Fourscore and more and still at the crease. Bravo! While we pray for his recovery, the mute heavens do not seem to respond to our fervent prayers. But these prayers shall continue to reverberate and rend the air till our wishes are granted.

writing. This has been more than noticeable in his weekly journalistic pieces on political, cultural, literary and other areas in that they unmistakably yield sharp literary and philosophic insights. However, his taking to the Muse in the post-retirement phase has had its own compulsions and an ineluctable relationship with physical pain, immobility and loneliness, as his three volumes of poetry, *A Reluctant Flame* (1987), *A House for Dreams* (1995) and *The Aching Vision* (2000) amply illustrate. As Professor Maini has himself stated in an excellent piece *The Poetry of Pain*, "If poetry is the linguistic correlative of pain ... it's also an armour against the assaults of absurd and unwanted pain. It's the way a body and a mind under siege dredge up energies from within to cope with the situation." What is indeed remarkable about dozens of his poems is the way his intellectual grasp, rare sensitivity to body language and literary erudition create a grand meeting-ground to structure a gradually expanding,



Professor Darshan Singh Maini reciting his poems at the 12th Conference of World Poets at Seoul, 1990.



With Korean and Japanese poets at Seoul.

Then Again: Academician-poets are not a rarity in Indian writing in English. Professor Darshan Singh Maini, who has enjoyed international reputation as a scholar and teacher, is a recent addition to this category. Professor Maini's forays into poetry, have some compulsive as well as engaging attributes. It is natural that something of the academician's long brush with literature (in Professor Maini's case, Henry James, and practically the whole of twentieth century British and American literature) and its creative and critical complexities should find its way into

transcendental world-view through art. What is more, his poetry evokes multiple, rich perceptions into the world of experience that is often mediated brilliantly by memory, anguish, self-pity, alienation and dreaming—that the reader perceives close to one's own poetic reflections, beyond the immediate context of the poems of Professor Maini. What comes quite naturally is a feeling of his involvement with his poetic subject-matter—love, pain, anguish, betrayal, the sense of waste and the nagging sense of being perennially afflicted physically. However, at no

place is one allowed to forget that the poet's mind (in Eliot's words, '... a repository of disparate material shaped into fine unity') works out brilliant metaphors of experience, together with intellectually built-up correlatives, whatever their quality or sign. Much in the same vein, Maini carries his scholastic and critical burdens seemingly lightly as he draws upon literary equivalents time and again (in his case perhaps unavoidable) and the Freudian overtones that mark the distinct stages of creative meditations. However, it must be acknowledged that the majority of pieces in the first collection, *A Reluctant Flame*, tend to move towards a relatively liberating imagination, catharsized through longings, desires and regrets for a troubled relationship that flashes through the twilight of memory. What these poems break free from is the later obsession with the self and its impossible physical cure in *A House for Dreams* and *The Aching Vision*. Though poetry is therapy in any given dimension, the later collections leave the reader

decades, found himself incapacitated, his peregrinations now hopelessly limited to home or doing the hospital rounds for check-ups. Yet, Professor Maini, from the early nineties, became more prolific with the pen, reaching out to people by handling wider issues, though not without a regular touch with aesthetics. *A House for Dreams* is perhaps a beginning an attempt to come to terms with this phase of hibernation in multiple ways. The poetry in this volume at once goes beyond the positive recollection of moments left behind; everything indeed, gets latched to the sense of the present.

An early poem laments the tragedy of the Golden Temple, now ensconced in layers of memory, shame and corruption that each one has to come to terms with, obviously shared by the poet's sense of extreme agony. Beyond this, the poetry of recurring moments of fantasies, faces and vanished dreams finds utterance, though



With an old friend, Professor Mohd Rashid from Lahore in Professor Maini's library at Chandigarh, 1997

somewhat fixed in Professor Maini's persistent struggle to use the poetic medium, and his special *oeuvre*, to provide a sense of release from this trauma.

With *A House for Dreams* Professor Maini enters the excruciating poetic phase, in his own words, learning to live with 'embattled and unhappy Muses'. This also begins a most disturbing and touching period for a man who, through his scholarship and high academic/cultural life, had earned what others might just begin to aspire for. A Professor who had traversed cultural geographies and critical boundaries *en route* his career spanning four

persistence of it is attributed to the 'whoring heart'. The thought of treasuring desires and dreams in what is left as debris is again a form of silent rage, a protest against the passing away of time, the former all buried, 'entombed in mansions of bad faith'. *A House for Dreams* also contains some 'statement' poems which define human states, sensations of pain and their incendiary nature, ever smouldering, sealed in 'smoking bones'. There are others such as 'Our Daughters' that draw upon inviolate filial bonds and touches, no matter what the distance or age may be. And 'A Mutiny' conveys the disease already

(Right) Professor Maini with wife, Tejinder and son, Manoranjan Singh at a friend's home in Valley Stream, New York, April 1989.



(Far right): Outside Warren House (Department of English), Harvard University, January 1970.



catching up with the poet's lower body parts that ultimately have rendered him immobile. *A Noose* further corroborates the poet's mental seizure of his malady, symbolised by the actual feeling of being collared. *Waiting For the Word* marks a recognisable shift in Professor Maini's sensibility to reach out to some kind of faith healing; beyond the clinical and medicinal plane of suppressing pain, there's another territory where the Higher One presides. Literary examples abound, but are of little respite. The poet, in a transcendental vein turns to Gurbani, to the 'Shabad', the word, and thus the final resolution of pain in faith coalesces with the surfeit of physical traumas he has undergone. The turn towards *moksha* from the veils of *maya*, the delusions of love and longing, the *Kingdom of Pain* thus form a sort of structural trajectory in *A House for Dreams*. The anguished strain that runs through the poems, as is clear, is largely self-reflexive and centered in individual stages and existential crises. Another poem 'A Spring-Cleaning' moves further from the sixtieth birthday in *A Reluctant Flame* to the seventieth, with the body now a 'house of choked blood', the 'Freudian attics' beginning to stink. Once again the faith therapy for sweeping away the heap of dust and rags beckons the Guru's song, the celestial music to silence the cacophonies and the jarring notes of experience and turn them into a rhythm and order. But, so is the nature of God's unquestionable 'gifts' — pain and pleasure — that must be accepted as Grace. The ambiguity of the poet's situation between the world, the shards of nagging memories, and God's presence lead him

to a sense of wanton shame; hence so many of the poems hover between states of drift, resolution, driven by self-condemnation. Some of Professor Maini's later poems in this volume could be summed up under the expression 'refinement of rage': the old man in a wicker chair, holding newspaper and ruminating at lost time, desperately clutching on to a possible *nirvana* that is yet abortive, sublimation a mere wish. The rage of 'wanton words' on the other hand, is inadequate for a sense of release, whatever its method or quality. Finally, a Catch-22 situation seems to overtake the poet waiting for the Signal of Destiny for a 'final assault'. It could be said with a measure of truth that Professor Maini puts the blame upon himself for his invisible sins due to which his racked body and lacerated bones are a case-study for all kinds of physicians and surgeons, that ultimately turn him to the wheel of *Karma* everyone's reward or punishment — that in his case comes to visit him in the shape of the 'sins', the 'voyaging self dissipating the wages of vanity'. Trapped thus in the ordeal of faith and prayer, the poet is drawn to the purity, the celestial quintessence of the *mul-mantra* for a temporary repose, but is soon thrown back to a realisation of 'fallen state'. Thus, the dialectics of pain and the wish to somehow define a process of release characterise the poet's hopeless wrestling with the endless signifiers of experience, that also becomes his *cul-de-sac*.

In *The Aching Vision* — the most voluminous collection of Professor Maini — the accent on pain and suffering becomes pronounced as the title itself indicates. The three



An oil painting of Prof. Darshan Singh Maini, by H.S. Bansal.

sub-sections of the collection mark a trajectory, as though to travel from dreams, desires, memories, *en route* pain and suffering to a voyage through deeps, on to a vision of some ultimate destination. *The Aching Vision* could be termed as a sequel to *A House for Dreams* in that the strain of troubled recollection of relations, love, desires and poetic overtures turn into an awareness of distant zones of life and shards of memory. As the poetic prologue to the volume makes clear, Professor Maini embarks upon the three stages of the Dantesque vision, which helps ordering one's existential odyssey, the hues, shapes, colours, temptations and the *lila* of one's forced play-acting in the theatre of life. The withered hand in the dustbin of memories may recall any mythical or literary female figure, but only to come back to haunt and tease him. But there are others too — transforming into new faces, turning what another poet would call 'myths of light', to be draped in Professor Maini's 'silken dreams'. The aged heart and tongue, however, would not settle for a more happy song and so the continuous sense of emptiness, of despair, of a confessional urge must imbue themselves in words time and again. The poems in *The Aching Vision* though are certainly remarkable for their music and maturity, the poet having now gained a decisive hold on his craft, allusions and images, to structure a heightening pitch as the poems progress.

The final section draws the poet to address God or the

Higher One while preparing for a voyage. What surfaces, significantly, is the quality of a deeper vision; to embark, 'sail away', say adieu 'to earth and Sun', in the vein of a Tennyson crossing the bar. From the first, the poet has been seeing himself as a 'marked' man, not only for his past 'sins' (if any), but also because Gods extract a special price from those marked for the 'word'. Hence, what a book of verse does to you—from the labours of its birth to the end — is an internal matter, a 'deep wound' that eats into your innards. Elsewhere, Professor Maini compares his 'complex tale' to a text with all its Jamesian architectonics and Shakespearean denouement, but also, like the text, it yields its own readings to others, while God (or the writer) abandons it for interpretation. He is at the end of the tether like Bellow's dangling man containing his inner rage, further mortified by a seemingly sealed fate. True to his vocation, Professor Maini brilliantly alludes to 'contexts and references' and sees his book of life as one of lost contexts and swallowed up references - a text denuded of a context. He now sees himself as the forsaken, rechristened 'Lear's boy', now as Prince Myshkin confronting a primal truth of life, alternately ruthless and innocent to thus gather the mechanics of coming to terms with all those loose ends that life betrays. The impressive side of the last section is the resignation and detachment with which he observes his own self, much less as a victim of it. The epiphanies take him to journeys, not his own, but the ordeals of the body, anywhere, everywhere, and the journeys of the soul, scanned through all spheres. Ultimately everything falls into an order, a pattern of perceptions, a pattern from utopias of the mind to the dystopias of a skeptical age, where among other things, pain is spiritual, physical, psychic, emotional. Whatever the residues finally, Professor Maini's poetic flights and their destinations appear to already transcend the 'frozen' state that he finds himself in—in short, poetry as an art, as a therapeutic power, and as literary food for thought is sure to provide him many more years of repose and self-reflection.

Ranjit Kaur Kapoor & Manjit Inder Singh

Ranjit Kaur Kapoor and Manjit Inder Singh are both former students of Professor Darshan Singh Maini. They completed their doctoral dissertations under his guidance. Ranjit worked on "The Symbiosis of Drama and Imagery in the Fiction of Henry James." Manjit Inder chose "V.S. Naipaul and George Lamming: The Problem of Alienation and Identity" as the topic of his doctoral dissertation. Currently Dr. Ranjit Kaur is Professor and Head, Department of English, Punjabi University, Patiala. Dr. Manjit Inder is the senior most Reader in the same department.

Hind-Di-Chadar

GURU TEGH BAHADUR



Contemplated a decade back, the series of ten volumes on the Sikh Gurus had their genesis in the need, poignantly felt by us, to reaffirm our commitment to the ideals enshrined in the *Gurbani* and the composite culture of the Punjab and also to reach out to the younger generations settled away from the land of their inheritance. As such, this book on the life, martyrdom and poetical compositions of Guru Tegh Bahadur, "the Shield of India" (*Hind di Chaadar*) is not a dissertation tailored to a specific topic or frame of references nor is it a routine biography detailing facts or events in a soulless manner.

The composite culture of Punjab which ensures tolerance, freedom of faith and dignity of individuals practising different modes of living and worship finds its

The Agnihotris

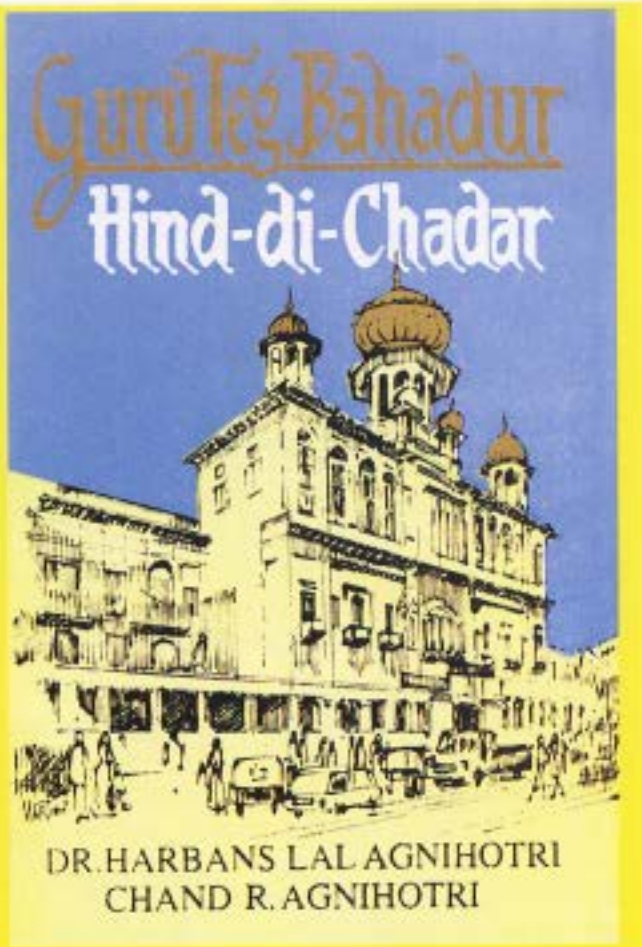
Dr Harbans Lal Agnihotri and his wife Chand Agnihotri, have just completed the greatest ambition of their spousal life: the writing and publication of well researched biographies of the ten Sikh Gurus.

I have yet to know a couple that could, for love and reverence of the Sikh faith, give the most productive years of their life to this grand project. Without any financial or other help from the Sikh community, above all from the SGPC despite a formal request, this unique pair of man and wife put all their energies and all their resources to see their desire come true. It is now for the Sikhs in India and abroad to do their part. As for myself, I cannot be thankful enough for their faith in the word and philosophy.

Prof Darshan Singh Mainsi

The ten books by Dr.Harbans Lal Agnihotri and Mrs.Chand R.Agnihotri

- ✦ *Guru Nanak Dev – His Life and Bani*
- ✦ *The Liberated Soul*
The Life and Bani of Guru Angad Dev
- ✦ *The Widening of Horizon*
Guru Amar Das and His Bani
- ✦ *The Life Divine*
Life of Guru Har Krishan
- ✦ *Creative Harmony*
Life and Bani of Guru Ram Das ji
- ✦ *Gathering Storm*
Guru Har Rai and His Times
- ✦ *Guru Hargobindji*
His Life and Times
- ✦ *Guru Arjan Dev*
The Poet Prophet
- ✦ *Guru Teg Bahadur*
Hind-di-Chadar
- ✦ *Guru Gobind Singh*
His Life and Bani



expression in the Sikh way of life, as espoused by the Gurus both in their lives and teachings. Prof. Puran Singh pays a tribute to this legacy when he writes that the gospel of the Gurus has sustained the community life in the Punjab : 'Panjab sara jeeonaa guru de nam te'.

This present full-length study is a labour of love, undertaken over the years, that reconciles the biographical details recorded in the Granth Sahib. Care has been taken to give the transliteration of the original verses which follow the analytical explanation of the text in English. The pattern affords the reader, unacquainted with the Gurmukhi script, a direct access to the *bani* in its original form. Translation, it is feared, loses much of the freshness of the spirit, its efficient and approximate rendering notwithstanding. Though not the first in English, the book stands apart as it contains original *bani* of the Guru in addition to the historical details of Guru Tegh Bahadur's holy ministry as the Ninth Guru.

We make no claim to learning or scholarship, nor do we pretend to have discovered anything new, hitherto unknown, from the labyrinths of records and manuals. An earnest attempt has, however, been made to present the

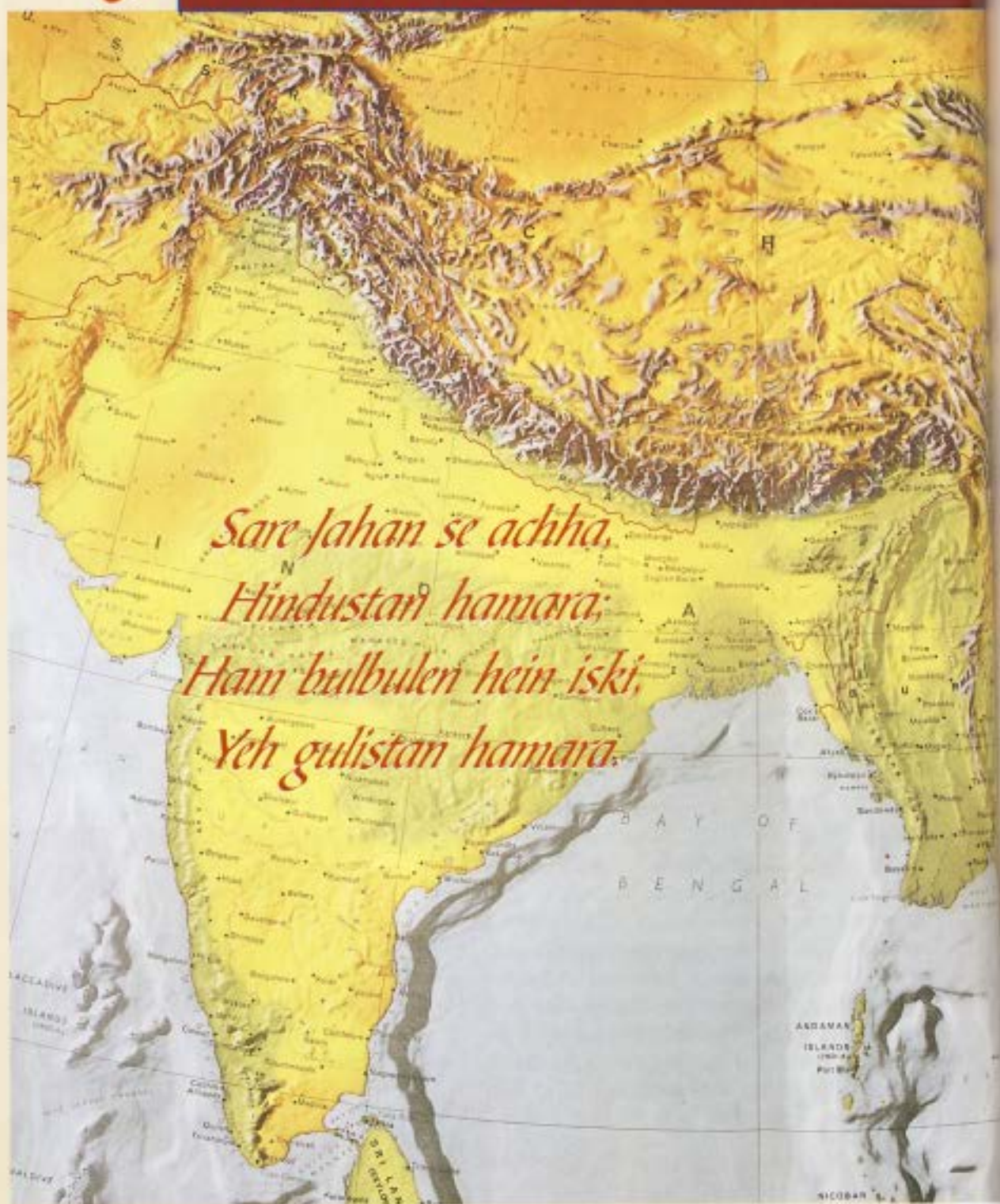
life and *bani* rationally and historically before the modern reader, exposed to the cross-currents of cultures and thoughts. *Guru Tegh Bahadur : Hind di Chadar (The Shield of India)* is part of bigger project that modestly seeks to transmit the universal message of the Gurus and their *bani* to readers in the language and idiom they understand.



Harbans Lal Agnihotri & Chand R.Agnihotri

THE SIKH HOMELAND

MYTHS AND REALITY



*Sare Jahan se achha,
Hindustan hamara;
Ham bulbulen hein iski,
Yeh gulistan hamara.*

The roots of tension in Punjab and the rest of northern India during the past two decades go far back in the history of the region. However, deterioration in the situation has been caused by a series of events of the past half century. In the background of the tragic partition of India in 1947, dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 and a *de facto* partition in Kashmir, the preponderant Hindu majority is genuinely concerned about the weak impulse of Indian nationalism and the danger posed by the forces of balkanization. The Sikh minority, which suffered appalling consequences of the 1947 partition more than any other people of the subcontinent, is very sensitive about the absorbing capacity of Hinduism—further enhanced by the virtual monopoly of political power and economic patronage throughout India. The Sikhs are also concerned that Indian nationalism is often confused with Hindu nationalism (“Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan”), and that the Sikhs’ quest for an autonomous territorial sanctuary in the Punjab, is either misperceived or deliberately misrepresented as another partition of India. They also fear that the majority’s “cultural imperialism” has become a sort of dangerous mixture of arrogance and ignorance toward the national minorities in general and the Sikh minority in particular. Indeed, many protagonists of Indian nationalism categorise the Sikhs as a sect of Hinduism. They argue that Guru Nanak, the Founder of Sikhism, was born in a Hindu family. Nobody calls Christianity a sect of Judaism, because Jesus Christ was born in a Jewish family!

Generations of Hindus have cherished the memories of the past glory of “Ram Raj” (the reign of justice and tranquility) and the Kingdom of Ashoka the Great, hundreds and thousands of years ago. The Sikhs have not yet forgotten the glory of the Sikh Commonwealth under Maharaja Ranjit Singh — the Lion of Punjab — which was lost to the British just over a century ago. The late Jawaharlal Nehru made the following observations about the Sikh ruler and his kingdom:

“Ranjit Singh was not only intellectually curious and inquisitive, he was remarkably humane at a time when India and the world seethed with callousness and inhumanity. He built up a kingdom and a powerful army and yet he disliked bloodshed. Never was so large an empire founded by one man with so little criminality.”

As a matter of fact, while the entire country was under British rule, only the Sikh Commonwealth (comprised of Punjab, Kashmir, and the North-Western frontiers) was independent until 1849. The following excerpt should illustrate the point:

“What does the red colour stand for?” asked Maharaja Ranjit Singh when he was shown a map of India, “Your

Majesty,” replied the cartographer, “red marks the extent of British possessions.” The Maharaja scanned the map...and saw nearly the whole of Hindustan except the was Punjab painted red.

During negotiations with the British for the independence of India, the Sikhs were one of the three parties, along with the Hindus and the Muslims. As observed by an eminent journalist, D.K. Joshi:

“Historically speaking, it is the Sikhs who were largely responsible for the partition of Punjab. If the Sikhs had agreed to live in Pakistan, then the map of the subcontinent would have been different.”

To be sure, the frontier between India and Pakistan would have been a few miles from New Delhi rather than a few miles from Amritsar and India would not have had a geographic contiguity with Kashmir. Besides, almost half a dozen Sikh princely states opted for merger with the Indian Union, just some decades back.

Under this historical environment, the Sikh minority has been struggling for a genuine power base in the Punjab in order to fend off the gigantic power of the preponderant majority and to deter the creeping danger of assimilation and extinction. As such, it is pure and simple a strategy for survival within the Indian Union. The Sikhs understand, more than any other people, that the balkanization of India would benefit neither the Sikh minority nor the Hindu majority. At the same time, the Sikhs are trying to retrieve their distinct status as a national minority, which was lost during the partition fiasco of 1947. They are asking for a genuine autonomy in the Punjab, where the Sikh heritage could pick up the “bits of a shattered rainbow,” to borrow Tennessee Williams’ words.

The Sikhs are a small minority, about 2 percent in India, and a little over 52 percent in the Punjab. However, their share in India’s freedom struggle, national security, and economic development far exceeds their small number. Out of 2125 Indians who died during freedom movement, more than 1500 were Sikhs. Out of 2645 Indians who were exiled by the British, 2147 were Sikhs. Out of 20,000 who joined the Indian National Army, under Subhash Chandra Bose more than 12,000 were Sikhs. Their heroism during the two Kashmir Wars (1947-48 and 1965), and the Bangladesh War (1971) is still fresh in the memories of the people in India and abroad. “The Sikhs distinguished themselves in the field of battle. The heaviest casualties among the Indians appeared to be those of the Sikh officers and enlisted men.” The Sikh farmers, relatively small and medium-size farm owners, have ushered in an era of “green revolution” in a country of chronic food shortages. Their pioneering spirit has made Punjab the granary of

India which provides more than 50% grain to the food basket of the country. This has been long acknowledged by the World Bank.

However, during the last four decades, whenever Sikhs asserted their distinct cultural identity and demanded a genuine autonomy in the Punjab, where the Sikh heritage could be preserved and promoted with dignity and respect worthy of the *Khalsa Panth*, the mass media cried "partition." When the Sikhs demanded the same status for the Punjabi language in Punjab that the Bengali language enjoys in Bengal, the mass media screamed "separatism." Indeed, the preponderant Hindu majority not only denigrated and ridiculed the Punjabi language, but also disowned it themselves! There is hardly any precedence in human history of a people disowning their mother tongue. The end product of this unfortunate schism was the second partition of Punjab in 1966. In the Hindu holy city of Hardwar, the slaughter of animals is prohibited by law, in deference to the Hindu religious traditions. However, when the Sikhs demanded that smoking be prohibited in the Sikh holy city of Amritsar, it was labelled as "fanaticism."

It is not prudent to cry "partition," and "separatism," at every demand of a national minority, lest this ugly monster pays a visit by default. Through an overuse of some of these negative expressions, *prima facie*, as tools of intimidation, the so-called champions of India's unity might unwittingly be hurting the very commendable cause they claim to espouse. Remember, the Bengalis were demanding only a genuine autonomy from Islamabad. But West Pakistan, misperceiving the situation, responded with arrogance followed by brutality. What happened after that is well-known in history. In this context, a noted scholar suggests that "the past is invoked not to make us weep, but rather to make us reflect. The future, born of the past, must break away in order not to repeat it." Another keen observer of minority affairs made the following comments:

"The lessons of disregard for the rights of minorities have been disastrous for several countries in Asia and Africa. It is not too late for India's leaders and people to wake up on this issue. Prompt investigation of complaints and careful planning at the national level may still save the country from disintegration."

While the preponderant majority has shown lack of empathy with the elementary Sikh sensitivities, using crude tools of intimidation and arrogance, the Sikh minority itself has failed to present its case in a unified fashion. Its public relations network, its rapport with leading journalists and its media strategies are poorly organised. It has the responsibility of reaching out and

convincing the preponderant majority of the genuineness of its case. It must put the majority at ease, by assuring unequivocally that the Sikh's commitment to the unity of India is not only to gain the goodwill of the majority which is indeed a desirable goal - but also that their own vital interests are intertwined with the horizontal unity of India. Worst of all, the Sikhs have not developed even a conceptual consensus on the vital issue of their status as a national minority.

Majority Rule And Minority Rights

True, democracy is based on the principle of majority rule, but it does not give the majority a license to impose its will and trample upon the rights of the minorities. It is imperative that democracy blends the majority rule with minority rights. The constitutional guarantees are inadequate without the "development of institutional safeguards to protect minority rights." A genuine federalism provides the means to resolve this tension between the supremacy of the majority rule at the national level and the primacy of sub-national autonomy at the local level, where the minorities can establish and operate their self-governing institutions. Without the shelter of such institutions, the minorities are naked before the arbitrary power of the majority and the freedom of expression is reduced to the "right to cry in the wilderness."

What touches the rawest nerve of Sikhs is the interference in every spectrum of the Sikh life. The ruling government, which preaches secularism (separation of religion and politics) has converted the Sikh religious and cultural institutions into political battlegrounds. The ruling party tries, overtly or covertly, to install its handpicked people who have neither the trust nor the confidence of the Sikh masses. The ruling party's relentless interference to subvert and dismiss elected councils managing the Sikh shrines undermines the norms of decency as well as democracy. The chief editor of the *Weekly Organizer* (a publication not so friendly with the Sikhs) recognized a "genuine concern over the threat to the Sikh establishment's authority as well as to the Sikh identity," and observed that "there is no doubt that the ruling party is interfering in Sikh religious affairs." The Sikh educational institutions enjoy no immunity either from political interference. As a matter of fact, the ruling party uses them as political fiefdoms reserved for party supporters, which seriously undermines their academic standards and hurts Sikh pride.

More often than not, the genuine Sikh leadership - with whom the masses identify and whom they trust - is maligned, smeared, and ignored by New Delhi.

Unfortunately, those who speak for the Sikh minority are labelled as "communalists," while those who excel in the art of opportunism are called "nationalists," and rewarded with political fiefdoms. The Sikh leaders are denigrated, thrown in jails and subjected to humiliation. If India's unity is based on this kind of deceptive vocabulary and misperceived identities, it might be in for big trouble! Such practices have virtually disenfranchised the Sikh masses. As such, they are profoundly disillusioned with the democratic processes and with the national government's "slanted secularism." This sad state of affairs is conducive neither for the much-desired unity of India, nor for the communal harmony in the region.

The Sikh's religious feelings and cultural pride is profoundly injured by New Delhi's lukewarm attitude towards the problem of Sikh historic shrines in Pakistan. While the sacred shrines associated with the spiritual heritage of different religions - Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Islam are managed by the followers of those faiths, the Sikh shrines in Pakistan are under the jurisdiction of non-Sikhs. All the holy shrines of Islam in India are managed by the Muslims, but New Delhi has not seriously sought reciprocity from Pakistan in case of the Sikh shrines. In this regard, one proposal by Subramaniam Swamy, "to barter away a part of the Indian territory," to recover Lake Mansarover and Mount Kailash from China, "for the sake of these two Hindu religious spots," is noteworthy.

While Punjab is complimented for its prosperity and for being the "breadbasket" of India - as Ukraine was, once upon a time, the "bread-basket" of Europe - the lack of industry and power in the state is likely to reduce it into an agricultural backyard. This is exactly what India and other Third World countries have been complaining about in the international assemblies. They have been pleading with the industrial countries to help the agricultural economies in a balanced economic growth. It should not be unreasonable to remind New Delhi of its own responsibility to redress this inequity toward the Punjab. An Indian journalist made the following observations in this context:

"Certain serious wrongs have been done to the Sikh community and no efforts have been made to correct them ... It is a historical fact that the Sikhs have always been loyal to the country and have always borne the brunt of foreign attacks..."

The most important grievance of people in the Punjab has been that their state has always been neglected so far as planning of the national economy is concerned. The state has suffered for long for want of adequate power.

Onkar Pandit, made the following comments:

"The Sikhs also complain that Punjab is being bled white because of the Centre's refusal to grant licenses for setting up big industrial units in the state. Nearly 70 percent of its cotton and about 60 percent of its molasses are "exported" to other states rather than being put to industrial use within its own territories, with the result that it has to "import" finished goods for which it pays "value added" prices."

"The Sikhs...feel sore over the ridiculously low central investment, totalling not even Rs. 900 crores, out of the total public sector investment of nearly Rs. 40,000 crores since 1951 (this was written in 1983). In fact Punjab's share is considerably less because in almost all of the hydel power projects...one or more of its neighboring states - Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan - have a substantial share, reducing its actual percentage share to around one percent."

The Sikhs are genuinely concerned that Punjab's prosperity, which is based on agricultural products, is being used as a pretext to deny it a fair share of industry and capital investment. They fear that without a balanced economic growth, the Punjab's might soon become a stagnant economy or even a deficit state like the once thriving Basque region of northern Spain.

If the environment of mutual trust and the spirit of sharing had prevailed between the Sikhs and the national government, the dispute over the Ravi-Beas waters would not have posed a problem. Punjab is already a very small state. While the demand for the integration of Punjabi-speaking areas into the Punjab has been ignored, its precious and scarce land and other natural resources are threatened to be taken away without its consent. Dr. Rajinder Kaur, a member of the Indian Parliament, pointed out that "in contravention of the nationally and internationally accepted laws...Punjab is allowed only 24% of its own river waters while 76% of its usage is given to the non-riparian states." Kuldip Nayar, an eminent journalist, expressed his concern over the "thoughtless use of force," pointing out that "the sharing of the Ravi-Beas waters...should not have posed a problem because the Akalis themselves say that the matter could be referred to the Chief Justice of India."

Punjab is the only state of India which is denied the control of its own capital city, Chandigarh. Though recognised as a Punjabi-speaking area, its legal transfer to the Punjab had been made conditional upon the transfer of the cotton-rich enclaves (tehsils) of Abohar and Fazilka to Haryana. Ironically, since Abohar and Fazilka are "not contiguous to Haryana, she (Mrs. Indira Gandhi) made a special provision for a corridor to link these tehsils with

Haryana." If this special provision is implemented, it would open a Pandora's box for India. In as much as, the Punjab would like to establish claim over New Delhi, which is a predominantly Punjabi-speaking area. While Punjab is denied the claims over the contiguous Punjabi-speaking areas in the neighboring states, Haryana is claiming - with New Delhi's blessings - a corridor through Punjab to establish control over non-contiguous enclaves in Punjab!

In 1982, Sikhs travelling from the Punjab to New Delhi were stopped, searched, insulted, detained and jailed - even beaten up and some murdered - by the Haryana police authorities. The National government then agreed to conduct a judicial inquiry, but backed off later. In other words, the Haryana authorities were blatantly treating the Sikhs as 'foreigners,' and potential suspects. Even Congressite Sikhs, belonging to the ruling party were not spared from such insult and humiliation. Indeed, Haryana was behaving like a foreign country for the Sikhs. If this was the way to keep India united, how shall one define a "prescription for disaster?" The belated apology by the Home Minister was only a cosmetic gesture. The misled zealots of India's unity, who used such crude and often brutal tools, were cutting the very roots of the spiritual and psychological unity of our beloved land. If such a thing was allowed to continue, even if unwittingly, territorial unity would become meaningless.

Many Sikhs abroad, planning to go home to visit their parents and for pilgrimage, discovered that their names were black-listed with Indian consular authorities. It was also found that at one time, the office bearers of virtually all Sikh organizations abroad were also black-listed without any evidence of their 'anti-Indian' activities - unless moral support to the Sikhs in India who are struggling for a 'fair deal' was considered as disloyalty to the country.

The request for a licence to install a transmitter in the Golden Temple for religious programmes, did not meet any better luck at New Delhi. The transmitter was to be sent from England as a free gift by the Sikh congregations. The national government's nervousness on this issue was all the more baffling, when in many countries corporations and universities have their own radio stations. Moreover, there are new techniques to relay satellite telecasts around the globe directly to receivers without going through ground receiving stations.

To be sure, the Sikhs in the Punjab have an advantage: plenty of food grain and the river-waters. Still, New Delhi decides the allocations, even though agriculture and canals

are under the domain of states. However, if the Sikhs asked for something which was lacking in Punjab - more power, industrial plants, raw materials, and capital investment - it was either be ignored or labelled as "parochial," or still worse as "separatism." As stated by Inder Kumar Gujral:

"Punjab has nursed a grievance that even agricultural based industry has not been built adequately" and "in the absence of industrial growth, sizeable agrarian and commercial savings of the Punjabis have been channelled out of the state through the banking network. It is commonly believed that about two-thirds of Punjabi's bank deposits get invested outside the Punjab."

The Sikhs had established a competitive advantage in recruitment to the national armed forces, by virtue of their fine physique and an exemplary spirit of sacrifice and heroism. The Sikhs distinguished themselves during the two World Wars, the two Kashmir Wars (1947-48 and 1965), and the Bangladesh War (1971), thereby gaining a competitive edge over many other religious and cultural communities. However, the national government then established a new policy of a quota system from each state - "provincial quotas," - to drastically reduce the share of Punjab and of the Sikhs in the national defence forces. The apologists of New Delhi's dubious policy do not like such a policy to be categorised as "a disguised provincialism," and a "legalised discrimination," against a national minority. Onkar Pandit, expresses the Sikh complaint in the following words:

"Why should quotas be fixed for each state in a country where voluntary recruitment is in vogue unless it is meant to shut out the Sikhs from the armed forces with a view to adversely affecting their economic position and social status further?"

He also points out that "in 1974 the Centre (New Delhi) fixed Punjab's share in recruitment to the armed forces to a mere 2.5 percent. Of this the Sikhs' share works out to around 1.3 percent." According to Inder Kumar Gujral, "it is a dangerous concept and is in sharp contradiction with the national policies."

Young Sikhs find life in the Punjab "very frustrating", because of the attitude of the national government and its interference in every spectrum of their existence. Instead of experiencing "the glow of freedom," promised by Jawaharlal Nehru, they find increasing intensity of the majority's "cultural imperialism," which has become a dangerous mixture of arrogance and ignorance. The "thoughtless use of force when tact and patience could have paid dividends," has ignited the environment in

Punjab and the neighboring states. They are profoundly disillusioned with a system where genuine Sikh leaders and heroes are denigrated, willified and thrown in jails, while those who excel in the art of opportunism are imposed upon the Sikh folks as political power brokers.

Communal Harmony and Territorial Integrity

It goes without saying that communal harmony is the cornerstone of India's unity and territorial integrity. Some people are fond of delivering sermons on unity, as if it is something synthetic. Unity and harmony have to be forged and nurtured through positive means, for which gentle tools and sensitive antennae are required. Humiliation, denigration and ridicule of a national minority - which has become a national sport particularly in northern India - are not the kind of tools which can promote the much-desired unity of India. Those who are, *prima facie* champions of India's unity and are trying to promote it by denying the distinct cultural identity of the Sikhs and a genuine local autonomy in their traditional homeland (somewhat analogous to Kashmir) may be the ones who are unwittingly damaging the very cause they claim to espouse. As a matter of fact, the preachers of India's unity, who identify it with the monopoly of power by the Hindi-speaking Aryans of the north, might alienate not only the Sikhs in the Punjab and the Muslims in Kashmir, but also the Dravidians in the south. They might also destroy the foundations of the cultural and psychological bonds, which provide the necessary cement for India's unity in diversity. This cement consists of a diverse cultural mix, which is neither a synthetic product nor a rock. In this context, the verdict of history should not be forgotten: "foolish friends can be more dangerous than wise enemies." Recognition of India's rich cultural diversity is not likely to weaken its unity. On the other hand, the denial of the existence of a cultural mosaic is not likely to strengthen it. The Sikhs are not alone in demanding a genuine federal system. Every other community, outside the northern Hindi Cow-Belt, is concerned about the concentration of power in New Delhi.

As observed, by Inder Kumar Gujral, who later became India's Prime Minister:

"A large number of problems emanate from the false belief that centralization of power makes a country strong. On the contrary, this leads to the emergence of a callous bureaucracy. Local leadership loses contact with grass-roots and starts paying court to powerful coteries in Delhi. As a result, local frustration leads to agitations and the setting-up of regional parties."

The Hindu-Sikh Cultural Kinship

There is a close kinship between the Hindu cultural heritage and the Sikh cultural heritage. India's history stands witness to the fact that whenever there was an attack on the dignity of the Hindu culture, or upon the territorial integrity of India, the Sikhs invariably stood at the front of the firing lines as the citadel of freedom and security of India. Instead of whipping the dog of "separatism," the traditional cultural kinship should be rekindled and utilized to resolve this essentially "family problem." Given the goodwill and the spirit of accommodation on both sides the cherished aspirations of the Sikhs can be realized in partnership with the preponderant majority. However, kinship implies reciprocity; it is certainly not a one-way street. Prem is the younger brother of Ram, but the former has his own individuality and his own distinct personality. He also has a yearning for the most elemental sentiment of personal dignity. An enduring relationship involves mutual respect and a spirit of cooperation and sharing not of subordination or denigration. It also involves an understanding of the inner personality, the cultural heritage, indeed the very soul of a national minority. It does not behove a great country to renege on the solemn promises of its leaders like Mohandas K. Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru. A series of resolutions of the Indian National Congress, between 1929 and 1946, and personal pledges of its leaders reflect in the following words of Jawaharlal Nehru:

"The brave Sikhs of the Punjab are entitled to special consideration. I see nothing wrong with an area and a set up in the north where the Sikhs can also experience the glow of freedom."

Sikh Heritage and The Punjab

There is both a symbolic as well as deep psychological kinship between a land and its people; which is often the product of a long historical process and sweep of events. For others, India may be a poor country somewhere in Asia, but for Indians it is *Bharat Mata*, which signifies much more than a piece of territory:

*"Sare Jahan se achha,
Hindustan hamara;
Ham bulbulen hein iski,
Yeh gulistan hamara."*

(Sir Mohammad Iqbal)

*"Finest in the world,
Is our beloved motherland;
We are its nightingales'
And this our garden."*

For others, the Punjab is a tiny state somewhere in northern India, but for the Sikhs it is their flesh, blood and tears. Indeed, Sikh heritage is inseparably intertwined with this land. For instance, a flag may be made of an ordinary piece of fabric, but it bears the imprint of a people's dreams, aspirations, honour, indeed their dignity. That is why nations feel insulted when their flag is torn or burnt. It is the imprint of a nation, which makes that piece of cloth different from any other. It is that kind of kinship between the Sikhs and the Punjab.

When a people call a land their homeland, it does not necessarily mean a separate country. Scotland is the homeland of the Scottish nation, as Ukraine and Uzbekistan are homelands of those respective nationalities; but these are not separate countries. For centuries, the Hindus have cherished the memories of "Ram Raj" (the reign of justice and tranquility). Similarly, "Raj Karega Khalsa" (the Khalsa shall rule - or "the Sikh people shall remain free and sovereign") has become a cherished Sikh aspiration and an integral part of their daily prayer. Their deep faith in the following verse by Guru Gobind Singh has always inspired them:

*Khalsa mero rup hai khas,
Khalsa mein haun karon niwas,
Jab lag Khalsa rahai naira,
Tab tak tej dieun mein sara,
Jab eh gahe bipran ki reet,
Main na karaun in ki parteeet.*
The Khalsa is my unique form,
In the Khalsa my spirit abides,
As long as the Khalsa remains distinct,
So long will I endow them all my power,
When brahmanic customs they partake,
Then I, too, will the Khalsa forsake.

India's unity does not have to be at a collision course with the ideals and dreams of the Sikhs. These dreams and ideals reflect the inner frontiers of the Sikh cultural heritage. These are deeply enshrined in their conscience and have become a part of their being. How, when, and in what form these ideals can be realised is a matter of reflection. Many of these dreams can be realised in an environment of sharing rather than in exclusiveness. As a matter of fact, when the Sikhs ruled the Punjab (1799 - 1849) the Hindus and the Muslims fully shared power and participated in every spectrum of life in the Sikh Commonwealth. However, the Sikhs have been the major victims and principal losers during the partition tragedy of 1947. Therefore, they are still struggling for the rediscovery of their national destiny. In this process, their cherished ideals and aspirations are like an English poet's

reflections: "I am certain of nothing, but of heart's affection and the beauty of imagination." This "beauty of imagination" has sustained the Sikhs throughout their relatively brief history in time.

Once again, when a people call a land their homeland, it does not signify that it has become their exclusive real estate; much less the name Hindustan makes India an exclusive Hindu real estate. It does signify, however, that a certain cultural entity is preponderant in that area. Nagaland was so named partly to satisfy the Nagas' aspiration for a homeland and partly in recognition of the Nagas as a distinct ethno-cultural entity within the Indian Union. Similarly, the state of Madras was renamed as Tamil Nadu in recognition of Tamil nationalism within the Indian Union. Despite the established precedents of Nagaland, Tamil Nadu and Kashmir, the Sikhs' aspiration for a homeland is assigned "anti-national" connotations - which has become a pattern of intimidation. To be sure, Punjab has had many other names like Punjal, Pentopotamia, Sapta Sindhva, and East Punjab. What makes "Sikhistan," or "Khalistan," so hysterically "anti-national" that many people have to jump the "anti-Khalistan" band-wagon in order to prove their loyalty to New Delhi? India itself has many names like Hindustan, Bharat, Arya Desha, etc. Those who scream "Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan," were silent when the framers of India's constitution had adopted a foreign name "India" instead of the native name "Bharat" which had invited the famous pique from the late H.V. Kamath, when he used the term, "India, that is Bharat," reminding his contemporaries that it should have been the other way around. It may be mentioned to refresh their memories that the term "Khalsa" (and its contemporary off-shoot "Khalistan") is a native product - made in Anandpur Sahib, Punjab (1699) to be specific. They have forgotten, unfortunately, that it was the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh, who had stopped the invaders coming through the North West Frontiers. These invaders had been coming for centuries not only to plunder India's wealth and destroy its temples, but also take away their daughters and sell them in the bazaars of Kabul and Ghazni. The Khalsa brought an end to this monstrosity and ignominy. Again it was the Khalsa who had established in 1799, the first free state, while the rest of India was moaning under foreign slavery. The Khalsa had shown the path of freedom to the rest of India. One now wonders why the terms *Khalsa* and *Khalistan* have become offensive, while *Nagas* and *Nagaland* and *Tamils* and *Tamil Nadu* are not? As pointed out by Onkar Pandit:

"The Hindu-owned vernacular press in Punjab is handling the Khalistan issue in the same manner in which it had handled the Pakistan problem in the forties; one only hopes not with the same disastrous consequences."

Nations, Nationalities and States

The terms 'nation,' 'nationality,' 'states,' and 'country,' though often used synonymously, are distinct conceptual categories. There are nations without a country, called "non-state entities or stateless nations," like the Palestinians aspiring for a homeland. At the same time, there are nations (call them nationalities, if you will), like the Uzbeks, the Ukrainians, the Armenians, the Kurds, the Tibetans, the Croatians, the French Canadians, the Pakhtoons and the Tamils of Sri Lanka, to mention a few, which have a territorial base, but not a separate country. Almost all the erstwhile Soviet Republics were identified as the homeland of a nationality, but these are not separate countries - even though the Republics of Byelorussia and Ukraine are members of the United Nations. Tibet is the homeland of the Tibetans, but it is presently an autonomous region of China. The Holy See (the City-State of the Vatican) has diplomatic missions in most countries and a Permanent Observer status at the United Nations, but it is not a country. Czechoslovakia was a bi-national state with two distinct regions, each designated as a homeland of the respective nations, once more the Czechs and the Slovaks.

There are different patterns and different levels of self-determination. The Swiss cantons enjoy much greater freedom than independent countries like Poland, Cambodia, or Bhutan. Uzbekistan had the constitutional right to secede from the Soviet Union, but not Scotland. Yet, Scotland enjoys much greater freedom in the United Kingdom than did Uzbekistan in the Soviet Union. In India, Kashmir enjoys much greater autonomy than Tamil Nadu, while Punjab enjoys the least. It is often said that "Punjab must catch a cold when New Delhi starts sneezing."

In this context, the expression "*Sikh Quom*" (the Sikh Nation - often synonymously used for the *Khalsa Panth*) has been a part of India's literature for over three hundred years. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in her address at the Sikh congregation in Richmond Hill, New York (in August 1982) used the term "*Sikh Quom*" almost half-a-dozen times. Some writers trace its origin as far back as to the compilation of the *Adi Granth* (the Sikh Scripture) and the foundation of the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Others identify it with the establishment of the *Akat Takht* by Guru Har Gobind Sahib in 1609. Ever since, the commands from the *Akat Takht* are applicable to the Sikhs all over the world. Even the highest courts in India generally do not, if ever, challenge this authority as it pertains to the Sikhs. Yet others identify it with the Baisakhi of 1699 - the historic Sikh Assembly at which Guru Gobind Singh "bestowed upon them (the Sikhs) a distinct political existence and inspired

them with the desire of being socially free and nationally independent." The Sikh flag was hoisted at the City-State of Anandpur Sahib and the sounds of the drum of victory (*Ranjit Nagara*) pierced through the hills across the country. It signified a challenge to political tyranny, social injustice, and religious bigotry. The years following this historic event were marked by the most heroic battles fought by the *Khalsa* in the cause of righteousness (*Dharma*). After a prolonged struggle, spanning over many decades, many Sikh confederacies (*Misls* or free republics) were established throughout the Punjab. It was soon after the Baisakhi of 1799, that a unified force of the Sikh *Misls*, under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, marched into the city of Lahore and hoisted the Sikh flag. This establishment of the Sikh Commonwealth in 1799 is cited as another milestone in the evolution of the Sikh political entity. At any rate, ever since the loss of Sikh rule over the Punjab, Kashmir and the north western frontiers in 1849, and the deportation of the last Sikh ruler to England, the Sikhs have been striving for the rediscovery of their lost national identity.

Sir Gokul Chand Narang, in *The Transformation of Sikhism* (first published in 1912), frequently used the term "Sikh Nation," and referred to Amritsar as "a sort of Sikh Capital." Mohammed Laatif, in *A History of the Punjab* (1881) also used similar terms. While writing about the evolution of the Sikh polity, Mushin Fani observed in *Dabistan*:

"A state peaceful and unobstrusive had slowly evolved," and the Sikhs "had already become accustomed to a form of self-government within the empire."

Despite the uneasiness of the preponderant majority, the Sikh minority has all the ingredients of a national entity: a common language, a common religion, a common cultural heritage, a distinct history of glory and heroism, a common vision of future destiny (as enshrined in the daily Sikh prayer) and above all a territorial base in the Punjab.

The Sikhs have long cherished local control over their destiny within the Indian Union. Despite the clarity of the *Anandpur Sahib Resolution* (1973), it has received very little publicity or attention until more recently. The following excerpts are noteworthy:

"To preserve and keep alive concept of distinct and independent identity of the Panth..."

"Creation of such an environment where Sikh sentiments can find full expression..."

"The Indian Constitution (should) become federal in the real sense and all states (should be) equally represented in the Centre..."

"In (the) Punjab and other States, Central intervention should be restricted to Defence, Foreign Affairs, Post and Telegraphs, Currency and Railways. The rest of the departments should be under the direct control of Punjab...

"Eradication of poverty and hunger through an equitable economic structure - increase in wealth and end of all exploitation...

"Prohibition and ban on smoking at public places...

"Revival of *Daswandh* (donation of 1/10th of income) among the Sikhs..."

In view of this most authentic and explicit resolution, approved by a representative Sikh organization, one wonders why so much space and time have been assigned in the mass media and articulate political arenas to the phenomena of "separatism," and "balkanization"? Once again, it underscores the imperative of an informed understanding of the basic issues and to unscramble the facts from fiction. For the sake of communal harmony and territorial integrity of India, it is the responsibility of all concerned to approach this problem in a candid and forthright manner and to explore the possibility of a peaceful and equitable solution. It is a difficult task, but not impossible. One can get some lead from George Bernhard Shaw's observation: "People see the things and ask why? I dream the things, which never were, and say why not?"

And So

A large country like India, which is the land of cultural diversity and a panorama of national minorities, cannot afford to live in the fear of the past. It has to face the future with courage and fortitude. It is not beyond the prudence and wisdom of a great country like India to evolve a synthesis between the Sikhs' quest for a distinct national status in their cultural homeland of Punjab at the vertical level and India's territorial unity at the horizontal level. Finding a *modus vivendi* between the aspirations of two estranged brothers is both a challenge as well as an opportunity. Politics, like individuals, do not grow and mature without facing the problems in a candid and forthright manner - problems can neither be wished away nor bombed out of existence. Human life is enriched, not by ignoring the problems or by hiding them under the rug, but by facing them with courage and perseverance and by finding peaceful and equitable solutions.

In world affairs, India has shown leadership in evolving a third perspective, while the nations of the world were caught in the 'right' and 'left' ideological spectrum. It can show a similar leadership by devising and implementing

new institutional strategies - blending territorial and ethno-cultural federalism. It needs a big brother's magnanimity and wisdom to make India a model polity, which other multicultural and multinational societies can emulate for resolving similar problems, e.g., the Tamil nationalism in Sri Lanka, the Tibetan nationalism in China, and Pakhtoon nationalism in Pakistan. It can pay rich dividends in the long-term, not only keeping India united, but also set in motion a new process of reconciliation, friendship, peace and prosperity in the subcontinent. A genuine sub-national autonomy for national minorities would facilitate excellent cooperation among India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and other neighboring countries.

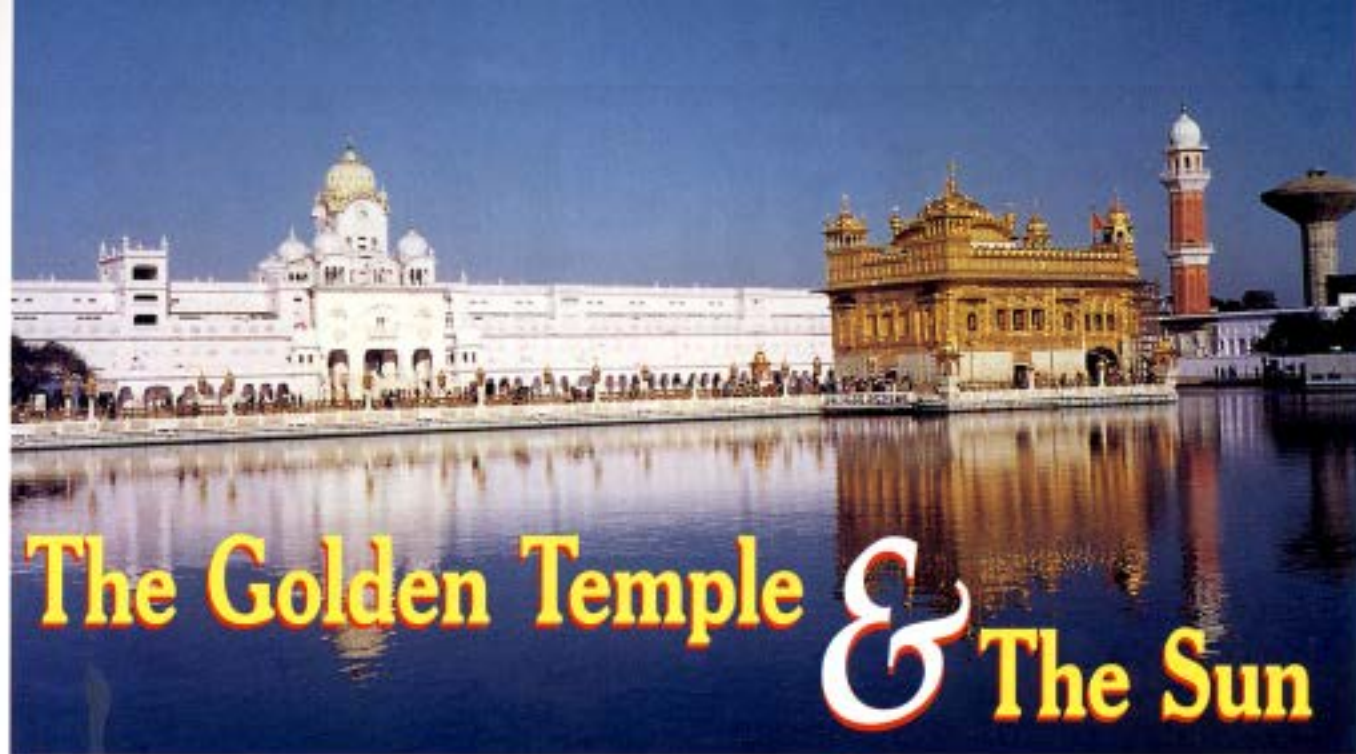
India's unity and the Sikh destiny are intertwined. Therefore, India's unity should not be at a collision course with Sikh aspirations. India's unity will not be strengthened by alienating and humiliating the Sikhs, who stand as a fortification against creeping fundamentalism in the subcontinent. It is time for the people of goodwill to rise to the occasion. India's mass media could make an important contribution by acting as a watchdog against the abuse of power, promoting the spirit of understanding and creating an environment where the aspirations of national minorities can find full expression. The Sikhs have always stood at the front of the firing lines as the citadel of freedom and security of India. Nobody should expect them to do otherwise in their quest for a genuine autonomy in their compact cultural homeland of the Punjab, where Sikh heritage could be preserved and promoted with dignity and respect worthy of the *Khalsa Panth*.



Dr. Gurcharan Singh

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[This was originally written in New York during 1983 in an attempt to face the problems with courage and preservice and finding peaceful and equitable solutions].



The Golden Temple & The Sun

They are always there to guide me, drive away the darkness, answer my prayers and fulfill my hopes, dreams and aspirations. I worship them, revere them, respect them and am in awe of them. They are the very centre point of my existence. 'They' are for me: the Sun and The Golden Temple. The first time I saw the sunrise at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, I was enchanted by the beauty of the scene. Shining in the morning light, the gilded splendour of its panelling, centre dome and minarets, I thought to myself this was more than just a place of devotion, it was a fairy-world palace to the eyes of a ten-year old boy. The two powerful forces coalesced to produce an ethereal scene I had never seen or even dreamt of before. I was captivated by the energy, confused since I didn't know which one to pay more attention to. They both complemented each other so well. Ever since that day whenever I see the sunrise or just the bright sun, my mind travels through the heart of India across the plateaus, deserts and plains and reaches the serene Golden Temple enclave surrounded by the 'beautiful pool of nectar'.

According to Indian mythology, the Sun is a power that commands the winds and waters and exercises control over everything moving and static. The sun moves by fixed laws and gives permanence and stability to the Earth and heaven, by fixing them with physical bonds. The Sun is the giver of light and life. It is the focal point of our solar system. In India, people of all faiths worship the Sun God, *Surya*. The Sun and Golden Temple have much in common; both are witness to deeds of men.

The Golden Temple, built in the mid sixteenth century, is a living symbol of the spiritual and historical traditions of the Sikhs. Hallowed by the prayers of holy men and the blood of martyrs, the tank and temple have been a source of inspiration to the Sikh community ever since they were founded. It stands for the many values and has seen in its 400 years, periods of tranquillity and torment, each time resurrecting itself and emerging the stronger. The Golden Temple symbolises spiritual freedom. It is an eclectic monument that has grown as much from the devotion of the folk as it has from the skill of the craftsmen of the guilds.

The Golden Temple is a product of the synthesis of Hindu and Muslim influences combined together to give it an appearance of its own. This feature is much like that of the Sun, which is composed of many different compounds, but eventually, takes its own identity. The golden dome of the temple is almost the exact colour as that of the morning sun. But beneath the outward appearance they both share an intrinsic characteristic. They both compel humility in the eyes of the beholder.

The Sun and the Golden Temple evoke similar responses in me. Five years ago, when my grandfather passed away, our family made a pilgrimage to the Golden Temple. On entering, I felt a sort of vibe that wiped away my grief and seemed to spark a new beginning, just as the sunrise always signals hope and the fulfillment of dreams. Both make me reaffirm my faith that we are being overseen by a guiding force, even though we cannot see, feel, touch or hear it.

Karambir Singh
(17 years)

1661 or 1666?

The generally accepted date of birth of the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh is *Poh Sudi Saptmi, 1723 Bikrami* (22 December, 1666). Recent researches establish that the correct date of birth of the Tenth Master is *Poh Sudi Saptmi, 1718 Bikrami* (18th December, 1661). In arriving at this conclusion, the following works on Sikh history have been consulted by Des Raj Narang and G.B. Singh:

Original or Primary Sources

<i>Bachitar Natak</i>	1692
<i>Guru Kian Saakhian</i> by Sarup Singh	1790
<i>Bansavali Nama</i> by Kesar Singh Chhibar	1769
<i>Rahat Nama Hazoori</i> by Chaupa Singh	
<i>Bhat Vahi and Panda Vahi Entries</i> brought to light by Giani Garja Singh	1960-70

Secondary Sources

Broadly speaking, these sources may be classified as:

Works in Persian

<i>Khalsa Nama</i> by Bakht Mal	1810
<i>Twarikh-e-Hind</i> by Ahmed Shah Batalvi	1818
<i>Twarikh-e-Punjab</i> by Bute Shah of Ludhiana	1848

Objective Europeans

<i>History of the Sikhs</i> by J.D. Cunningham	1849
<i>Sketch of Sikhs</i> by Sir John Malcom	1805
<i>Adi Granth</i> by Ernest Trumpp	1870
<i>Later Moghuls</i> by W. Irwin	1909

Works of eminent Indian scholars

<i>History of the Punjab</i> by Syed Mohammed Latif	1891
<i>Transformation of Sikh Religion</i> by Sir Gokul Chand Narang	1912

"Other Side of the Picture" (i.e., date of birth of the Tenth Master is *Poh Sudi Saptmi, 1723 Bikrami, (22nd December, 1666)* is depicted in the following works by eminent writers:

<i>Gurbilas Padshahi Daswin</i> by Koer Singh	1751
<i>Gurbilas</i> by Sukha Singh	1797
<i>Suraj Prakash</i> by Bhai Santokh Singh	1843
<i>Panth Prakash</i> by Giani Gian Singh	1870
<i>The Sikh Religion</i> by M.A. Macauliffe	1909

Guru Tegh Bahadur's First Journey to Patna

Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna when Baba Tegh Bahadur paid his first visit to that city. Entries in *Bhat Vahis* and *Panda Vahis* at Hardwar, Prayag, Banaras, Patna and Delhi provide first hand and reliable information regarding Baba Tegh Bahadur's journey to the East and the correct date of birth of the Tenth Master.

Guru Tegh Bahadur undertook two journeys to Patna. The first visit was in 1661 before accession to Pontiffship and the second in 1666 after becoming the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh was born during the course of first visit.

During the first journey, Baba Tegh Bahadur was accompanied by his mother Nanaki, his wife Gujri, his brother-in-law Kirpal Chand and Chaupat Rai. The pilgrimage party set out from Kiratpur in June 1656, reached Hardwar in December 1656 and was present there on the Baisakhi day, 29th March 1657.

The party reached Prayag in early 1661 and stayed there for a couple of months. They were present at Prayag on the full moon day of Baisakh 1718 Bikrami: 4th May 1661. Leaving Prayag, they reached Banaras in the month of June. From Banaras, travelling via Gaya, they reached Patna.

The Birth of Guru Gobind Singh

It was during the stay at Patna that Gobind Das was born. According to *Bhat Vahi Purbi Dakhni*, the Tenth Master was born on *Poh Sudi Saptmi, 1718 Bikrami* (18th December, 1661) after midnight. There was great rejoicing, illuminations at night and alms were distributed to the poor.

Return from Patna

Towards the end of 1662 Baba Tegh Bahadur had to return to Punjab to offer condolences on the death of Guru Hari Rai. His wife Gujri, her brother Kirpal Chand and Gobind Das stayed back at Patna because the child was too small to bear the hardships of travel. This is borne out by the *Bhat Vahi* entry at Prayag. It is mentioned therein that the following persons came to Prayag from Patna alongwith Baba Tegh Bahadur:

Mata Nanaki, Mata Hari, Dewan Dargah Mal, a number of Sikh *fakirs*.

It is significant that Mata Gujri, Kirpal Chand and Chaupat Rai who had accompanied Baba Tegh Bahadur on the outwards journey had stayed back at Patna.

Guru Hari Krishan passed away on 30th March, 1664. Baba Tegh Bahadur was proclaimed Guru on 11th August, 1664.

Imprisonment of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Tegh Bahadur toured throughout the Punjab. His teachings made powerful impact on the people and he attracted large crowds wherever he went. This made Emperor Aurangzeb very apprehensive and he ordered his arrest.

The Guru was arrested at Dhamdhan by Alam Khan Rohilla. As mentioned in *Bhat Vahi Jadav Bansian*, he was in the custody of Moghuls at Delhi for two months and three days. He was set at liberty in December 1665 but ordered to be kept under surveillance. As per entry in *Bhat Vahi Talaunda (Pargana Jind)*, the surveillance condition was waived off only in June 1670 when the Guru visited Delhi on his return from Assam.

The second visit to Patna

Evidently it was considered prudent by Guruji to keep himself away from the direct watch of the imperial officials. Accordingly after staying in the palace of Rani Champa Devi at Raisina for three days, he almost immediately left for Patna and arrived there in the middle of May, 1666.

Journey to Dhaka and back

Guru Tegh Bahadur took pains to organize missionary work. In pursuance of the same objective, he set out on the journey to Dhaka in August 1666. Travelling via Barh, Monghyr, Bhagalpur, Colgong, Sahibganj, Katinagar, Malda, Godigari, Gopalpur and Pabna, he reached Dhaka in early 1667. After staying there for about a year, Guru Tegh Bahadur came back to Patna in 1668.

Journey to Assam

After the Guru had come back from Dhaka to Patna in 1668, Raja Ram Singh met him in the neighbourhood of Monghyr. The Raja was commanding a strong Moghul army and was on his way to Assam. The expedition was directed against the Ahom ruler who had earlier inflicted a crushing defeat on the Moghuls and driven them out of Guwahati.

It is stated that Aurangzeb had appointed Raja Ram Singh in-charge of the expedition with a sinister motive as

it was fraught with great dangers. Hazards of climate combined with sorcery for which Kamrup was notorious, had caused a terror not only in the minds of rank and file of the Moghul forces but also their commanders. The death of Mir Jumla, Commander of the previous expedition in 1665, was by common belief attributed to this combination. Raja Ram Singh made an humble appeal to Guru Tegh Bahadur to give him his protecting hand and accompany him to Assam. The appeal was accepted and Guruji agreed to accompany the Raja instead of going to Patna. This was, however, an unforeseen development.

As mentioned in one of the *Hukamnamas*, the expedition left Monghyr in September 1668. Travelling via Dhaka, it reached Assam in early 1669. According to Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, the expedition reached Ranga Mati (Assam) in February, 1669.

After staying in Assam for about a year, Guru Tegh Bahadur took leave of the Raja and left for Delhi and arrived there in June 1670. According to *Bhat Vahi Talaunda* the Guru stayed in Delhi for two months and thirteen days and then left for Lakhnaur (near Ambala), enroute to Punjab.

Surveillance waived

It was during the stay at Delhi that the restriction regarding surveillance conditions was waived off under orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. Nawab Saif Khan, who was a relative of the Emperor and a devotee of Guru Tegh Bahadur, played a significant role in the entire case.

Dastar Ceremony

Meanwhile, Mata Gujri alongwith the child Gobind Das and her brother Kirpal Chand travelled from Patna to Lakhnaur (near Ambala). As mentioned in *Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi*, they arrived at Lakhnaur, a day before Dussehra in 1727 *Bikrami*. Mehar Chand Subhikhi, maternal uncle of child Gobind Das, who lived at Lakhnaur, performed the *Dastar* ceremony of the child next day, in September 1670.

Guru Kian Saakhian

This work was completed in 1790 by Bhai Sarup Singh of Bhadson by drawing upon his family records of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. It covers a period of 73 years from 1692 *Bikrami* to 1765 *Bikrami* upto the passing of Guru Gobind Singh. The book, edited by Giani Garja Singh and Prof. Piara Singh Padam, was published in 1986.

Extracts from Saakhis No. 14 and 112 are reproduced:

It is mentioned under Saakhi No. 14 that Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna on *Poh Sudi Saptmi* 1718 *Bikrami* (18 December, 1661).

According to Saakhi No. 112 Guru Gobind Singh passed away at Nanded on *Katak Sudi Panchmi* 1765 *Bikrami* (7 October, 1708) at the age of 46 years 9 months and 14 days.

***Bansavali Nama Dasan Patshahian Ka* by Kesar Singh Chhibar**

Kesar Singh's ancestors belonged to Kariala, District Jhelum (now Pakistan). His grandfather, Dharam Chand, and great-grandfather Dargah Mal, had been Diwans to Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Tegh Bahadur. He had consulted the records in Guru's house at Anandpur. The book was written in 1826 *Bikrami* (1769 A.D.).

Writing about the work in *Panjab-Past and Present* (April 1970 issue), Dr. Ganda Singh says: "To a discerning research scholar well versed in the chronology of the period, the book is full of useful information about such of the events upto about 1756 A.D. as he had recorded on personal observation or first-hand knowledge". Evidently, the information contained in *Bansavali Nama* is reliable.

***Rahat Nama Hazoori* By Chaupa Singh (Chaupat Rai)**

Chaupat Rai accompanied Guru Tegh Bahadur throughout the first journey to Patna where he was present at the time of Guru Gobind Singh's birth. He was in constant attendance to child Gobind Das. Chaupa Singh was killed at Delhi alongwith 60 other Sikhs in 1723.

It is mentioned in the *Rahat Nama Hazoori* that Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna in 1718 *Bikrami* (1661 A.D.).

Works in Persian

Bakht Mal wrote *Khalsa Nama* in 1810 at the instance of a British historian, Sir John Malcom, author of *A Sketch of Sikhs*. He gives 15 years as the age of Guru Gobind Singh at the time of the passing of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Ahmed Shah Batalvi, completed his book *Twarikh-e-Hind* in 1818. He mentions that when Guru Tegh Bahadur was put to death, his only son was fourteen years of age.

Bute Shah (Ghulam Mohayya-ud-din) of Ludhiana wrote *Twarikh-e-Punjab* in 1848 at the instance of a British official. It is a comprehensive history of the Punjab from the earliest time to the break-up of the Sikh Empire. The author, on the authority of Shankar Jyotshi, puts the year of birth of Guru Gobind as 1718 *Bikrami* (1661 A.D.).

The above books written in Persian are historical works based on information available to, or collected by, professional historians and therefore carry credibility.

Objective Europeans

European writers of history are generally more objective and precise and those who have written on the Sikhs in the first half of nineteenth century were seasoned scholars like Sir John Malcom, Dr. W.L.M. Grgor and Captain Joseph D. Cunningham. The last of them incurred displeasure of his superiors and so lost his political appointment for his frank and honest observations in his *History of the Sikhs* written in 1849. He writes on page 59: "When Tegh Bahadur was put to death, his only son was in his fifteenth year". Again at page 73 he says, "Gobind is stated to have been born in the month of *Poh*, 1718 *Sambat* (1661)".

Sir John Malcom in his book *Sketch of the Sikhs* published in 1805, writes, "Guru Gobind Singh is stated by a Sikh author of respectability, Bhai Guru Das Bhala, to have been fourteen years of age when his father was put to death".

Dr. Ernest Trump in his book *Adi Granth*, published in 1870, wrote, "Tegh Bahadur was succeeded by his son Gobind Singh who was fifteen years old when his father died".

W. Irwin's *Later Moghuls* edited by Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar (published in 1909) mentioned that Gobind Singh was born in 1661".

Eminent Indian Writers

The last important writer of the nineteenth century on history of the Punjab in English was Syed Muhammed Latif of the Punjab Judiciary Service. His well-known book *History of the Punjab* was published in 1891 and is still one of the best books on the subject. He writes: "After the death of Tegh Bahadur, the martyred Pontiff, his only son, Gobind Singh, then but fifteen years of age, succeeded to the Pontiffship" (page 261).

Sir Gokal Chand Narang mentioned in his famous book *Transformation of the Sikh Religion*, published in 1912, "In 1675, after the execution of his father, Gobind Singh was a young boy of fifteen".

Relevance of the Hukamnamas

Most of the *Hukamnamas* issued by Guru Tegh Bahadur provide the Guru's own evidence of his travels in the Eastern region of India. It is commonly believed that one of the *Hukamnamas* addressed to the *sangat* at Patna bears relevance to the birth of Guru Gobind Singh.

In all the books on the subject, one *Nisan* and twenty one *Hukamnamas* have been mentioned. The serial numbers of these *Hukamnamas* vary in different books and they are not in chronological order. For ease of reference, the *Hukamnamas* given here have been taken from the book *Hukamnamas of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur* by Fauja Singh.

The main problem faced in regard to these *Hukamnamas* is that they do not bear any dates. With the exception of two, issued from Monghyr, place of issue is also not indicated; out of these two, one is addressed to the *sangat* at Banaras and the other to the *Sangat* at Patna. Five more *Hukamnamas* were issued to the *sangat* at Patna and another was addressed to Shri Dayal Das and Bhai Ram Rai (destination not specified but it is believed that they were in and around Patna). Thus a total of six *Hukamnamas* were issued to the *sangat* at Patna, one to the *sangat* at Banaras and one to Shri Dayal Das and Bhai Ram Rai. These are *Hukamnamas* 4,5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15 and 16. It may be added that *Hukamnama* No. 13 addressed to the *sangat* at Banaras has not been included in Appendix III.

A perusal of these letters shows that they were issued when Guru Tegh Bahadur and Raja Ram Singh were on their way from Monghyr to Assam via Dhaka during the closing months of 1668. Evidently the Guru felt much concerned about the welfare of members of his family.

Backdrop

It is on record that after becoming the Guru, the Ninth Master came back from Delhi to Patna towards the end of May 1666. He took pains to coordinate missionary work. In pursuance of the same objective he set out on the journey to Dhaka in August 1666. On the way he stopped at numerous small places including Barh, then reached Monghyr and stayed there for some time. From Monghyr, he travelled via Bhagalpur, Colgong, Shaibganj and Kantnagar. A number of villages in this area are still predominantly Sikh. Although their dress is Bihari and their language is Maithili, they have retained Sikh traditions and practices till date. Memory of the Guru's visit is still fresh in the minds of these people and many legends pertaining to the same are still current among them.

From Kantnagar the Guru moved on to Malda where he stayed for more than a month. From Malda, he set out for Dhaka passing through Godagari, Gopalpur and Pabna. The exact date of his arrival at Dhaka is not known and widely varying guesses have been made. Considering the fact that the rainy season was not yet over when he set out from Patna—the Guru had undertaken the journey to

organize missionary work and had stopped at numerous places large and small, of which the stays at Monghyr and Malda were prolonged – early 1667 appears to be realistic.

Journey to Assam and back to Delhi

Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed at Dhaka for about a year. He then left for Patna in 1668.

Raja Ram Singh of Amber was leading an expedition to Assam under orders from Emperor Aurangzeb, issued on 27th December, 1667. The Raja met *Guruji* in the neighbourhood of Monghyr and made an humble request for accompanying him to Assam. This was agreed to. As mentioned in *Hukamnama* No. 14, they left Monghyr for Dhaka in September. According to Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar they arrived at Rangamati (Assam) in February 1669 (*A Short History of Aurangzeb*, p.110). After staying for about a year in Assam, the Guru took leave of the Raja in early 1670. He left for Delhi arriving there in June 1670 (*Bhat Vahi Talaunda Jind*).

From the foregoing it is evident that Guru Tegh Bahadur and Raja Ram Singh were together from September 1668 to early 1670.

The Relevant Hukamnama

Out of the six *Hukamnamas* addressed to the *sangat* at Patna, only *Hukamnama* No. 4 is of relevance on the birth of Guru Gobind Singh and the same is reproduced below:

“The congregation has incurred expenses on the *Badhai* of Gobind Das. At this the Guru expresses his pleasure. Each rupee spent has earned the blessings of a *mohar*. The offerings sent previously too have met the Guru's pleasure. Whoever serves the Guru in future, shall earn merit”.

When was this Hukamnama issued?

Sikh Scholars are of the opinion that this *Hukamnama* was issued during the period when Guru Tegh Bahadur accompanied Raja Ram Singh to Assam.

Dr. Ganda Singh in his book '*Makhaz Tawarikh-e-Sikhan*' maintains that the *Hukamnama* was issued in December 1668.

Dr. Hari Ram Gupta writes that the *Hukamnama* was issued when the Guru and the Raja were at Dhaka (*History of the Sikhs*).

Randhir Singh in '*Gurparnalian*' (S.G.P.C.) at p. 115 writes that the Guru and Raja Ram Singh were together in Assam when the *Hukamnama* was issued.

Macauliffe in the *Sikh Religion* IV, pp. 352-358, and Khazan Singh in *History of Sikh Religion*, p. 166, corroborate

the same. (also see Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar's *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, p. 354).

Sikh writers like Koer Singh, Sukha Singh and Bhai Santokh Singh also write that the *Hukamnama* was issued when Guru Tegh Bahadur and the Raja were together.

Summarising the above facts it can be stated, without any fear of contradiction, that the *Hukamnama* was issued between September 1668 and early 1670 when Guru Tegh Bahadur accompanied Raja Ram Singh to Assam.

Hukamnama No. 4 does not pertain to the birth of Guru Gobind Singh.

The Other View

The other side of picture, i.e., that the date of birth of Guru Gobind Singh is 22 December 1666, is depicted in the following works:

<i>Gurbilas Patshahi Daswin</i> by Koer Singh	1751
<i>Gurbilas</i> by Sukha Singh	1797
<i>Suraj Prakash</i> by Bhai Santokh Singh	1843
<i>Panth Prakash</i> by Giani Gian Singh	1870
<i>The Sikh Religion</i> by M.A. Macauliffe	1909

How did this come about?

The widely prevalent belief that Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna in 1723 *Bikrami* (1666 A.D.) stems from that fact that after accession to the Pontiffship, Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Patna in 1666 A.D. Actually he paid two visits to Patna. The first visit was in 1718 *Bikrami* before becoming Guru and the second in 1723 *Bikrami* after becoming Guru. Guru Gobind Singh was born during the course of first visit in 1718 *Bikrami*.

Most writers of Sikh history of the Guru period have made no mention of the first visit in their works. In recording the birth of Guru Gobind Singh, they took the *tith* (lunar date) *Poh Sudi Saptmi* from the firmly established tradition among the Sikhs regarding the birth of the Tenth Master and the year 1723 *Bikrami* from the year of the Ninth Master's visit to Patna after becoming Guru and came to the conclusion that the date of birth of Guru Gobind Singh was *Poh Sudi Saptmi* 1723 *Bikrami* whereas actually it is *Poh Sudi Saptmi* 1718 *Bikrami* corresponding to 18 December, 1661 A.D.

It appears that since the lunar date (*tith*) of birth (*Poh Sudi Saptmi*) remained the same in both the cases, the public remained ignorant about the actual year of birth.

Origins of Error

The first eminent writer to mention the incorrect date of birth of the Tenth Master was Koer Singh, author of *Gurbilas Patshahi Daswin* written in 1751 A.D. It is a

commendable work but its greatest weakness is that the important events connected with Guru Gobind Singh's life are incorrectly recorded in this.

Besides date of birth, the author also gives incorrect dates about some of the other important event as detailed below:

Event	Given Date	Correct Date
Creation of Khalsa	1746 Bik (1689)	1699
Guru Tegh Bahadur's Journey to Patna	1721 Bik (1664)	1666
Passing of Guru Gobind Singh	1766 Bik (1709)	1708
Battle of Bhangani	Before 1685	1688
Battle of Nadaun	Before 1685	1689

Sukha Singh, author of *Gurbilas*, written in 1797, took his cue from Koer Singh. Bhai Santokh Singh, author of *Suraj Prakash* (1843) and Giani Gian Singh, author of *Panth Prakash* (1870) relied entirely upon the incorrect date of birth given by Koer Singh.

Macauliffe, author of *The Sikh Religion* written in 1909, was a mere translator and scrupulously avoided expressing his own views anywhere. To quote his own words: "It must also be stated that the intention of the author has been in fulfillment of his promise to write the work from the orthodox Sikh point of view, without any criticism or expression of any opinion of his own".

Suraj Prakash is considered to be one of the greatest epics of northern India. All the other four works mentioned above are all held in very high esteem by the Sikhs. Thus the error that had initially crept into the first work, namely *Gurbilas Patshahi Daswin* by Koer Singh, got propagated through the medium of the other four subsequent publications by eminent historians and writers.

Des Raj Narang & G.B. Singh

Des Raj Narang, a Sikh by faith, was born in January 1911 at Narang, District Jhelum. After his matric at the Khalsa High School in Chakwal, he graduated (B.A. Hons) from the Khalsa College Amritsar in 1933, with a first class degree and awarded the Gold Medal. He did his M.A. in Mathematics at the Forman Christian College in Lahore before sitting for the ICS in 1938. He retired from Government Service in 1972 and has since devoted his life to the study of Sikh history and Punjabi literature, especially the life and times of the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh.



S P I R I T U A L I S M

in today's weird world

With the world afflicted by international terrorism, militant fanaticism and religious intolerance, which has unleashed profound hatred and senseless killing, spiritualism has more importance than ever. People are increasingly turning to the holy scriptures to find spiritual strength to re-shape a world where the people of all faiths must respect each other, with love and compassion towards all beings.

In fact, all religions evoke spiritualism which is *divine love*. No religion divides, but really unites. No religion preaches hatred nor killing but only amity and love for mankind. We only have to listen to the timeless messages of our spiritual godheads, prophets, saints and gurus and act upon these. Mere reading of scriptures without realising the divine presence in all beings is meaningless. What is required is a passionate commitment by people of all faiths, in a spirit of genuine friendship, to build a better world, a truly multi-racial, multi-religious and multi-cultural society grounded in the ethical and spiritual values of life.

Spirituality means vigilance, self-control, a consciousness, a sincerity, patience, humility and never-failing goodwill. Only then one realises the Divine presence, divine or spiritual love and discovers one's own true mental being.

A spiritual approach to life awakens one's awareness and responsibilities towards one's family, the neighbours, society at large and the country. It helps establish a healthy relationship in which all human beings are treated as equals and their faiths and beliefs respected.

All religions preach peace and compassion. Islam denounces killings and intolerance. Prophet Muhammed gave the highest sanctity to human life. Tolerance is the essence of Hinduism and truly a differentiating mark of Indian culture. In fact, the Hindu way of life is the essence of secularism. When Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*, "I give to every one according to his worship", he proclaims a doctrine which is one of wide tolerance and respect for the faiths and beliefs of others. The appeal in Hinduism is for universal love and brotherhood. "The whole world is our family" is a *Vedic* spiritual injunction.

Such are the teachings of the Buddha, Jesus Christ and

our Guru Nanak. They show ways and means of eliminating suffering and anguish of man. It is only through the love of humanity, through service, benevolence and compassion that love of God and human beings becomes possible, says Guru Nanak.

According to the Sikh scripture, the holy *Guru Granth Sahib*, spirituality invests the individual with a vision of divine presence in all human beings and motivates him to dedicate himself to the welfare of fellow beings. Realising spiritualism transforms him into an ideal man of benevolence who, besides being divine-oriented becomes, in effect, socially oriented.

Guru Nanak, by his vision of the one humanity, which transcended all distinctions of caste, creed, race and country, inspired mankind to treat all human beings as equal and with love and compassion. That there is One God, who is our Father and we His children and, therefore, all brothers was his message which is as relevant today as it was in his time, over five centuries back. An apostle of peace and love, Guru Nanak's response to the disharmony and chaos of the times in which he was born was that of a spiritual reformer. His message, to both Hindus and Muslims was one of humility, religious tolerance, goodwill and compassion. The famous words when he emerged from a vision of God were: "There is neither a Hindu nor a Mussalman".

It has been said: *Baba Nanak Shah Faqir, Hindu ka Guru, Mussalman ka Pir.*

The underlying principle of all religions is love and compassion and peace on earth. What the world needs is a religion of love. To be a good religious man is to do good and be good to others and respect their religious beliefs and faiths. There is no alternative to living in religious harmony, amity and mutual trust.

Survival of the human race depends upon the full realisation of the grand vision of our great spiritual godheads where, forever, love overwhelms hatred, compassion replaces cruelty, and there is harmony against racial prejudice.



SEWA

I've run to the mountains
Searching for my salvation
When a Khalsa came along
And showed me the way.

The salvation that you seek
Lies in serving His creation
Running to the mountains
Is not the Sikhi way.

But His creation is unkind
And lashes out at me
I shudder at the anger
That I see around me.

Rise to the challenge
See the Divine in all
In serving that Divinity
Lies your salvation.



It's Amrit Vela, dear child
Rise and meditate, at this time
Give up the sleep, that you so love
Rise and experience, the glow of dawn.

In this silence, there is no one else
Just the Shabad and myself
The Shabad fills every pore
And the nectar beings to flow.

The serenity lingers through the day
As I go along my way
I feel His Hand over me
Guiding me through my day.

Inni Kaur