

II/2019

# NISHAAN

NAGAARA



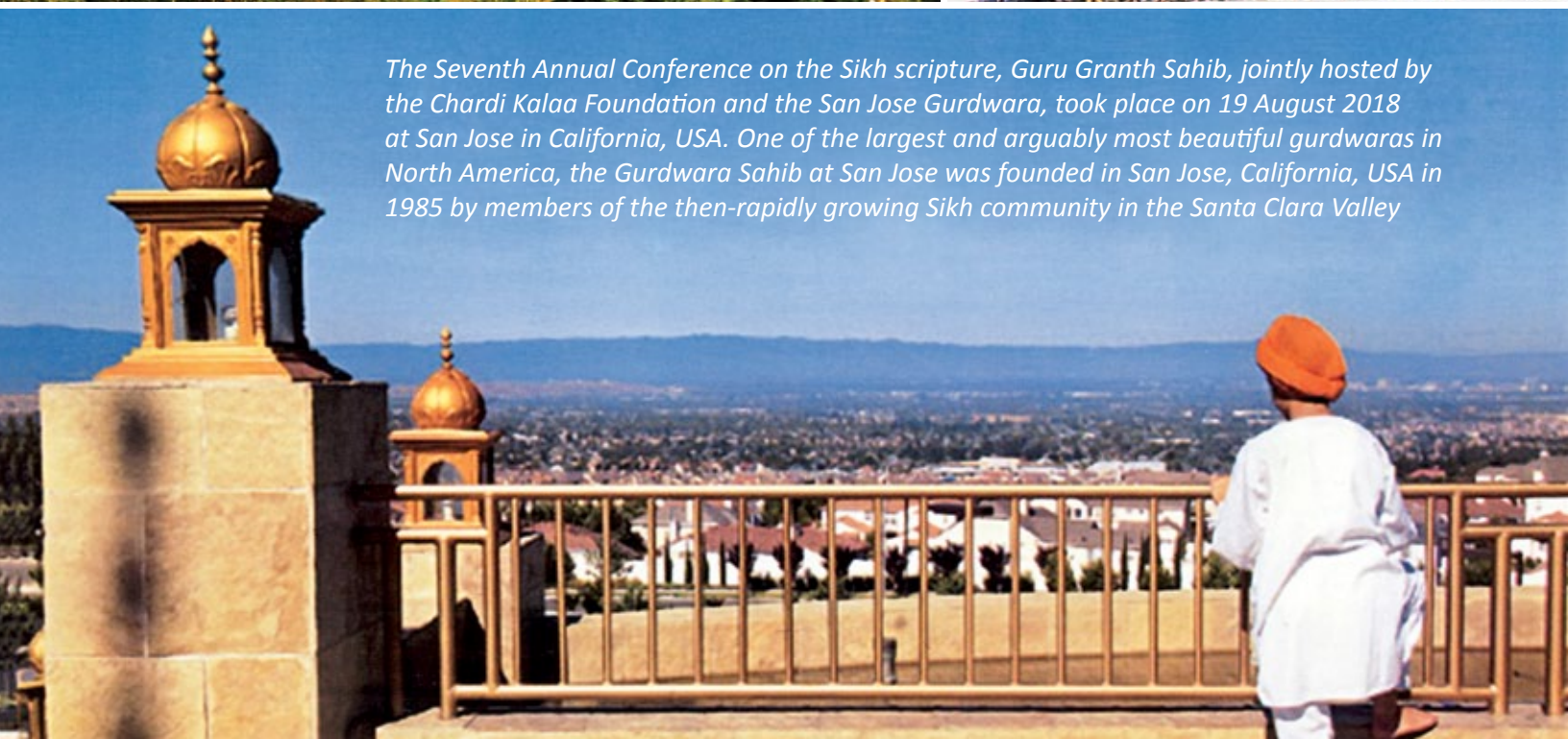
**Return to Lahore**  
**The Real Ranjit Singh**

**An Occidental Romance**  
**Vaisakhi in Canada**





*The Seventh Annual Conference on the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, jointly hosted by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation and the San Jose Gurdwara, took place on 19 August 2018 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley*





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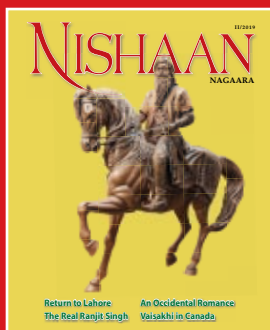
Arguably the largest Vaisakhi event outside of India, over half a million took part in this parade in Surrey, British Columbia even as Canada declared April as 'Sikh Heritage Month', Prime Minister Justin Trudeau sent joyful greetings. The city of Surrey BC also has the distinction of having the highest number of Sikhs in an urban concentration.

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Statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh installed at Lahore (credit Bobby Singh Bansal)

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## ART & LIFE

Does art imitate life or is it the other way around? The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche reminds us that “Art is essentially the affirmation, blessing and deification of existence.” Am I musing on art as life or life as art? Perhaps in reproducing the visible, art may reveal the invisible. I leave this profundity for another day. Let’s engage with matters that are less esoteric and settle for Henry Miller’s assertion that “art teaches nothing except the significance of life.” Our sense of art and its impact emerges from the limited art we create, conceive, own or periodically enjoy in private or museum-collections!

Just months ago, Gautam Srivastava founder of the *Hubris Foundation* hosted the first grand exhibition, an unabashed, tribute to the *Glory and Grandeur of the Sikhs – as painted by European artists in the 19th century*. It included painstakingly selected examples from about 60 institutions and museums from different parts of the world including Europe, America, and Japan. To my knowledge, this is the first such effort and was eminently successful. It includes the work of many prominent artists, the exhibit first opening in New Delhi and then remounted in Chandigarh, capital of the Punjab.

The theme is Sikhs and Sikhism; the artists are European. Also note that Gautam Srivastava is not a Sikh nor is the project identifiably backed by any Sikh organisational financial support. Clearly, this is neither the first nor the last example of Sikh art on the world stage. While we enjoy the quality of the art and its presentation here which are, by any standards, first rate, I am tempted to highlight some matters that my eye or mind will not let go.

While we ought not to live in the past, objects of art housed in museums worldwide retain lasting significance. The carefully chosen items that constitute the Hubris Foundation’s exhibition are remarkable and deserve celebration. The essay *An Occidental Romance* masterfully captures the substance and the spirit of the endeavour. Since Sikh sentiments rightly do not condone images and icons of the Gurus for exhibition, yet a slew of examples exist, like calendar and pop art.



The exhibition mounted by the Hubris Foundation is free of such artefacts and distractions.

Most Sikh art that graces museums and palatial homes favours renditions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh or famous gurdwaras and historic themes. When the emphasis is on glory, Ranjit Singh’s persona dominates the landscape. Though entirely understandable, in my view, this leaves the narrative grossly incomplete, even misleading.

The truth is that Ranjit Singh, a barely literate and minimally educated ruler was way ahead of the times and a true genius. He ruled in the name of the Khalsa but his reign was secular. He treated Sikhs and non-Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus, alike and they were equally represented in his court and in the corridors of power. There was no capital punishment in his long



reign. His foreign minister was a Muslim while Hindus held equally important cabinet posts. He appointed French Generals to command his formidable army, and the Italian Ventura too served as a general in Ranjit Singh's army. There was no special tax on non-Sikhs and no special rights for Sikhs. He gave charitable grants not only to Sikh gurdwaras but to non-Sikh places of worship as well. Examples of his generosity and kindness to the needy in his domain are now part of folklore. He welcomed visitors from the far corners of the multifaith, multicultural world in which we live today. He was truly ahead of his times.

Usually, celebrations of his memory highlight his service to Sikh institutions, like the gold on the Golden Temple, or his possession of the Kohinoor, the largest diamond of the time that now adorns the British Royal collection, even the luxurious throne that he did not use. *But really little else.*

We seem to overlook his large perspective of humanity beyond the needs of Punjab and beyond the Sikh world. In today's hotly polarised Trumpian reality, what could be more important than Ranjit Singh's secular inclusive views that transcended religious labels and regional political barriers?

And then there is some grim reality : good and honest as he was, Ranjit Singh was not perfect. No one is. For example, he undermined the tradition of *Sarbat Khalsa* that was so critical to Sikhs and Sikhi as an institution of representative participatory self-governance. I understand why any sovereign leader will do what he did, but the larger implications of what he did continue to haunt us today.

We ignore that his many widows committed the Hindu rite of *satee* (self-immolation) at his death. His multiple marriages were not consistent with Sikh ethos nor was *satee* by his widows. His son (Duleep Singh) did not and does not deserve the unquestioned adoration of Sikhs, yet we continue to honour Duleep Singh as well as his daughters, for little reason.

Of course Ranjit Singh was great and has earned his place in history as very few people have. Remember him but don't whitewash the blind spots, which are important for us to remember. Let's not forget that he was a real, living, breathing, feeling human but a great man, warts and all. There may be other Sikhs, as well, who deserve a community's deference, so let us not forget that no one is perfect.

I heartily confess that I admire the idea of the exhibit and the work of the Foundation; yet, the 'Hubris' in the title of the foundation intrigues me. The Greek word *Hubris* speaks of arrogance and excessive pride. Does it refer here to the fact that the exhibited art on Sikh themes is the work of non-Sikh Europeans? So what? I would ask. Is there a problem or novelty in their probing Sikhs and Sikh themes as museum pieces which are representations of a dead and buried past? Is it a reflection of the arrogance that so many immensely successful financial Sikh fat cats who seem unfairly tied to an arrogant sense of self? This trait is not so rare in successful people, regardless of their origin or religion. Some are even proud as peacocks of their self-professed humility.

Or is my nitpicking here a classic example of my own *Chutzpah* (as Yiddish speakers might say) as a superb reflection of my own hubris? Anyway, the name of the Foundation continues to intrigue me!

As Gurbani tells us: We are creatures of one breath (*Hum aadmi haen ik damee muhlat muht na janaa...* Guru Granth p. 660) – the one breath we are in at any given moment. The breath before this defines the past; the one yet to come is the unknown uncertain future. So, live not in the past; it would be like making your living quarters in the foundations of your house. Foundations give one a sense of self and security. Live in the present in hopes and dreams of the uncertain future.

In addition to the above noted exhibit, this issue of *Nishaan* offers a rich harvest of several timeless reminders of Sikh heritage. In June 2019, through the tireless efforts of the UK-based Bobby Singh Bansal and Raj Kapany of *The Sikh Foundation*, a 9-foot bronze statue of Ranjit Singh astride his horse was recently installed in Lahore, his kingdom's capital city. The peerless Maharaja is also remembered in three unique essays and related articles.

He had both Muslims and Hindus as courtiers in his court. The *Fakir* family of Muslims : *Hakeem* (Expert of Traditional Medicine) Aizazuddin, had treated Ranjit Singh when he caught an eye infection, and three sons Azizudddin, Imamuddin and Nooruddin were the most prominent Muslims of Ranjit Singh's inner circle. Azizudddin served as his foreign minister. Nooruddin was in-charge of construction and logistics during his rule, but took on a significant role after



downfall of the Sikh empire. He was a member of the Regency Council, that helped the child ruler Duleep Singh govern what was left of the empire. Then Fakir Nooruddin accompanied Maharaja Duleep Singh during his exile, taking on the role of a tutor to the exiled child-king.

The Fakir brothers had a pivotal role in the historic Treaty of 1831 that defined Anglo-Sikh relationships between areas west of river Sutlej and the British controlled territory east of that river (verily the rest of India). Both Imamuddin and Nuruddin were involved in negotiating with the British and the Treaty remained inviolable till machinations of the British (and Dogras) resulted in the two Anglo-Sikh wars and eventual annexation of the Punjab.

Into the present times and lest we forget, a poignant write up on that terrible tragedy in New Zealand in March 2019 when a crazed terrorist attacked mosques in New Zealand with terrible consequences, killing scores of Muslim New Zealanders. The local Sikhs reacted with alacrity to provide not only medical aid and sustenance but helped in the final rites during the grim aftermath. This is in keeping with Sikh teaching and historic traditions of helping those in grief. Sikhs have mounted similar responses after earthquakes whether in India or elsewhere – the killings in Rwanda and of the Rohingyas, earthquake in Kashmir or the fearsome Tsunami which hit Sumatra some years ago.

Back in India, the events of 1984 continue to rightfully reverberate in Sikh memory as they have for the past 35 years. Parmod Kumar's piece is a potent call that these events not be forgotten. He proposes a Peace Memorial and a People's Committee. I wish we could hold our breath for the duration it might take for the Indian political structure to chart a clear path to such simple wisdom.

We are grateful to Ek Ongkaar Kaur and Harbans Lal for highlighting the Sikh teaching of *Khima*. A defining doctrine of Sikhi, as the authors remind us, *Khima* is generally but inadequately translated as 'Forgiveness.'

On the other end of the globe, there is much to cheer the success of Sikhs in northern America. There are now perhaps half a million Sikhs in Canada alone and it seemed most of them were parading in British Columbia during Vaisakhi. The Canadian Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau sent a special message and April was declared 'Sikh Heritage Month'. An essay captures the event superbly and highlights the fact that 25 percent of the population in Surrey, British Columbia is Sikh.

With the diaspora growing, there are Sikhs in transit at many international airports at any time. A colourful essay captures several Sikh families at the Munich International Airport boarding a flight to India. Such ordinary, mundane events are the factoids that mark our historical journey. In vivid contrast I am reminded of a day in 1960 when I was the lone Sikh landing at Idlewild Airport (now JFK) in New York.

Just released is a Directory of 500 distinguished Sikhs, painstakingly compiled by S Surinder Jit Singh Pall, a retired Indian civil servant and dedicated activist Sikh with a lifetime of service. It is unnecessary to comment here on the manner and means of selection as we, at *Nishaan*, have not scrutinised this list nor do we intend to. Surely, many readers may have different honorees in mind, might disagree on who made the list or the appropriate criteria, but we honour them all. John Milton's words come to mind that "They also serve who only stand and wait."

Finally, I take some liberty in pointing out my occasional restlessness with the *Nishaan*, even though I see the Journal as an institutional presence, one of a kind and absolutely special. New Delhi is *Nishaan*'s base and its reach is global, whereas I live and work 10,000 miles away in New York. Except for Pushpinder Singh, I am a stranger to the good men and women who breathe life into *Nishaan*.

My link is via e-mails and occasional phone conversations; personal contact remains mostly non-existent. Matters of timeliness and procedural delays, inevitable as they are, create anxiety at times. *Nishaan* has come a long way and has miles to go and I remain grateful to those behind the scenes. However, like an old-fashioned Neanderthal, I remain deeply attached to direct face to face interaction, where eye contact, expression, a nod and a wink, a smile, frown, even a poker face speak volumes, much, much more than the smartest electronic gizmo. Such is the marvel of our modern magical existence.

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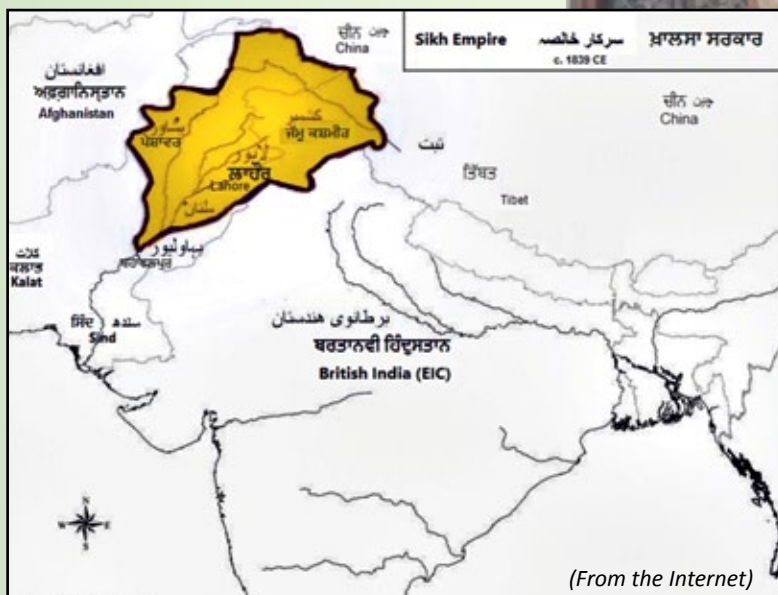
## Cover Story

# Return to Lahore

## Maharaja Ranjit Singh's magnificent statue unveiled

**O**n 27 June 2019, a new statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, 'Sher-e-Punjab' resplendent on his horse, was unveiled at Mai Jinda's Haveli in Shahi Qila of Lahore, in conjunction with the Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA). This magnificent statue, over 9 feet high and made of cold bronze by local artisans, is a gift to the peoples' of Lahore and was conceived by Bobby Singh Bansal, President of SK Foundation, UK and Raj Kapany of the Sikh Foundation, San Francisco, "to forge unity of lasting friendship and symbolic of the rich history of the Punjab and its peoples".

A flash back into history : Ranjit Singh had made Lahore his capital (shifting from the former capital at Gujranwala), the kingdom encompassing the land from the river Sutlaj till the Khyber Pass, incorporating Jammu & Kashmir. He had crossed the river Indus going west/ north-westwards while firmly



The Sikh Empire 1849, before annexation by the British



keeping the British from expanding across the River Sutlej. He rose to power in a very short period, from being the leader of a relatively minor Sikh *misl* to becoming Maharaja of the Punjab and remained so for 40 years till his passing in 1839.

The Kingdom of the Punjab was to be one of the most enigmatic in the sub-continent, its large and well equipped army trained by Europeans and Americans to become one of the most powerful at that time, reversing the aeons of invasions from west-to-east and now taking his Kingdom's frontiers to the north western edge of the sub-continent, beyond the River Indus to the Khyber Pass, wresting this area from the Afghans. This swath is verily today's Pakistan, sans Sind and Baluchistan.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh soon enough established cordial relationships with the British and maintained a relatively stable arrangement with the Afghans while the Court of Lahore remained most secular, with ministers of all religions holding positions of immense authority. He was a colourful character, a sagacious ruler, courageous warrior and of course his farsightedness and generosity contributed immensely to prosperity of the 'Land of the Five Rivers'. After Ranjit Singh's passing, machinations of the English and treachery of some within the Darbar resulted in annexation of the Punjab Kingdom by the British while the state of Jammu & Kashmir was transferred to the Dogras.

### In Bobby Singh's words

I have been going to Pakistan since 1989, so it's been 30 years since my numerous visits began to a country that has been negatively seen by many in the world. When I first crossed over at the Attari-Wagah border on 10 April 1989, taking the train to Lahore and then catching a *tonga* from the station to Dera Sahib Gurdwara, I was immediately overawed by the imposing and formidable Lahore fort of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and that image has remained embedded in my mind thereafter.

I was barely 19 years old then, travelling alone in an 'alien land', yet this was not alien at all, as my forefathers were from Rawalpindi, and I felt at home almost immediately.



*Bobby Singh Bansal with Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Statue*

Thereafter I travelled extensively all over the country by local buses and simple conveyances. From Lahore, I first went to Nankana Sahib, then Gujranwala, continued on to Rawalpindi, and at last to Hasan Abdal, *Punjab Sahib*, which became my



*Being interviewed in Lahore*



adda for days. The Pradhan there, Sardar Sahib Singh took care of me at this very peaceful and mesmerising place. From here I went to Murree in the hills, then to Islamabad, which city reminded me very much of Chandigarh. Sahib Singh's friend from the Swat Valley took me to the frontier city of Peshawar, where I stayed overnight at Bhai Jogan Shah Gurdwara. My visits to Bala Hisar Fort and the century old Gurdwara were sobering and I met many of the local Sikhs, all tall, fair and with green eyes.

That was in 1989. In 2004, I met Sahib Singh again, this time at Dera Sahib Gurdwara where I had taken my parents, and this was an emotional reunion.

Since then, I have been visiting Pakistan on a regular basis, but many matters continued to disturb me. Everytime I returned, it was to find that several historical Sikh structures had been either demolished or replaced by new buildings. This alarmed me and I felt the need to do something to halt this erosion of Sikh history in Pakistan, before things went completely out of hand.

The first sight that sent shivers down my spine was destruction of Maharaja Sher Singh's samadhi in 1992 which unfortunately took place after demolition

of the Babri Mosque in Ayodhia by fanatics in 1992, and in turn some Pakistanis went on a rampage, these persons unable and oblivious to identifying differences between Sikh and Hindu structures but simply destroying numerous Sikh monuments in the mayhem that followed. Sher Singh's tomb became a victim of such mindless vandalism, was completely ruined and the remnants painted green to merge with the nearby masjid. After some impassioned meetings and official intervention, we had the paint removed and in 2013, in collaboration with the Department of Archaeology Lahore, the entire structure was restored. However, the priceless frescoes could not be restored.

Over the years, thereafter, I have been working with the Pakistan Government, highlighting Sikh structures of historical importance, not necessary Sikh shrines, such as the obelisk at Chillianwala, which marks site of that epic Anglo-Sikh battle on 13 January 1849. In 1998, in collaboration with the British High Commission, we renovated the obelisk there, and various nearby graves, giving the inscription a facelift.

In 2016, I wrote a book titled *Remnants of the Sikh Empire - Historical Sikh Monuments in Pakistan & India*, an academic book which essentially was to catalogue numerous structures built by Maharaja



The obelisk at Chillianwala





Ranjit Singh and his courtiers, especially the many forts along the Pakistan/Afghanistan border built by Hari Singh Nalwa. In all, he had built eight forts including that at Jamrud (above) which are very much operational today, as bases of the Pakistan Army and Frontier Constabulary.

### The European connection

In 2008, I had been at St Tropez, southern France researching on the Europeans mercenaries who had served at the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and later in 2010 published a book with the title *The Lion's Firanghis - Europeans at the Court of Lahore*. While visiting the main square there, in company of Henri Prevost, the maternal descendant of General Allard, there was a bust of his ancestor but I observed that "something was missing". He asked me as to what and I answered "Maharaja Ranjit Singh !" That was in 2008 and eight years later, my dreams became reality when we installed a bust of the Maharaja opposite

General Allard, to the delight of the peoples of St Tropez.

In my eagerness to forge such trails in Europe and linking Sikhs from the Punjab with Europe, we continued to delve into history. An Italian officer, General Ventura from Finale, near Bologna had served Maharaja Ranjit Singh from 1822 to 1839. It was necessary that General Ventura's legacy somehow be brought to public knowledge, especially at his



General Allard



General Ventura



birthplace. After our “success” at St Tropez in 2016, I contacted the authorities at Finale and the family of General Ventura in France, and offered my proposal to the Mayor which was accepted immediately. This time I commissioned not a statue, as in 2012, but a bronze bas-relief of the Maharaja at durbar in the presence of his Italian officer. As the Council was cash strapped for funding, a statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and General was not viable, so the relief work was finally commissioned and sculpted by a team from Chandigarh, installed on 26 May 2019, outside the ancestral birthplace of General Ventura’s to commemorate his 225th birth anniversary.

### Back to Lahore

But my passion to install a statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore remained all abiding. It was strange that not a single monument to him existed

preserving the heritage of Lahore, including restoration of Sikh heritage and other historical sites such as the Lahore fort, the royal kitchens, and many others.

I met with his team in 2016, along with the Punjab Heritage Board and the Department of Archaeology. I already had an artist’s concept of the statue, which depicted the Maharaja on horseback and everyone unanimously accepted the proposal. It was envisaged that the Maharaja was to be depicted on horseback, with a bow, going on a hunt on his favourite horse, Kahar Bahar, this Arabic horse having been presented to him by Dost Mohammad Khan. I initially contacted a sculptor in New Delhi, but owing to logistics and the complication of transporting a 10 feet statue across the international the border to Lahore, I contacted the National College of Arts at Lahore. They proposed that talented students along with skilled sculptors from near

by areas work as a team on the statue, under the overall guidance of the Fakir Khana Museum. I secured some funding from sponsors in California, and from my own organisation, the *Sarkar Khalsa Foundation UK*, in partnership with Raj Kapany of the USA. We sought no financial support from the authorities in Pakistan, all was secured privately and I donated funds personally as well, this being a life-long dream of bringing the great Maharaja back to Lahore. It was to be gifted to the peoples of Pakistan, as lasting friendship and rekindle Sikh heritage in Pakistan.



*At the inaugurations in Lahore*

in his erstwhile capital to commemorate the unique secularism of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. After 1947, most statues had been removed, even that of Queen Victoria, which was uprooted and is now stored at the Sikh Gallery in Lahore Fort. Thus began a lengthy process as how to begin and whom to approach. I had already worked with Lahore’s Archaeology Department, and shared my plans with a close friend who immediately suggested I contact Director General of the Walled City of Lahore Authority, Mr Kamran Lashari. He has done so much for



*Statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Hall Bazaar, Amritsar*



My only stipulation was that the statue be installed at a prominent location and where it was secure. During subsequent meetings in 2017 to decide on the overall design, dimensions, possible locations and so on, some members of the Board even suggested that the life-size statue be placed inside the museum where the Bamba Collection was on display. I was the only Sikh during these meetings and give full credit to Mr Kamran Lashari who supported me throughout many stressful meetings, approving what I had sought, foremost being the location. We decided the statue was to be installed opposite Rani Jinda's haveli, inside the Lahore fort, not far from Ranjit Singh's own palace, the Sheesh Mahal.

Fantastic ! Work on the statue then took over 8 months, there were many delays, the structure to be made in cold bronze, standing nearly 9 feet high, raised on a two foot plinth. Work was finally completed in May 2019, and preparations then started outside Rani Jinda's palace to secure the site and beautify the flooring, actually carried out by the WCLA, which worked tirelessly to complete the work before 27 June, the date set for installation, and coincidentally, the day which marked Maharaja Ranjit Singh's 180th death anniversary.

There are several statues of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in India, including Amritsar, but unfortunately they are oversized and with little resemblance to the Maharaja whereas, the statue proudly installed at Lahore has

striking similarity to Ranjit Singh's features. The design was positively received and during the inauguration, media and government officials, stated that the statue indeed was worthy of the great Maharaja.



*After the formal unveiling at Lahore*

The formal unveiling was done by the Pakistan Minister of Tourism Raja Yasir, Kamran Lashari DG of Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA), SGPC Chief Secretary Dr Roop Singh, Sardar Tara Singh of the PSGPC, Anjum Dara, Curator of Lahore fort in presence of many scholars, officials and historians.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh was now back where he rightly belongs – Lahore, capital of the erstwhile Kingdom of the Punjab !

***Bobby Singh Bansal is a Writer, Historian & Documentary Filmmaker, living in the UK***

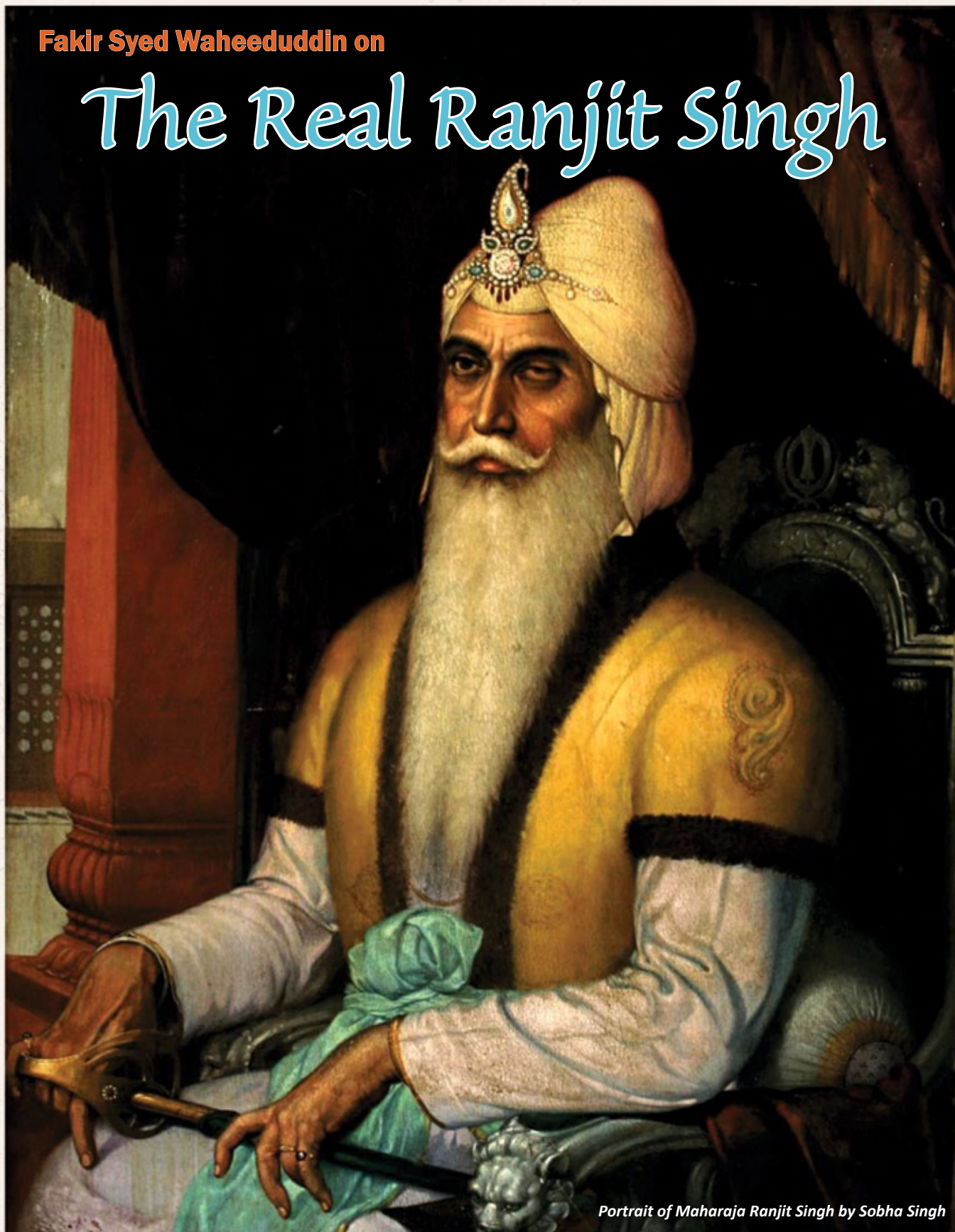
***“The life-size statue of Ranjit Singh on horseback has been installed to celebrate the legacy of the Maharaja whose impact in the region was historically associated with Punjab. It is sculptured by talented local artists, under the guidance and supervision of Fakir Khan Museum.”***

***This monument is gifted to the people of Pakistan by Bobby Singh Bansal, President of SK Foundation UK, Raj Kapany & Mandeep Arora of Sikh Foundation (US) to promote Sikh Heritage, Culture and Tourism in Pakistan and to forge a unity of lasting friendship. It has been installed with approval and esteem collaboration of the Walled City Lahore Authority (WCLA), with the support of the Department of Archaeology, Punjab.***



Fakir Syed Waheeduddin on

# The Real Ranjit Singh



Portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Sobha Singh



In the introduction to his book written in the early 1960s and since re-published several times and now available in libraries around the world, Fakir Syed Waheeduddin acclaimed that Ranjit Singh was of the stuff that legendary characters are made of, and legend has claimed him for its own. He continues to live and grow in the people's imagination, and it has been history's unceasing task to make his historical personality live up to its legendary counterpart.

There was that about him which makes men more memorable than their achievements. Men's achievements date; but if there is something about the men themselves, something besides their achievements, which is worth preserving, the memory of mankind sees to it that it is preserved and it has other means of doing so besides history. History is after all concerned primarily with events and deals with men only as they appear in the events – as counters on the chequer-board of politics and not as creatures of flesh and blood. As creatures of flesh and blood, some of them prove larger than history. Ranjit Singh was such a one.



Maharaja Ranjit Singh 1780 - 1839. From The Book Gallery Of Historical Portraits Published C.1880.



As achievements go, Ranjit Singh's were remarkable by any standard. Heir to one of many petty chiefdoms that had sprung up on the ruins of the Mughal Empire, he rose to be the ruler of a powerful state extending from Tibet to Sind and from the Khyber Pass to the Sutlej. He was a rival as well as a friend and ally – both feared and respected – to the British power in India, which held sway over rest of the sub-continent. He avenged the innumerable defeats, humiliations and depredations suffered by India over the centuries at the hands of Afghan invaders by reconquering part of the Indian territory wrested by them and, more than that, by being an arbiter in the fate of Afghanistan herself.

These and other achievements of his have been recorded by historians in various ways : by some in an admiring, by others in a derogatory, and by still others – a small minority – in an impartial manner. No two accounts of them substantially agree about facts,



places, persons, motives, etc. But, however they were recorded, they ceased to have more than an academic significance with the end of Sikh rule soon after Ranjit Singh's death. Since then the mist of time into which they have receded has been thickened by the mist of distance which veils a large part of their scene from the Sikhs. They have thus become mainly the concern of the professional historian. Not so the man behind them.

Ranjit Singh still lives, large as life, in the imagination of the people. He does so not only where the Sikhs now live, but also where they lived before; for the Muslim village-folk who shared him as a legendary figure with the Sikhs and they have not let him depart with the latter. The image that persists of him is that of a popular king well known to his people through his frequent appearances in their midst, ready to listen to them and to redress their grievance at all times, and looking upon all his subjects, irrespective of caste and creed, "with one eye." That the one eye in his case was literally so seems to have been the subject of innumerable good-natured jokes, which, it is said, he would not only ask people to repeat in his hearing, but to which he himself contributed.

There are even stories of this physical defect of his having been hurled at him with impunity by common people to drive home to him some grievance which they thought he should have but had not redressed personally. It is immaterial whether these stories are true or false. They can only have gained currency

because they fit in with Ranjit Singh's reputation, and he must have won that reputation by exhibiting in other ways the qualities implied in the stories. In short, Ranjit Singh's popular image is that of a kindly patriarch rather than that of a conquering hero or a mighty monarch. He was all three, but his humanity has outlived his splendour and power. Meteoric as his historical career was, the star of his fame as a man shines with a milder and steadier glow; and it has a friendly twinkle in its eye. This then is a response to that friendly twinkle—a response which has been due for a long time from the author and his family.

Three of the author's ancestors were among the men nearest to Ranjit Singh, both in his public and in his private life. Fakir Syed Azizuddin was his Foreign Minister, Fakir Syed Nuruddin his Home Minister and his personal physician, and Fakir Syed Imamuddin one of his principal administrative officers. These men helped him to establish his kingdom on a firm footing and were with him till the last. They were among his chief counsellors and assistants, not only in affairs of state but in many matters behind the scenes. They have left valuable accounts, not only of happenings in and around the court, but of Ranjit Singh's day-to-day life. They have also left documents, paintings and other mementos of the Maharaja and his court. More than all these things, they have left the author a legacy of affection and admiration for the man who was Ranjit Singh.



*Fakir Azizuddin and Imamuddin in the Maharaja's darbar, seen at the bottom left as depicted in a painting by Schoefft*

This ode, as it were, is an attempt to discharge as best he can the duty that has for long rested on the author's, shoulders of adding what is in his possession to the world's knowledge of that fascinating man. It is hoped that what is presented here will help in the conversion of his popular image into a full-blooded portrait, a true likeness of the man behind the events by which history remembers him.



# “He who ruled Lahore ... lives on forever!” Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s darbar



*A painting of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's darbar at Lahore in the 19th century*

**I**n an extensive interview with *SBS Punjabi*, Fakir Aijazuddin reflected on the rise and consolidation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Empire, the principles that underpinned it, and the reasons why it is still regarded as an ideal model of governance. It is often said that 'he who hasn't seen Lahore, was never born'. But I have added to this. I believe, "he who ruled Lahore," ... "lives on forever" said Fakir Aijazuddin.

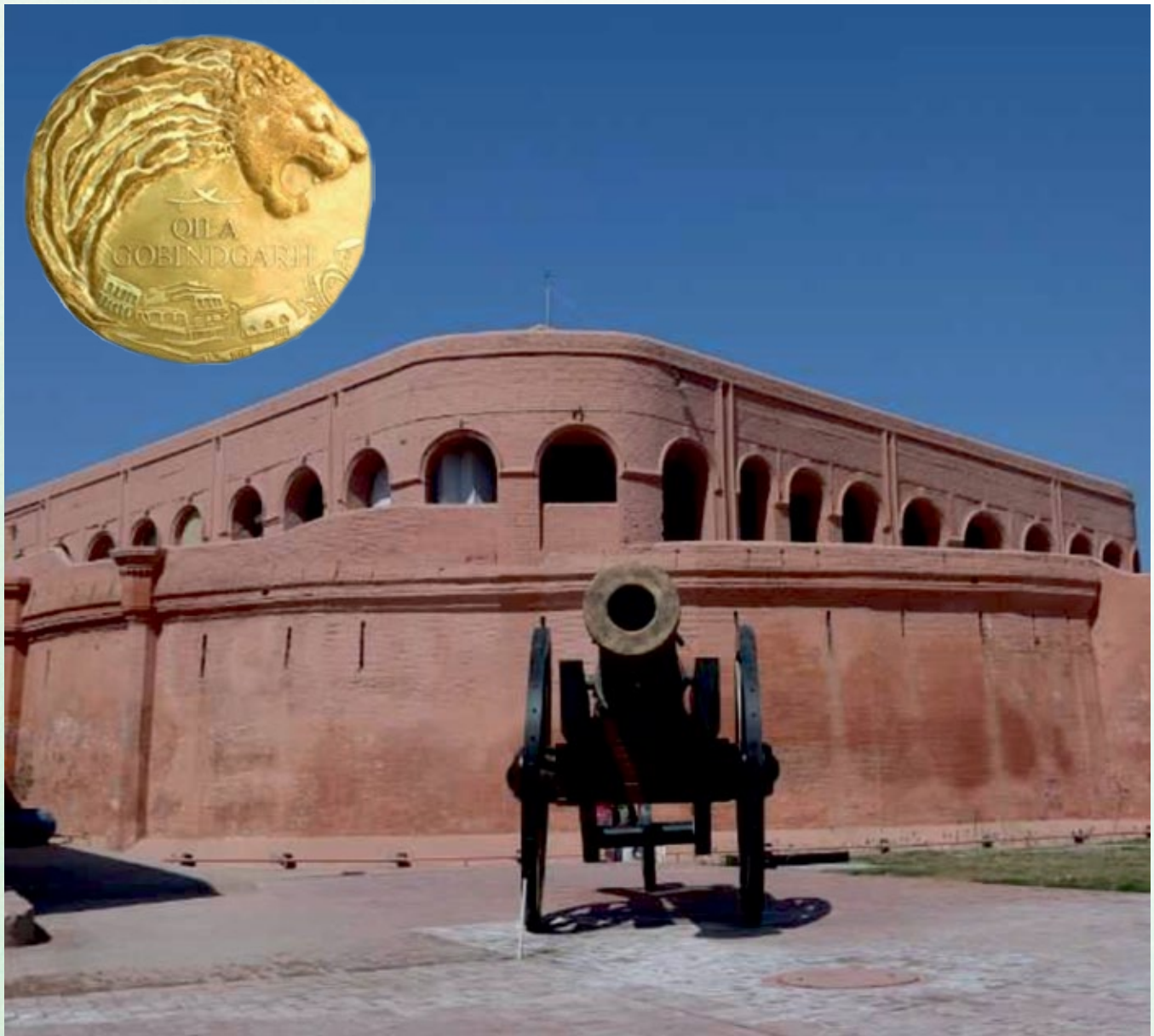
Maharaja Ranjit Singh was very young when he took over the Sukarchakia leadership and went on to build the empire in Punjab that included Afghanistan in the north-west and Kashmir to the north. "His greatest quality was his egalitarianism - he was truly secular in his outlook, and appointed people into positions based on their qualifications

and loyalty. Religion was never an influencing factor in his decisions."

Not only the Dogra brothers and Fakir brothers, but French generals and people of various faiths and backgrounds were entrusted in positions of power. "The other quality of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was his unique ability to endear himself to others - he commanded love and respect of his peers, his courtiers and of the citizens. I'm not suggesting that he *bought* this love and respect - he simply commanded it", observed Fakir Aijazuddin.

"My ancestor Fakir Azizuddin was very similar to him in age. The Fakirs were mendicants, and Fakir Aijazuddin first met Maharaja Ranjit Singh when





*The Gobindgarh Fort presently (inset : Seal of Qila Gobindgarh)*

he was summoned to the court to tend to his only functional eye. As his eye improved, the Maharaja's trust in Fakir Azizuddin grew and soon he became an indispensable part of the court."

"The reason partly for this was that whilst the Maharaja and many of his Sikh courtiers spoke in Punjabi, the official language of the time was Persian - and the Fakir brothers were very well versed in the language. It soon came to pass that Fakir Azizuddin became Foreign Minister in the court, and wrote all the official communications and treaties for the Maharaja."

The eldest Fakir Azizuddin became a trusted aide of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who sent out all official communication and wrote all the treaties entered into by the Maharaja's darbar. He was in fact, the Maharaja's Foreign Minister, who helped with foreign policy, negotiation and communication. "He had a way with words."

"He was very wise and always provided the Maharaja with sound counsel. But perhaps more tellingly, he knew when to remain silent. He was fiercely loyal to Ranjit Singh and never revealed any state or personal secrets."



In fact once when a British spy, masquerading as a merchant tried to gather some intelligence from Fakir Azizuddin and started by asking which one of the Maharaja's eye was faulty, Azizuddin's response was that "the radiance of the Maharaja's face is such, I've never looked at his face fully, and have never dared to look him in the eye."

The second brother, Fakir Imamuddin, was in fact the first of the Fakir brothers to meet the British on the Maharaja's behalf in 1807. "He was asked to negotiate a treaty with the *feringhis*, and he took his older

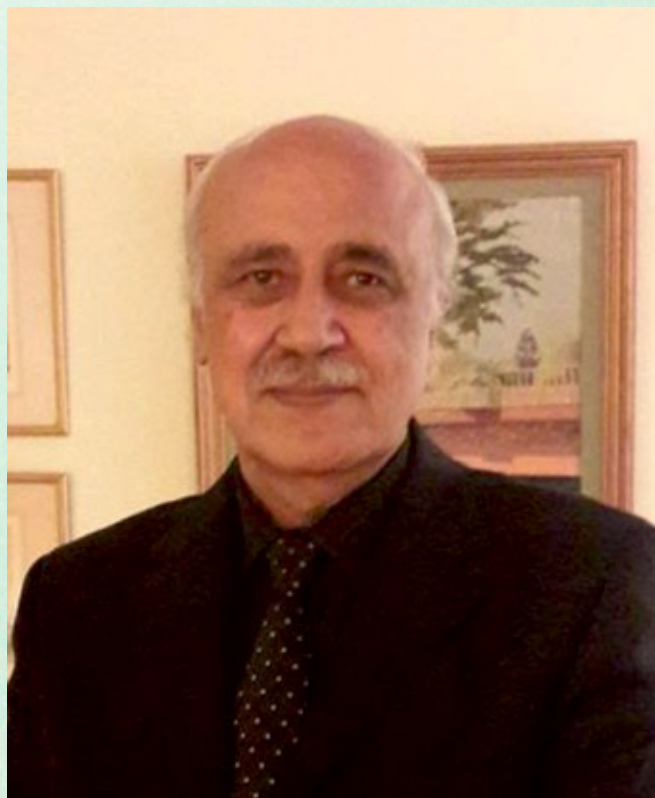
brother Fakir Azizuddin along as well. Soon thereafter, Azizuddin fully took on that role, and Imamuddin was made caretaker of the Gobindgarh fort.

"Gobindgarh fort was where the military arsenal of the Maharaja's army was manufactured, including guns and cannon. It is also where the crown jewels and money were kept safely in the *toshakhana*. Imagine that the man who was in-charge of the treasury as well as the arsenal of the Sikh empire, was a Muslim," said Fakir Aijazuddin.

The youngest of the Fakir brothers was Nooruddin. "He was in-charge of construction and logistics during Ranjit Singh's rule, but took on a very significant role after downfall of the Sikh empire. He was a member of the Regency Council, that helped the child-ruler Dalip Singh govern what was left of the empire. Thereafter, Fakir Nooruddin accompanied Maharaja Dalip Singh during his exile, with his son also taking on the role of being a tutor of the child-king".



Maharaja Duleep Singh depicted as a child in this miniature painting Circa 1849



Direct descendant of the Fakir brothers, Fakir Aijazuddin who resides in Lahore has passionately researched history and written the book 'The Resourceful Fakir', highlighting the contribution of the three Fakir brothers during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's 'raj'.



# Role of the Fakir Family in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Court



*The Fakir brothers: Illustration by Minhaj Ahmed Rafi*

Of the three Fakir brothers who held high office under Ranjit Singh the first to be introduced to him was Azizuddin. He accompanied his father, Ghulam Mohiuddin, when the latter was summoned to treat the Maharaja for an eye ailment soon after his conquest of Lahore. Then came Nuruddin and finally, Imamuddin. The family traces its origin to a famous holy man, Syed Jalaluddin, a native of Arabia, who converted the still more famous Hulaku Khan of Bokhara to Islam, married one of his daughters and travelled with her to the Punjab, where he finally settled down. From Jalaluddin's residence in Bokhara the family acquired the name of "Bokhari" but since Ranjit Singh's time that name has yielded place to the title of "Fakir".

The title was first assumed by Ghulam Mohiuddin by popular acclaim because of his piety, but it

was Azizuddin in whose case it first gained official recognition. This happened in a way typical of the relations between Ranjit Singh and his Foreign Minister. In the beginning Ranjit Singh used to address Azizuddin as "Shah Ji", as was and still is customary in the Punjab in addressing Syeds. One day, when the Maharaja was particularly pleased with Azizuddin, he said to the latter, "Shah Ji, I wish to give you some title which will stick to your family from generation to generation. Can you suggest one?"

"Maharaj," replied Azizuddin, "if it is your pleasure to do so, then be gracious enough to grant me a title which will not sound too big if future generations of my family should become poor and which will have an added grace if they should remain rich or become richer still." "What about Fakir?" asked the Maharaja. "Your father is already spoken of by that title." "There could



be no better title than that for me and my family,” assented Azizuddin. So the title was formally conferred, along with a gift of two valuable shawls of orange-brown (*gerwa*), the colour distinctive of ascetics.

Fakir, a word of Arabic derivation, in common parlance is used to denote a mendicant but that is its corrupted meaning. In the language of mysticism and religion it has the opposite connotation: it means one who is content with what God gives him in the way of his material needs and strives only for spiritual riches.



*A portrait of Fakir Azizuddin, the Foreign Minister in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's kingdom*

Azizuddin had a place of his own from first to last in the Maharaja's esteem and confidence. The Maharaja never undertook any important operation without, or against, his advice. It was due to his wise counsel that the Maharaja maintained friendly relations with the British Government and the fact that these relations were on a footing of equality and mutual respect was largely an outcome of his ardent loyalty to Ranjit Singh, his inborn tact and his great skill in negotiation. In 1808, when British troops were moved up to the river Sutlej in pursuance of the British policy of confining Ranjit Singh to the north of the river, the Maharaja felt so annoyed that he was determined on war. But Azizuddin, with great foresight, dissuaded him from this hazardous course and skillfully steered the mutual relations of the two powers towards a friendship which stood many tests and which proved of great value to Ranjit Singh in the times to come.

Azizuddin proved still more useful to Ranjit Singh in his dealings with the Afghans. An instance of this is provided by the manner in which he handled Amir Dost Muhammad Khan. When Dost Muhammad Khan advanced with a large army towards Peshawar with the intention of recovering the city from Ranjit Singh, the latter went out with an opposing army under his own command to stop the Afghans' advance. Azizuddin was sent ahead to Dost Muhammad's camp as an envoy for a negotiated settlement. He was given a hostile reception. According to Josiah Harlan, an American officer, who accompanied Azizuddin as his assistant, the Amir, as soon as they arrived at his camp, swore at them, saying, "Ah you kafirs, I have taken you in." Fakir Azizuddin protested against this manner of receiving envoys whom the Amir had agreed to receive.



*Amir Dost Muhammad Khan of Afghanistan*

There followed a heated religio-political debate between Afghan courtiers on the one side and Azizuddin on the other. Azizuddin outshone the Afghans with his great learning and his equally great gift of ornate speech. Amir Dost Muhammad Khan listened with rapt attention and applauded more than once. Azizuddin had all but succeeded in his mission, when a courtier who had remained silent all this time suddenly struck



a discordant note. “Fakir Sahib,” he said to Azizuddin, “it is surprising that with all your religious learning and your piety you are advocating the cause of an infidel against that of a Muslim Amir.” The Fakir unrolled Amir Dost Muhammad’s insulting ultimatum to Ranjit Singh and put it before the courtier. “This letter clearly shows,” he said, “that the Amir is fighting for territory and not for Islam. Is it not my duty as a good Muslim to be true to my salt and to defend my country against aggression?”

While the debate was still in progress, Ranjit Singh, guessing its trend and anticipating its outcome, advanced and almost surrounded the Afghan camp. Amir Dost Muhammad was left with no choice but to retreat. In doing so he tried to carry off Azizuddin with him in order to use him as a hostage, but the attempt miscarried.

Fakir Azizuddin was a man of learning and not a soldier by profession. Nevertheless, so great was Ranjit Singh’s confidence in his all-round ability and his fidelity that he entrusted several difficult and delicate military assignments to him. He was sent to annex the Gujrat chieftom of Sahib Singh Bhangi; to reinforce the garrison at Attock after it had been surrendered by Jahan Dad Khan; to relieve the fort of Phillaur from Dewan Kirpa Ram on the latter’s fall from grace; and, finally, to assume charge of Kapurthala, Jandiala, Hoshiarpur and the estate of Fateh Singh Ahluwalia, who had fled across the Sutlej to seek British protection. There were even occasions when Ranjit Singh proceeded with his entire army on distant military expeditions, leaving Azizuddin in charge of defending Lahore with a few junior officers.

It was during Ranjit Singh’s last days that the close relationship between him and Azizuddin reached its climax—but a sad one. When in December 1838 Ranjit Singh had a stroke of paralysis, the third in less than two years, he completely lost his power of speech and could only communicate by means of signs. Azizuddin was one of the only two courtiers, the other being Bhai Ram Singh who could interpret the sign language. So well did Azizuddin know the Maharaja’s mind that the least little sign by the latter made with his speechless tongue, his single eye or his one good hand sufficed to

convey the Maharaja’s meaning to him. This, however, meant sitting in close attendance in the Maharaja’s rooms for long hours, almost round the clock, day in and day out. Some people who were present during this illness of the Maharaja have recorded their admiration for this marathon exercise of devotion and love.

It was said that even a son could not have done more for his sick father. During Ranjit Singh’s last illness, Azizuddin surpassed even this feat of endurance, sustained by the abundance of affection in his heart for his dying master and friend. It was, therefore, to him that Ranjit Singh turned, as he had always done in important matters in the past, for advice as to the succession and for ensuring that it would take place smoothly. Fakir Azizuddin advised the investiture of Prince Kharak Singh as the Maharaja’s successor with Raja Dhian Singh as his Chief Minister, and the advice was accepted and acted upon. This was not a simple matter to advise on or decide, as the second prince, Sher Singh, had always been considered to be a serious rival to Kharak Singh.

As Ranjit Singh’s Home Minister – his man about the Court – Fakir Nuruddin had a whole host of duties attached to him. He was physician royal, apothecary-general, almoner, director of the royal palaces and gardens, one of the three custodians of the keys of the royal treasury, commandant of the arsenal at the fort, a judge extraordinary, keeper of the Maharaja’s judicial conscience, and much else. These multifarious duties brought him into constant personal contact with the Maharaja, who learned to respect him for his integrity and piety. There developed between the two men in course of time a kind of spiritual bond. Thus, without being a member of the Maharaja’s Council, Nuruddin wielded a good deal of personal influence with him. Not seldom was this influence called to their aid even by members of the royal family. There are several accounts in the author’s family papers of instances of this.

The most significant of these was one in which Prince Sher Singh, second son of Ranjit Singh, was saved by Fakir Nuruddin’s intervention from a premature end of his princely career. It happened like this. Sher Singh had for a long time had an eye on one of the Maharaja’s favourite horses, named ‘Dooloo’, and had several times



unsuccessfully approached his father for its gift. One day, when he could no longer curb his desire to possess the horse, he went to the royal stables and ordered the *darogha* to saddle the horse for him to take out for a ride. The *darogha* complied, thinking that the prince would return the horse after the ride. The prince, however, had other designs. After his ride, he sent the horse to his own stables. When many days had passed without the horse having been returned to the royal stables, the *darogha* got frightened and reported the matter personally to the Maharaja. The Maharaja flew into a rage. There used to be two signs of his being angry. One was the twirling of his moustache and the other fanning himself with his handkerchief, the latter being the more dangerous of the two. On this occasion it was the latter sign that evinced itself.

The Maharaja ordered that the prince be exiled and everything belonging to him was to be forfeited. The order was carried out forthwith in so far as seizure of the prince's property was concerned. Before, however, the order of exile could be executed, the prince ran to Fakir Nuruddin, who was his tutor, and asked him to intercede on his behalf with the Maharaja. The Fakir upbraided the prince for his improper conduct, but promised to see what he could do to obtain the Maharaja's pardon for him. In the evening, when the Fakir, as was his daily wont, presented himself to the Maharaja, the latter angrily complained to him against his pupil. "Maharaja", said the Fakir, "you have punished him far too lightly. He took away the horse as if it was his father's property." The Maharaja burst into laughter on hearing this witty truism and not only ordered the return of the prince's property and the cancellation of his exile but also granted 'Dooloo' to him along with the royal trappings.

An extremely important duty of Fakir Nuruddin as Apothecary-General was to supervise the Maharaja's food. It was prepared under the supervision of Hakim Bishan Dass, a trusted assistant of Fakir Nuruddin, and tasted in presence of the latter by a team of professional tasters, having first been served to them in special poison-detecting plates. The effect of the food on the tasters was watched for two hours. After all these processes the food was put into special containers with locks, and the locks put under Fakir Nuruddin's personal seal.

## Second Maharaja of the Punjab – and Kashmir: Maharaja Kharak Singh

The second Maharaja of the Punjab, Kharak Singh was born in Lahore in 1801, to Ranjit Singh and his second wife Datar Kaur. Kharak Singh received the principality of Jammu as his jagir in 1812, and in 1818, together with Misr Diwan Chand he commanded an expedition against the Afghan ruler of Multan Nawab Muzaffar Khan, achieving a decisive victory at the Battle of Multan.

In 1819, he held nominal command of the expedition to take over the rest of Kashmir. In the end and just three months before his death, Ranjit Singh awarded Kashmir to Kharak, a move which was seen as a check on the ambitions of the Dogra Gulab Singh. Tragically, just a year after his accession, Kharak Singh was poisoned with white lead and mercury, was bedridden and died on 5 November 1840 in Lahore. By the end of the decade, and after the two Anglo-Sikh wars, Jammu & Kashmir was virtually gifted to Gulab Singh by the British, as reward for their "betrayal" of the Kingdom.



*Image of Maharaja Kharak Singh, taken from the court painting by August Schoefft*



The Maharaja never partook of any food without satisfying himself about the seal. The third of the Fakir brothers, Imamuddin, was not a figure about the court, but he held important administrative and military posts upcountry. During a great portion of Ranjit Singh's reign he was custodian of the key fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar and governor of the country immediately surrounding it. Along with these duties he also held charge of the magazine, arsenals and royal stables there. He also saw military service in a number of campaigns, as, for example, in the operations against the forts of Sada Kaur and the Kanhayas.

Since the Fakir brothers' close connection with Ranjit Singh's government is the *raison d'être* of this book, the author trusts that it will not be considered immodest on his part if he gives three excerpts about them from standard books on Ranjit Singh, which contain tributes to the quality of these men, as typical of the Maharaja's chief councillors and trusted servants. The first excerpt is from Sir Lepel Griffin's *Ranjit Singh* :

“The most conspicuous figure in the eyes of foreigners visiting the court of the Maharaja was Fakir Azizuddin, his Foreign Minister....He was celebrated as the most eloquent man of his day, and he was as able with his pen as with his tongue. The state papers drawn up by him are models of elegance and good taste, according to Oriental standards. He was himself a ripe scholar in all branches of Eastern science, and was also a generous and discriminating patron of learning...As a poet, Azizuddin may be allowed a high place....He is now dead, but for many years

I enjoyed his intimate friendship and I have never in India met a man of more refined manners, or a greater flow of eloquence of the florid Persian order...Nuruddin especially enjoyed a very general respect in the country, and, after the war of 1846, when Raja Lal Singh was deposed for treason, Nuruddin was appointed as one of the Councils of Regency to carry on the administration until the majority of the infant Maharaja Duleep Singh. The elder brother was ordinarily known at the court by the title of the Fakir Sahib not that the style of Fakir which the family were proud enough to retain



Prince Sher Singh was the second son of Ranjit Singh



signified, as the word ordinarily implies, any vow of poverty, for the brothers were all wealthy.”

The second excerpt is from an official report submitted to the Governor-General of British India, which has been reproduced in WL M’Gregor’s *History of the Sikhs* :

“This worthy man (Fakir Azizuddin) never ceases to watch over the interest of his master, who, in return, treats him with the most marked kindness and respect....The Fakir is of a most humane disposition, and he deems it cruel to deprive even the insect of life : though obliged to witness the death of animals while on hunting excursions with his master, he confesses that he never sees a hare start before the dogs without offering his prayers for its escape.... These traits will show the mild and gentle disposition of this worthy man “

The third excerpt is from Professor Narendra Krishna Sinha’s *Ranjit Singh* :

“He (Azizuddin) styled himself as a fakir and adopted the dress of a fakir. This he regarded as an armour in the court of Lahore, which was, in its later days, so full of intrigue. . . .His personal attachment to Ranjit Singh was very great. . . With so much power in their hands, had these Muhammadan officers been so inclined they might have added one more party to the list of three that arose on the death of Ranjit Singh.

In addition to the Court, Dogra and Sindhanwalla parties there might have been a Muhammadan party resting on the support of the Fakir brothers, the Muhammadan officers in charge of the artillery and the large Muhammadan population of the Punjab. To the honesty of Azizuddin and his younger brothers there is no better testimony

than this that the confidence Ranjit Singh reposed in them was never misused.”

These excerpts speak volumes by implication about Ranjit Singh, both as a man and as a ruler. It is not every king who is served or likes to be served by men of such character.

*Extracted from the book The Real Ranjit Singh by Fakir Syed Waheeduddin, first published by Lion Art Press in Karachi, 1965 and reprinted by Punjabi University, Patiala 1981.*



*Painting of Fakir Nooruddin with Maharaja Dalip Singh before his exile*



*Rare photograph the author Fakir Syed Wahiduddin (on the left) with Faiz Ahmed Faiz and artist Sadequain during the 1960s*



# The long forgotten Treaty of 1831

In October 1831, on a cliff overlooking the River Sutlej, not far from the small town of Rupnagar (Ropar) took place this historic meeting between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Lord William Bentinck,

the Governor General of Indian territory under the East India Company. As recorded by eye witnesses “over eight days of festivities, military reviews, entertainment and feasting, each side tried to outdo the other in show of goodwill and warmth. At the conclusion, a document was presented by Lord Bentinck to the Maharaja – often erroneously referred to as the ‘Treaty’ of 1831. This was in fact, more of a British proclamation of good intention and its desire for good relations with the Maharaja and can possibly be compared to the communiques issued post meetings between modern day heads of states.



*Pomp and glory as Maharaja Ranjit Singh meets Lord Bentinck on the banks of the River Sutlej*



*An unpretentious signboard ‘Rendezvous’ is all that marks the place where the historic meeting took place in 1831*

By this time the British Empire had extended up to the eastern banks of the Sutlej, while the territories westwards beyond the river right up to Afghanistan was firmly part of the Kingdom of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It was only after his death and subsequent intrigues, and two wars that the British conspired to extend their rule beyond the Sutlej to encompass the erstwhile Punjab, the last independent Kingdom of the sub continent.



*Gurudwara Tibbi Sahib at Ropar overlooks the river Sutlej and the barrage, not far from the place where the Treaty was signed in 1831*



# An Occidental Romance

## Paintings of the Sikhs by European artists

The two events held, in short succession, over two months in April and May 2019, first in the heart of India's capital, the other in Punjab's capital, were, unabashedly tributes to the glory and grandeur of the Sikhs in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – as painted by European artists.

“History of the Sikhs is replete with narratives of their valour and bravery over the centuries”, said Gautam Srivastava, founder of the *Hubris Foundation*. So fascinated is he by the lore, Gautam went on to organise the exhibitions of such exquisite paintings titled *Sikhs: An Occidental Romance* by eminent artists of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. After its impressive debut at the AIFACS Gallery in New Delhi during 13-18 April 2019, the exhibition moved to Chandigarh where all these classic and vibrant exhibits were showcased during 21-23 May 2019. Held at the Punjab Kala Bhawan in Chandigarh, the latter exhibition encompassed 80 museum archival replicas of paintings by western artists in the 19<sup>th</sup> (and early 20<sup>th</sup>) century.

This Collection has been put together by the *Hubris Foundation*, which has passionately gleaned exhibits from about more than 60 institutes and museums from different parts of the world including those in Europe, America



*Risaldar-Major Sunayat Singh, Kashmir Lancers (1897 by Rudolf Swoboda , Royal Collection Trust, Royaume-Uni) de Rudolf Swoboda (1859-1914)*

and Japan. As an art enthusiast and founder of the foundation, Gautam Srivastava said, “This is our maiden attempt to bring these to the State where they belong.” The works of the artists included those of Alfred De Dreus, Emily Eden, Edwin Lord Weeks, Prince Alexis Soltykoff and others.

For over 20 years, Gautam Srivastava has gone about collecting works of art from Europe and the United States. While searching for art works on the Sikhs, he found it “very interesting that this relatively small community got such massive attention during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.... and wondered why westerners were firstly so interested in painting them but also that most of these works on Sikhs are in obvious awe and admiration.





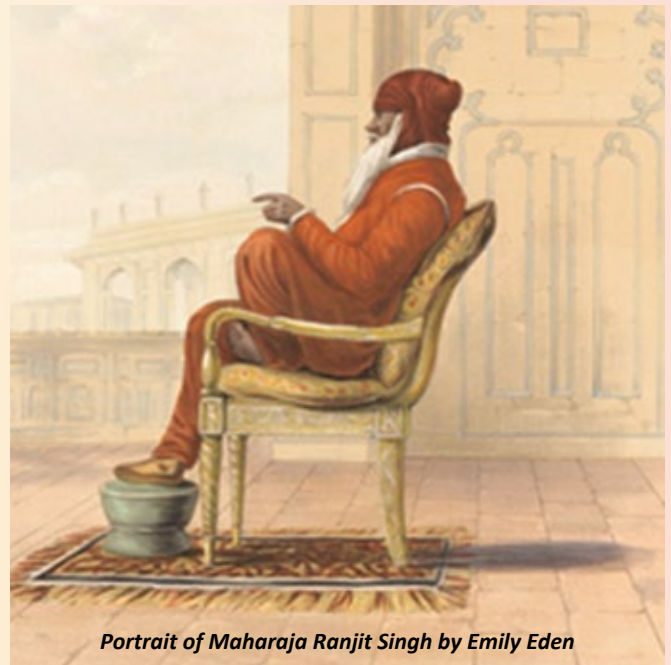
*A portrait of Darbar Sahib by Charles William Bartlett*

One can understand one country or one incident, but artists these countries were spread far and wide and included those from England, France, Germany, Russia, Japan, Hungary, Austria, Europe, America....”

As Gautam reflected “it all started in the year 1838 when the Punjab was still an independent Kingdom, headed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, who had strong connections with many European kingdoms but also the nascent United States of America. France became the first nation to reach out to Ranjit Singh, and as a friendly gesture, the Maharaja later gifted his portrait, painted by the very renowned French artist Alfred de Dreux, to the King of France Louis Philipe. This is now exhibited at the world famous Louvre museum in Paris.”

The works of art include images of the Darbar Sahib in Amritsar, which, over the century, have depicted this holy and beautiful Gurdwara by different artists from different countries in different hues. The twin-cities of Amritsar and Lahore attracted many an

artist. “As a visitor, one can see the differences in the sketches, and way they were perceived by artists from different perspective,” stated Srivastava.



*Portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Emily Eden*



The exhibition included that iconic portrait of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, in reverential tranquillity, by Emily Eden, as also Rudolf Swoboda's portrait of a Sikh done under commission by Queen Victoria, works by August Schoefft, court painter of Maharaja Sher Singh, who also painted a credulous Akali ensnared by the thugs of central India. Then the Russian prince Alexis Soltykoff's rendition of the grandeur of Lahore, capital of the Sikh Empire. Also on display were works of Charles Harding, son of Viscount Harding, Governor General of India, who painted the infamous Gulab Singh of Kashmir, directly accused of betraying the Sikh Empire.



*The iconic painting of Prince Duleep Singh by Franz Winterhalter*

The exhibition included works of painter Alfred De Dreux, who had been commissioned by an Italian General and painted Maharaja Ranjit Singh's portrait, which was later presented to the King of France. Finding special place is the evocative painting young Prince Duleep Singh by Franz Winterhalter, commissioned by Queen Victoria, Duleep Singh's youthful charm enshrined for eternity.

The exhibition included paintings with themes of the Anglo-Sikh wars, but also of common people on the streets, in bazaars, and the railway station. On display were eye-catching and impressive exhibits from the Princess Bamba Collection, by William Carpenter on the Akali Tower in Amritsar, exquisite works by the Company School, with artists using the medium of both oils and water colours to create so many layers of history with luminosity and in intricate detail.

### **On the artists themselves and their works**

Prince Alexis Soltykoff grew up in St Petersburg and at the age of eighteen joined the diplomatic services with the Russian State Board for Foreign Affairs in Moscow.



*Portrait of a Sikh Noble by Prince Soltykoff*





*Une Rue de Lahore by the Russian prince Alexis Soltykoff*

By the age of 23 he went abroad with the Russian Foreign Service, first in Constantinople, then in Athens, later in London, Florence, Rome, and Teheran. In 1840 Alexis retired and moved to Paris where he planned his voyages to India, making two voyages there (1841–43 and 1844–46), soon gaining the sobriquet “The Indian” from the Russian and French aristocracy.

In 1849 he published a selection of his letters in French accompanied by his drawings, which became very well known in Europe as *Lettres sur L’Inde*. Paris, 1848) which enraptured the Russian reading public, the drawings published separately in London in 1859 as “Drawings on the Spot”.

**Alfred de Dreux** was born in 1810 into a privileged and colourful family, being the first child and only son of the architect, Pierre-Anne Dedreux and lived at the Villa Médicis in Rome and won the Prix de



*Randjiit Sing Baadour, roi de Lahore by Alfred de Dreux*





Rome for architecture in 1815. In 1823, at the urging of his uncle, the painter Pierre-Joseph Dedreux-Dorcy, he began studying art with Géricault who was a family friend and a lover of horses which too became his favorite subject. In 1838, he painted the famous picture of Maharaja Ranjit Singh Baadour, now in the Louvre in Paris.

From 1840, he began the now famous series of portraits of horses from the stables of the Duc d'Orléans. King Louis-Philippe was so pleased that he invited Dreux to accompany him on an official trip to England, where the English passion for horses and fox-hunting earned him many commissions from the English aristocracy.

**Edwin Lord Weeks** was an American born in Newton, near Boston, Massachusetts in 1849, his parents being affluent spice and tea merchants from Boston, and as such were able to finance their son's youthful interest in painting and travelling. After his studies in Paris,

Weeks emerged as one of America's major painters of Oriental subjects, was an inveterate traveler and journeyed to South America (1869), Egypt and Persia (1870), Morocco (frequently between 1872 and 1878), and India (1882–83). This was when he painted *Across the Pool to the Golden Temple of Amritsar*, oil on canvas (seen above).

**August Theodor Schoefft**, the son of a local portrait painter, was born in Budapest in 1809 to German parents who had migrated to Hungary. After formal art training in Vienna, Schoefft set out on a great adventure to travel exotic lands and paint foreign scenes. He entered India via Turkey, arriving at Bombay in 1838 and after spending three years painting and exploring India, Schoefft eventually reached Lahore, capital of the Sikh Kingdom in 1841.

At Lahore, Schoefft was the guest of Dr. Martin Honigberger, personal physician to the Sikh Royal Court and a fellow German speaker. Schoefft then spent





*Maharaja Ranjit Singh listening to Granth Sahib being recited near the Golden Temple, Amritsar.  
From a sketch made by August Schoefft in Amritsar, 1841. oil on canvas, 143.5 x 109 cm, Princess Bamba Collection*

over a year at the Sikh Kingdom, painting various scenes and portraits of prominent members of the Sikh court and community.

After spending much time in Amritsar and Lahore preparing preliminary sketches of the locale as well as observing the Sikh Royal Court, he got close views of the Maharaja's Royal Court. Schoefft brilliantly combined reality with imagination to create scenes that he had actually witnessed, but which were based on first hand accounts on what might have been. Thus Schoefft laid the foundational work for his two most famous epic historical paintings, that of the Court of Lahore and Ranjit Singh at Darbar Sahib, Amritsar, which ended up in the collection of Maharaja Duleep Singh living

in England. After Duleep Singh's death, these priceless paintings became the property of his daughter Princess Bamba Jindan and are now known as the Princess Bamba Collection at Lahore.



*The Court of Lahore – by August Schoefft, oil on canvas, 487 x 254 cm, Princess Bamba Collection*



**Emily Eden** was the seventh daughter of William Eden, the first Baron Auckland, who accompanied her brother George, Lord Auckland (1784-1849) to India where he was Governor-General from 1835-1842. At first they stayed in Calcutta and then between October 1837 and February 1840 toured the country through Oudh and to the hill regions. They then visited (along with sister Fanny) the court of Ranjit Singh in 1838.

Emily was one of the first western women of her time to come into contact with Maharaja Ranjit Singh. During her stay in Lahore, capital of the Sikh Kingdom, Emily spent much of her time in making colourful sketches of the Sikh Maharaja, his family and courtiers, as well as some of his jewels including the fabled Koh-i-Noor, and his favourite horse, Laila.



*Raja Heera Singh, by Emily Eden*







*Ranjit Singh's famous horse Laila as painted by Emily Eden*



Eden recorded her impressions both in writings and displays in an extensive collections of letters and sketches, which on her return to England in 1842, had printed privately as a set of 24 lithographs. The portraits were published in 1844 in four parts, in wrappers. Most were in monochrome except for a few beautifully hand-coloured copies, of which some are still available. Her written accounts were also published as *Up the Country: Letters written to her sister from the upper provinces of India by the Hon. Emily Eden, 1866*.

of Queen Victoria during the first half of her reign. He first came to London in 1842 on the recommendation of Louise, Queen of the Belgians and he continued to work for Queen Victoria at intervals until his passing, with well over a hundred paintings done.

Queen Victoria admired the light, fresh colours of his work, and frequently commissioned him to paint subjects of private significance. Queen Victoria was captivated by Duleep Singh when first introduced to him in 1854, the year in which he was brought to



*Darbar Sahib complex at Amritsar by William Carpenter*

**William Carpenter** was eldest son of the distinguished portrait painter Margaret Sarah Carpenter and of William Hookham Carpenter, who became ‘Keeper of the Prints and Drawings Department’ at the British Museum. In early 1850 he set off in the footsteps of his younger brother Percy, also an artist, and landed in Bombay. He spent much of his time painting portraits of local rulers and the surrounding countryside, often wearing Indian dress himself. He travelled widely, from Sri Lanka in the south to Kashmir in the north, but also much time in the Punjab and Afghanistan before moving south to Rajasthan. His famous artwork ‘The Akalis Tower, Amritsar, Punjab’ famously records the tower that then was part of a Gurdwara built to commemorate Baba Atal Rai, the son of the Sikh Guru Hargobind Sahib, who died in his ninth year in 1628. The Gurdwara no longer exists, and thus Carpenter’s drawing provides an priceless record of what it must have been like.

England, having had to surrender sovereignty of the Punjab in 1849.

She recorded in her journal on 10 July 1854 that “Winterhalter was in ecstasies at the beauty and nobility of bearing of the young Maharaja. He was very amiable and patient, standing so still and giving a sitting of upwards of 2 hours”. Queen Victoria’s fascination with India – and Indians – continued throughout her life and this was one of many portraits that she had commissioned. In the portrait, the Maharaja is shown wearing his diamond aigrette and star in his turban and a jewel-framed miniature of Queen Victoria by Emily Eden. During one of the sittings, he was shown the Koh-i-Noor diamond which he had been forced to surrender, earlier in 1849.

*Franz Winterhalter* who was born in the Black Forest of Germany, was principal portrait painter at the court

**Rudolf Swoboda**, whose painting of Risaldar-Major Sunayat Singh of the Kashmir Lancers is lead image in this article, studied under Leopold Carl Müller, a well-known Orientalist and in In





*Franz Winterhalter was Queen Victoria's principal portrait painter. Both Queen Victoria and he were captivated by Duleep Singh's beauty and nobility of bearing*

1886, Queen Victoria commissioned him to paint several groups who had come to Windsor as part of her Golden Jubilee preparations. She liked the resulting paintings so much that she paid Swoboda's way to India to paint more of her beloved Indians. Most of these paintings today hang at Osborne House, once Victoria's residence on the Isle of Wight.

***Inputs from Siddharth Sharma, Partner and CEO Foundations PR***  
***Photo credits : Hubris Foundation***



# “A Brush with History”



At Chandigarh, (L-R) Gautam Srivastava, Laila Singh Majithia, Anant Bir Singh Attari and Gurpreet Singh.

It is a brush with Sikh glory, grandeur, history, tradition, culture, that one views and feels, as part of ‘*The Sikh: An Occidental Romance*’, a unique exhibition of the Sikh community by Western artists from the 19th and 20th century. Such painstaking effort of the *Hubris Foundation*, on show as part of the exhibition at Chandigarh were 80 museum archival replicas by as many as 23 renowned painters from across the world, each work distinct in style, treatment, vision and sensitivity. The exhibition is culmination of the effort of over nine years, and according to Gautam Srivastava, founder of the *Hubris Foundation*, “the idea being to bring to India and Punjab, a rare portrayal of the Sikh community by Western artists, with the paintings housed in museums, libraries, institutions, colleges, across the world, with the Punjabi and Sikh community in India never getting a chance to view this exquisite and extraordinary part of our history”.

While Sikhs form a relatively small part of the Indian population, the community has been handsomely represented on a large canvas by globally renowned artists from France, Austria, America, London, Vienna, Japan, Russia, with one distinct feature visible in all the works : “it is with great admiration and respect that the Sikh community is portrayed in these artworks, in sharp contrast to how *natives* were then represented in Western art”.

The exhibition covered a broad spectrum, as artists of different countries presented a glimpse of a long period of time, with the collection becoming vital record of Punjab’s history, from about 1838, when the Punjab was an independent kingdom, to about 1855. Each work is a story of the times, the political, social, economic situations and how these impacted the Sikhs and Indians at large.



“Putting together of the exhibition required tremendous research, time, travelling and, of course, a love and understanding of Sikh history, with the attempt being to present a wide spectrum. We have over 200 works, and presented 80 here, with the Foundation collecting works of art from Europe and USA for over 20 years. We are so proud to present ‘Sikhs: an Occidental Romance’ here for the first time,

with the endeavour being to take this exhibition across the Punjab,” explained Srivastava, adding that the exhibition would not have been possible without the support of Anant Bir Singh Atari of Ambala, Gurpreet Singh of Chandigarh and Laila Singh Majhitia of New Delhi.

[From the Tribune, Chandigarh]

### **Gautam Srivastava and the Hubris Foundation**

For more than 20 years now, Gautam Srivastava has been working to present a historical narrative through art. He founded *The Hubris Foundation* in 1994 with the aim to showcase the work of western artists who painted India and its people.

The Foundation has been collecting archival replicas of paintings by western artists from Europe and USA for over 20 years now. The process began when Srivastava was working in the US and would travel across Europe to view art by Indians in museums. “I was transported back in time and was immediately driven to research on the many aspects of these artworks, from the time period to the artists themselves, how they had portrayed India and the influences on their work. In those times, accessibility to art was limited in India. The strong urge to bring this treasure back to India led to the Foundation,” reflected Srivastava.

As Gautam Srivastava further researched and read about Western artists working on India, he noticed some works on the Sikh community. “I have often wondered why the Sikhs received near universal admiration from these magnificent wielders of the paint brush. Over the years, I discovered an exhaustive collection of Sikh paintings by illustrious western artists. My endeavour is to share these works with as many people as possible,” he said. The Foundation does not sell any of the works. “I have read about 8,000 pages on Sikh history and the Anglo-Sikh wars. I hope to curate an exhibition on that in the future” he added.





# 500 ਸਿੱਖ ਰੋਲ ਮਾਡਲ

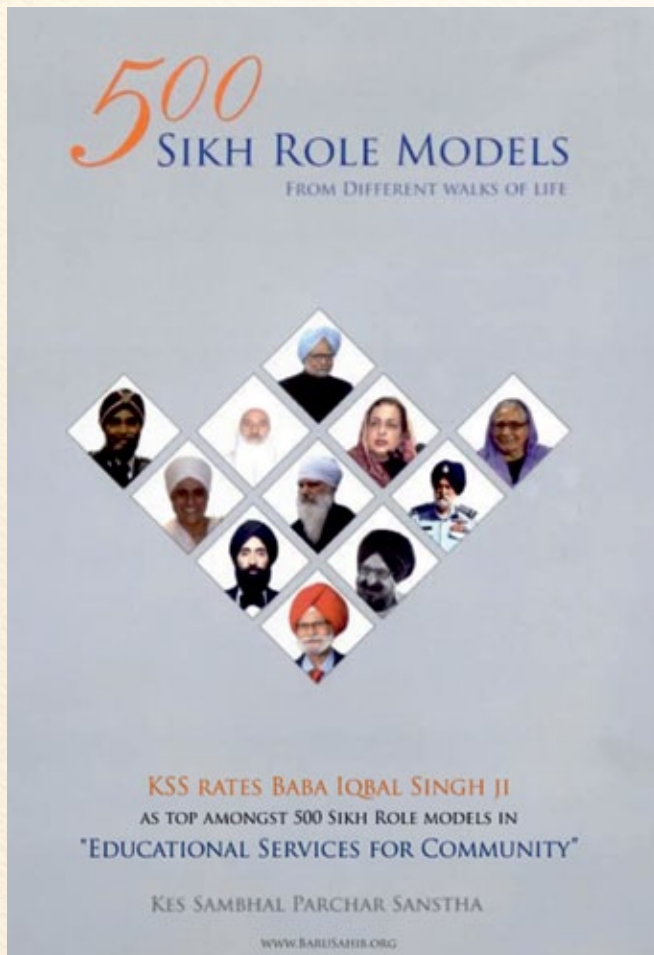
## From different walks of life

Many decades back, the venerable S Khushwant Singh wrote that when a Sikh is asked as to how many of them there are in the world, he may well reply “one and a half billion”. He explained that “this is a vast but understandable exaggeration as every Sikh looks upon himself as *Sava Lakh* (equal to 125,000) or as a *fauj* (army). Actually, there are no more

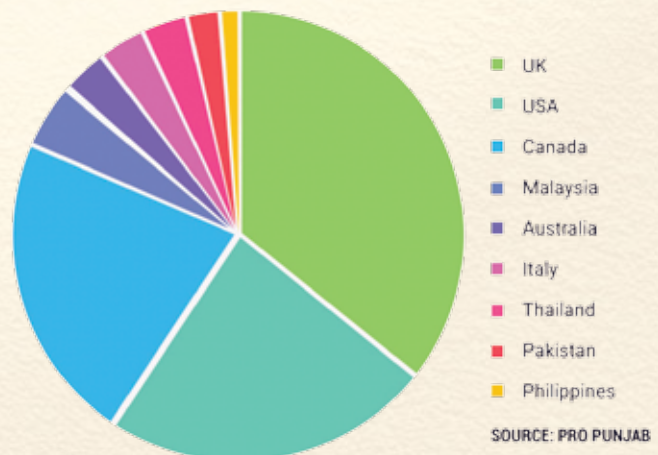
than 12 million Sikhs most of them concentrated in the Punjab, which is on the north-western frontier of India bordering on Pakistan”.

That was then today, there are an estimated 27 million Sikhs in the world, 83% of them living in India, largely in the Punjab but their diaspora is ever increasing, with some 4 million Sikhs now living in virtually every corner of the world but mostly in the UK, Canada, the United States, Australia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore but significantly also in Iran, the UAE, Italy, Germany, Scandinavia, Argentina and Chile. By Sikh standards then, there are nearly three billion of them in the world !

But this strays from the subject at hand : the publication of this Directory by *Kes Sambhal Parchar Sanstha* in 2017, followed by its sister companion *Some Prominent Gurdwaras & Sikh Organizations of the World*,



The Global Sikh spread







*The Directory was released at Bhai Veer Singh Sahitya Sadan, New Delhi and those honoured there included Baba Iqbal Singh, Founder President Kalgidhar Trust & Society, Baru Sahib, Dr Inderjeet Kaur, Padmashree and Patron President All India Pingalwara Charitable Society, S Trilochan Singh, former Chairman National Commission for Minorities, Dr Khem Singh, former Vice Chancellor PAU Ludhiana, Giani Kewal Singh, former Jathedar Takht Sri Damdama Sahib Sabo ki Talwandi and many others.*

also published by the Sanstha in 2019 and released at a well-attended function in New Delhi in May 2019. This review however is on the earlier publication.

Perhaps the most difficult, and certainly most controversial task that faced S Surinder Jit Singh Pall in compiling this handsomely produced Directory, would have been to identify and shortlist those 500 contemporary Sikhs who qualified as being 'Sikh Role Models'. Certainly, there are probably multiple times many more Sikhs who should be in this Directory but as he explains in the Preface, "originally it was planned to bring out a directory of 1100 Sikh role-models in different spheres of life. However, considering the difficulty of collecting data for such a big number of persons and also the unmanageable size of the Directory with such a big number, these were reduced

from 1100 to 500. Also, as per original plans, the Directory was to be released in November 2016 on the occasion of Avtar purab of Guru Nanak Dev ji, but when it was realised that to complete this mission, much more time was required, it was finally decided to dedicate this project to the 350<sup>th</sup> birth Anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh ji and release the Directory in January/February 2017. By grace of God, we have been able to accomplish this task and the Directory is being released accordingly".

And in May 2019, the Directory on *500 Sikh Role Models* followed. As Surinder Jit Singh Pall clarified, the Sikhs included in this Directory "are supposed to possess minimum two qualities as mentioned in Gurbani and by Bhai Gurdas ji in his Vars and Kabitts. These qualities include simplicity, humanity, humility,





*S Surinder Jit Singh Pall at launch of the Directory in New Delhi*

knowledge, honesty, truthfulness, soft speech and a humanly sensitive attitude to help others, irrespective of their caste, creed, religion and nationality. Another important factor about all these role-models listed, is that they have done or are doing something significant for the propagation of Sikh religion, Punjabi culture, Punjabi language and ethical values. Some of them might have done or are still doing much marvelous work in other fields for human welfare which has made people in general and Sikhs in particular, proud of them. The list of role-models includes people from almost all walks of life, belonging to different strata of society living at different places in the globe”.

The *Kes Sambhal Parchar Sanstha* itself has three trustees, with members and associates in different areas to include senior officers of the central and state Governments “highly intellectual persons who take dedicated interest in doing anything for the promotion and propagation of the Sikh religion.” Amongst them are bankers, doctors, advocates, CAs, architects, principals and teachers. This group was involved in all aspects, from collecting data to the final selection of ‘role models’ by the screening committee in Delhi and the Punjab.

But most credit must rightly be given to S Surinder Jit Singh Pall himself, as Chairman of the *Sanstha*. Born in November 1945 in New Delhi, he did his Masters in English in 1968, then appeared for the Central Services exams and joined the Indian Revenue Service in 1970. During his career of 36 years, he worked in different capacities at Mumbai, Delhi, Kolkata, Allahabad and different stations in Punjab. He was Commissioner of Income Tax from 1993 to 2001 at Amritsar, Secretary Settlement Commissioner at Delhi 2001 to 2003 and Chief Commissioner 2003 to 2004 at Allahabad having jurisdiction over the entire eastern U.P. He retired as Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Ludhiana at the end of 2005.

A person of many interests, Surinder Jit Singh Pall has always been fond of music, art, reading, writing and social service in various spheres. During his career he got Masters in Punjabi, History and LLB (Academic), has written more than fifteen books on Sikh history, religion and philosophy apart from three novels, one travelogue and two collections of poems in Punjabi.

A firm believer in the Sikh way of life, he is soft spoken, humble and “loves all people, irrespective of their religion, caste and creed.” He is presently associated with various social, educational and religious organisations and is also the President of *Kendriya Vihar Officers Sehkari Makan Usari Sabha* at Ludhiana, Trustee of *Mai Kamli Wali Jan Kalyan Charitable Trust*, Delhi, Member of the *Chief Khalsa Dewan*, Governing Council *United Group of Institutions*, Allahabad, Greater Noida and Delhi, *Punjabi Urban Co-operative Thrift and Credit Society Ltd.*

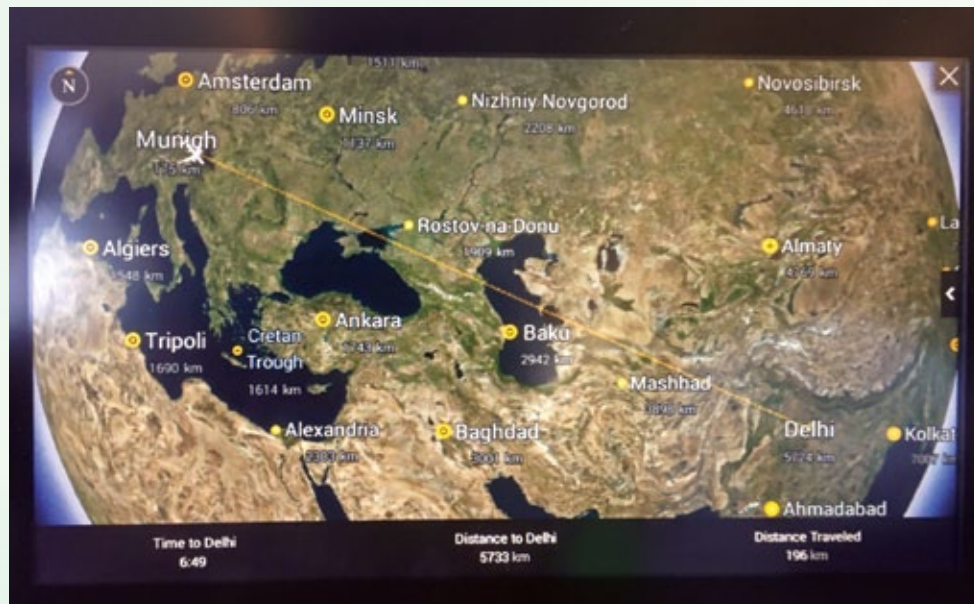
His wife, Sharanjit Kaur Pall, another founder trustee was a great source of inspiration for him in this great task. S Judgebir Singh Walia, the second trustee, who is engaged in the business of real estate, took on the responsibility for the design, construction, interior decoration, valuation and so on provided valuable assistance, particularly the all-important effort in raising funds.

In fact it must be readily acknowledged that, the team behind the Directory itself, are the real *Sikh Role Models* !



# Sikhs of Munich – and in Transit

During the half-an-hour that the editor recently spent in the Transit Lounge at Munich International Airport in Germany before boarding the Lufthansa flight to Delhi, he noticed a number of young Sikh families as also some wizened elderlies coming from various parts of the western world on their way to India. There are an increasing number of Sikhs now resident in Germany, with some 20 active Gurdwaras including those at Munich, Hamburg, Frankfurt, Cologne and Berlin. This is a brief cameo of Sikhs in Munich and at its increasingly busy airport.



to Winnipeg in Canada, “where opportunities are immense and there is no prejudice.”

And then there was Khushvinder Singh Bhara with his wife Javinder Kaur, son Aman Singh and daughter Shaan Kaur. Originally from Ludhiana, they are now ‘Brits’, Khushvinder working in IT at London and going on a short holiday to the Punjab.

## A Common Theme:

**N**ishaan talked to some of them including Harbans Singh and Baljinder Singh, the former now in Toronto in Canada having migrated from his village near Moga, the latter having left his home in Jullundur to settle down in Halifax, also in Canada. They were going to India for some family functions and then returning to their ‘new homeland’.

Meanwhile, Ajit Singh was keeping his little son Mukht Singh in good humour while they waited boarding. Talking with him, Nishaan learnt that Ajit Singh is from a second-generation north Bengal family (father is in transportation business at Siliguri) but the new generation have moved

without any rancour they all felt that moving to Canada or the UK had been a well considered decision, especially in the wake of 1984 and how thereafter, no matter which government is at the helm in India, “Sikhs continue to be targeted.”







*The Bhara family from London and Ludhiana*

Various sources put the number of Sikhs resident in Germany as some 20-25,000, mostly in Frankfurt, Cologne, Berlin but also Munich, the capital of Bavaria. Many of them regularly visit the Gurdwara at



*Young Khalsa with backpack waiting to board aircraft at Munich's Franz Josef Strauss airport.*

Neumarkt, Berg-am-laim, where at the Sunday *langar* are increasingly seen not only Punjab-origin Sikhs, but increasingly many Germans who have adopted the Sikh faith.



*The Rathaus (Town Hall) in Marienplatz, with the iconic Frauenkirche with its twin domes seen in the background.*



*This German lady, shopping at the Marienplatz had spent many months at Amritsar, also doing sewa at the Golden Temple*



*Young Sikh school boy with classmates in Munich's famed Marienplatz*



# Vaisakhi in Canada



## 500,000 parade in Surrey, British Columbia

**T**he largest Vaisakhi parade outside of India set a new attendance record on 14 April 2019, with over half a million people crowding the streets of Surrey in British Columbia. This annual event, which celebrated its twentieth anniversary, welcomed visitors from across Canada, the next-door United States and many other countries of the world come to Surrey to celebrate birth of the Khalsa in 1699, at Anandpur Sahib in the Punjab, which is almost exactly on other end of the globe.

There were scores of floats, accompanied by *dhol* players and dancers dressed in their traditional clothes, all in bright and vibrant colours. The crowd was not only in buoyant mood but were lavished with snacks

and fare generously provided free by scores of kitchens run by the community.

Main organiser of the massive parade was Moninder Singh Bual who reflected that “the turnout was indicative of the event’s purpose of bringing people together .... it’s one of the most important days for us ... we want to reach out to all peoples on the fringes of society and make them feel involved and welcome, and that’s why you see so much goodwill here today.”

Vaisakhi is celebrated by Sikhs all over the world to mark birth of the Khalsa brotherhood, which upholds humanity and equality of mankind and importantly, preservation of the environment. The





significance of Vaisakhi was exemplified this year, with April being designated *Sikh Heritage Month* in British Columbia.

As Surrey-Newton MP Sukh Dhaliwal also said, “recognising the contributions Sikhs have made to the fabric of Canadian history can’t be overlooked”.

“Sikhs have been here for 120 years,” he observed. “They fought for the Allies in the First World War, they fought in the Second World War, they’ve built industries here and look where we are today.”

**Sean Boynton,**  
*from Global News*



*Serving food to the hundreds of thousands and keeping the environment clean, all in the service of humanity. (Lien Yeung/CBC)*



# Canada declares



Canada is arguably the first country in the world to officially adopt formal legislation to recognise April as *Sikh Heritage Month*. Ontario was the first province to declare April as Sikh Heritage Month in 2013, followed by British Columbia in 2017. The private member's bill was brought forward by Sukh Dhaliwal the Liberal MP for BC's Surrey-Newton and the bill was unanimously passed by the Senate on 11 April, awaiting royal assent.

“The first Sikh Canadians arrived in Vancouver just 20 years after British Columbia became joined the confederation, so the story of Sikh Canadians is actually the story of Canada itself,” Dhaliwal stated.

The ‘early’ Sikhs had travelled from northern India (essentially the undivided Punjab) to Canada by end of the 19th

century, many being former-soldiers travelling through Canada in 1897 to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. In 1902, the second ship of Sikh soldiers travelling on the *Empress of Japan* docked in Victoria, BC. According to the Khalsa Diwan Society of Abbotsford, BC, “it was this group of South Asians who became intrigued at the possibilities of







settling in British Columbia.” As a result of this interest, nearly 5,000 immigrants from Punjab – majority of them being Sikhs – arrived in Canada between 1904 to 1908.

Then there was that infamous *Komagatu Maru* incident. Over 360 people, 337 of them Sikhs many of them from the British-led police forces of Hong Kong and Shanghai, had attempted to emigrate to Canada in 1914. The chartered Japanese steamship *Komagata Maru* had sailed from Hong Kong, via Shanghai in China and Yokohama in Japan to Vancouver in British Columbia, Canada. But they were not allowed to disembark and were finally forced to return to India where they were fired upon by the Indian Imperial Police, resulting in the deaths of 20 Sikhs.

A century later, everything is different. “[Sikhs] have been a part of the fight for equality, helped build our industries, and today provide the services we all depend on as Canadians. To come to this moment in



Canadian history, there are 120 years of struggle, hard work – and success.”

Dhaliwal has worked on the federal legislation for the past two years and says he brought the bill forward in order to share the story of Sikhs with all Canadians and to create a better understanding of how immigrants have contributed to the success of this country. “Because Sikh Heritage Month was passed as a bill rather than a motion, the cause will receive support from the federal government to raise awareness and organise celebration projects across the country.”

**Simran Singh**



# In perspective



**Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau attended a nagar kirtan in Vancouver less than 24 hours after the decision to remove all references to “Sikh extremism” from the report that had earlier been made and the changes were in place.**

**T**he Justin Trudeau government has reportedly removed all references to “Sikh extremism” in a report on terror threats to Canada because of hints that leaders of the ruling Liberal Party would not be allowed to speak at parades marking Vaisakhi. Pressure from sections of the Sikh community had apparently mounted on the government over references to such extremism in *Public Safety Canada’s* report released in December 2018. The Canadian Government thereafter released an updated version of the report that removed all mention of Sikh extremism – much to the chagrin of the Indian Government.

“I definitely think the decision we made as a collective has had an impact, otherwise we would not have seen such a quick response within 36 hours by the Liberal government,” observed Moninder Singh, president of Gurdwara Sahib Dasmesh Darbar and one of the principal organisers of the event in Surrey, BC. There was concern within Liberal Party circles of a domino effect, across cities and provinces. He confirmed his group had “started discussions for other nagar kirtans in Calgary, Toronto and Montreal to follow suit as well”.

The Canadian Liberals also received a scare recently when a slate backed by fathers of two major figures



of the Sikh community, including cabinet minister Navdeep Singh Bains were soundly defeated in elections to the management of Ontario Khalsa Darbar in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). GTA and Metro Vancouver area (where Surrey is located) account for a trove of seats in the House of Commons, and a majority of Liberal MPs elected in 2015, including Bains and defence minister Harjit Singh Sajjan, are from these areas.



*Navdeep Singh Bains*

Veteran GTA-based journalist Balraj Singh Deol agreed: “This was a victory for Khalistani groups. Removing it [the references] is a political decision. It’s not a security agency assessment.”

London-based activist Jasdev Singh Rai, who has been in talks with the Narendra Modi government to resolve issues of overseas Sikhs since 2015, said there was “frustration and anger” among Sikhs worldwide over Canada labelling “Sikhs as extremists and terrorists”. There was also anger that this was done when Canada had Sikhs at the highest levels of government, including in security and defence.

“Canada is the only country which has now officially established a black list of Sikhs denied entry. While India has brought down its list with a few exceptions, Canada has set up a black list,” he observed. Rai said



*Ruby Sahota*



*Harjit Singh Sajjan*

he also believed the Trudeau government was “bending over backwards” to appease India after his disastrous visit last year.

Rai believes that Indian diplomats in Canada should instead adopt a “discreet, nuanced and respectful approach” towards gurdwaras, similar to that taken by the Indian High Commission in the UK, adding he hoped the “process of dialogue and unobtrusive engagement is restored”.

*Anirudh Bhattacharyya and  
Prasun Sonwalkar*



# *“A Joyful Vaisakhi in Canada”*

**The Canadian Prime Minister’s message on 14 April 2019**



*On 14 April 2019, the Prime Minister of Canada Justin Trudeau issued the following statement :*

*“Today, Sikhs in Canada and around the world will celebrate Vaisakhi.*

*“Vaisakhi is the most important day of the year for the Sikh community. It celebrates the creation of the Khalsa Panth – the community of baptised Sikhs – by Guru Gobind Singh ji in 1699. This year is also a special year for Sikhs, as it marks the 550th anniversary of the birth of the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak Dev ji.*

*“To mark the occasion, family and friends will gather in Gurdwaras to pray and read sacred texts, and take part in parades, or Nagar Kirtans.*

*“Sikhism is rooted in teachings of equality, unity, selfless service, and social justice. For over a century, Sikh Canadians have shown us the best of those values, and put them into practice to build a better Canada.*

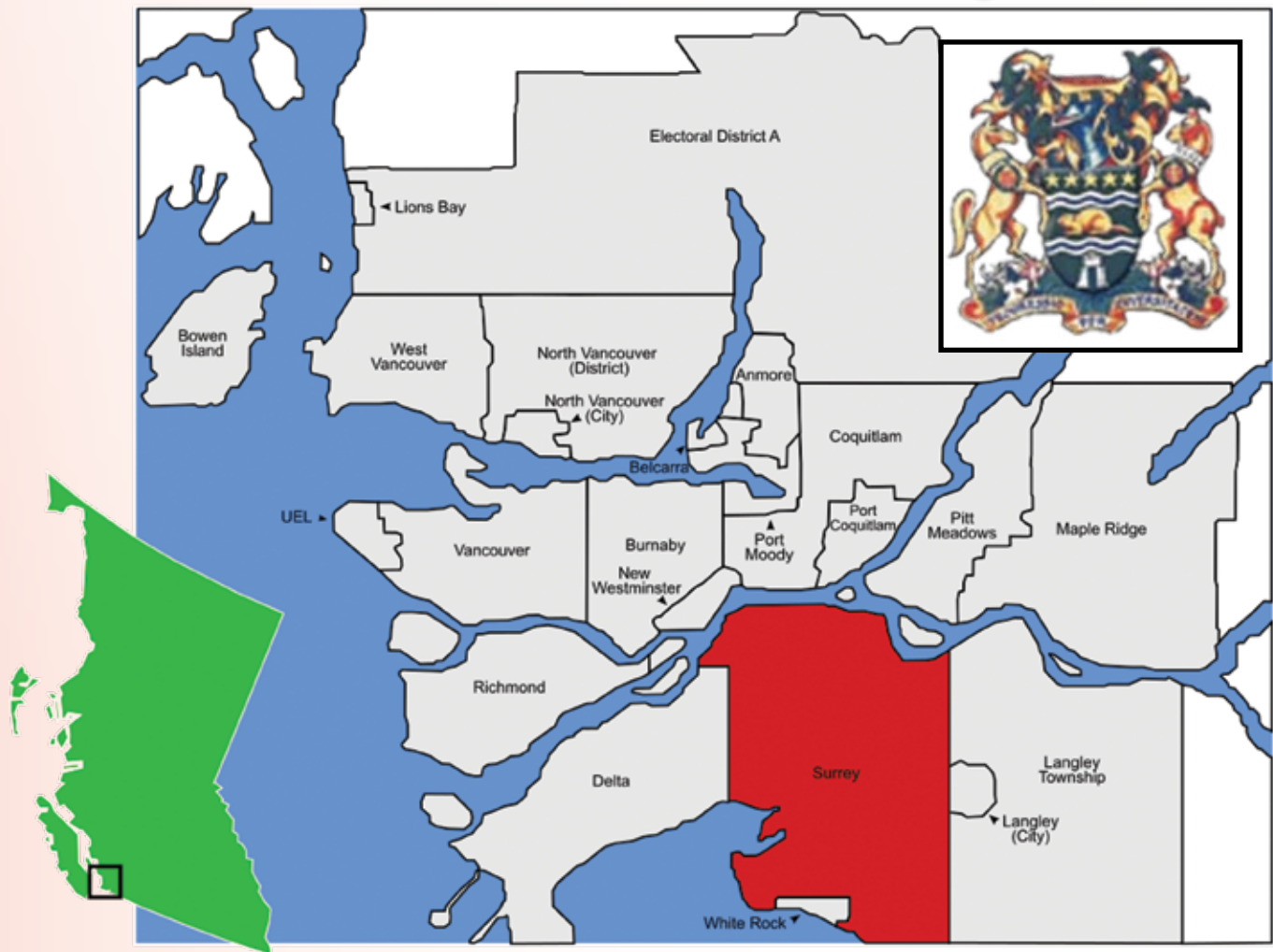
*“Vaisakhi is an opportunity to recognize the immense contributions that Sikhs have made to our country, and to celebrate more than 120 years of Sikh history in our communities. Canada is proud to be home to one of the largest Sikh populations in the world.*

*“On behalf of our family, Sophie and I wish everyone celebrating a joyful Vaisakhi.*

*“Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh.”*



# The Sikhs of Surrey, BC



Surrey, a city in the province of British Columbia, Canada, is remarkable for the fact that some 25 percent of its total population are Sikhs, as compared to about 5 percent Sikhs being in Delhi. Located south of the Fraser River and north of the Canada–United States border, Surrey is a member municipality of the Metro Vancouver regional district and metropolitan area. Essentially a suburban city, Surrey is the province's second-largest by population after Vancouver and the third largest by area, after Abbotsford and Prince George. Surrey is a city rich with Sikh culture and peoples, one of the greatest contributors to Vaisakhi celebrations in Canada, with Surrey, being home to the Gurdwara Sahib Dasmesh Darbar.

Surrey is relatively young, having been incorporated in 1879, and encompasses land formerly occupied by a number of Halqemeylem-speaking aboriginal groups. When Englishman HJ Brewer looked across the Fraser River from New Westminster and saw a land reminiscent of his native County of Surrey in England, he named the settlement as such. The area then comprised forests of douglas-fir, fir, red cedar, hemlock, blackberry bushes, and cranberry bogs, which still abound in resplendent manner.

“Outsiders” first arrived in Cloverdale and parts of South Surrey in the early 20th century mostly to farm, fish, harvest oysters, or set up small stores. In





the post-war 1950s, North Surrey's neighbourhoods filled up with single family homes and Surrey became a bedroom community, absorbing commuters who worked in Burnaby or Vancouver.

Then, through the 1980s and 1990s, Surrey witnessed unprecedented growth, as people from different parts of Canada and the world, particularly Asia, began to make Surrey their home. This city is projected to surpass the city of Vancouver as the most populous city in BC by 2020 - 2030.

Interestingly, Surrey has two 'sister cities', Kyoto in Japan and Zhuhai in China but also a number of 'Friendship cities' including Ludhiana and Jalandhar in the Punjab.



Close by to Surrey is Abbotsford, just across the US border, Greater Vancouver and the Fraser River and in fact the municipality's southern boundary is the Canada-United States border itself. Much of Abbotsford has views of Mount Baker (to the southeast, in Washington) and the Coast Mountains (to the north).

Abbotsford is also well known for the International Airshow held annually in August at Abbotsford International Airport. In the mid-1970s, Abbotsford was designated as *Canada's National Airshow* by Prime Minister Pierre E Trudeau, with both military and civilian aircraft from Canada and the United States, and on occasion military aircraft from other countries such as Britain, Germany and Russia.

In 2014, Abbotsford was named as one of the ten best airshows in the world, and also held a twilight show for the first time. In December 2014 the airshow won a prestigious Silver Pinnacle award from the International Council of Airshows. In 2015 the airshow continued its successful twilight show and had the Breitling jet team from France perform its first Canadian show, and also hosted the USAF F-22 Raptor for the first time. In 2016 two 5th generation USAF F-35A Lightning II fighter jets made history as this marked the first appearance of an F-35 in Canada.

Attracting several thousands of visitors and enthusiasts, Abbotsford's young Sikh population visiting the Air Show often attract as much attention as do the aircraft themselves !







## Sewa : back in the Punjab

There are some special people who feel the pain of those in distress and do something about it. Among these is Dr Naurang Singh Mangat who has been looking after the homeless, sick and abandoned, for the last 14 years. Though Dr Mangat immigrated to Canada in 1996 yet he never forgot the



state of the homeless, abandoned, and discarded back in his own Punjab. He was moved to provide help and he forsook Canadian comforts, went back to the Punjab in 2005, and surrendered himself to the welfare of the downtrodden and dejected. Since then, he has never looked back.

In the beginning and for many years without formal office, this former Professor and Scientist of Statistics, University of Windsor (Canada) and Morrison Scientific Inc. Calgary (Canada) pedalled his bicycle on the roads of Ludhiana and surrounding areas, in scorching heat and freezing winter. He picked up numerous homeless sick lying on the streets and saved their lives providing them medical help. However, at that time he did not have any place where he could provide shelter to these homeless patients.

So in 2008, he purchased land near village Sarabha and started with a kerosene lamp (for light) and kerosene stove (for cooking) in a mudroom. His hard work and unflinching belief to help the poor led to the construction of a three storey building *Guru Amar Das Apahaj Ashram* near the village Sarabha.

For many years he continued this mission singlehandedly and now it is being run by a Registered Charitable Trust. The vulnerable, disabled, mentally challenged, paralysed and poor sick are brought to



the Ashram. Since 2011, around 300 patients have been admitted in the Ashram, some of them regained health after treatment and were rehabilitated. Those who could not improve much live in the Ashram permanently. Of the current 120 homeless patients living in the Ashram, 85 are male and 35 are females, many mentally challenged, disabled, paralysed, unable to even recall their own names or whereabouts. Fifteen people (employees, volunteers, and doctors) are working at the Ashram to take care of these sick patients.

**Truly, Sarbat da bhalla**



*“To be imbued and attuned to the shabad;  
To be kind and compassionate;  
To sing the kirtan  
These are the most worthwhile actions in this Dark Age of Kali Yuga”*

## Light in dark times



### New Zealand Sikhs exemplify courage and compassion

**I**t was darkness during bright daylight on 15 March 2019 at Christ Church North, in New Zealand, where a crazed youth had entered two mosques, with blazing guns, killing and wounding nearly one hundred persons at their prayers. Shock and outrage throughout the world, particularly New Zealand where amidst the grief, were few Sikhs of this Island country who, in the darkness of death, brought the above *shabad* to life.

For Christchurch's tourniquet of pain, balm came from 'Guru Nanak's Free Kitchen, Auckland' and Young Sikh Professionals Network NZ virtually with the speed of light. Not just in the traditional form of opening a *langar* for those arriving at the venue to help, but in another basic, immediate and most cathartic of needs. The many dead in Christchurch needed obsequies and all at the same time. In coming forward





“This kind of violence and the hate it perpetuates has no place in any country and we have a collective responsibility to stand up and say *no* — this is not us. We are reminded of the tragedies at Pittsburgh, Oak Creek and Charleston that were similarly driven by racial, religious and ethnic hatred and urge our community, and in particular our elected officials, to denounce this attack in the strongest possible terms.”



to move the bodies to the cemetery, washing them and readying them for burial, the Sikh community became virtually the next of kin to the Muslim slain.

The community spokesperson, Daljit Singh, said: “The Sikh community stands strongly and firmly with the Muslims because this act of terrorism happened in a place of worship, and we will spare no effort in supporting them.” Asking gurdwaras to support New Zealand’s Muslim community in their respective regions, the Young Sikh Professionals proceeded to issue a statement, a model in phrasing for any spokesperson of any government, anywhere.

When the Sikhs of New Zealand said of the Christchurch carnage “This is not us”, they were paraphrasing their prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, who said the terrorist was “not us” immediately after, saying that in fact the slain, “are us.” She spoke not just nobly but transformatively.

This reflexive activation of the core of their faith as enunciated by Guru Nanak in the Guru Granth Sahib had another feature: the offering of votive space to Muslims to undertake *namaz* in gurdwaras. For sheer originality and sublimity, this gesture was unique, redemptive. And there it holds, quite unintendedly but





*Gurdwara congregation in New Zealand*

unquestionably, a great lesson for India locked as it is in the *mandir-masjid* issue around Ayodhya. No greater example in creative mediation can be found than in this for the three eminent gentlemen now tasked with mediating in the Ayodhya matter.

But to return to Sikhs and Sikhism.

Social media redeemed its abysmal image and reputation in the ensuing flow of tweets. One from a Sikh lady said: “The Sikh community’s response is moving me to tears.” Another from a Sikh gentleman: “This is what it means to be a Sikh.” A Maharashtrian gentleman tweeted: “Salute to you and to all Sikhs!”

And crowning all tweets, from a sensitive soul by the name of Emily Cragg: “Will Sikhs civilise the rest of the world? Possibly... Hugs to you all.”

Reading these tweets, two images came to mind. The first was of a tall Sikh, Colonel Niranjn Singh Gill of the Indian National Army and of Colonel Jivan Singh, also of the INA, who volunteered with other INA soldiers to go to Noakhali in 1946, to help quell the terrible communal riots. The Sikh-led INA group was not large but it was right there, beside Gandhi, during the most intense crisis. Pyarelal writes in his biography of Gandhi (*The Last Phase*, Part II): “The INA had built up a fine tradition of bravery and patriotism



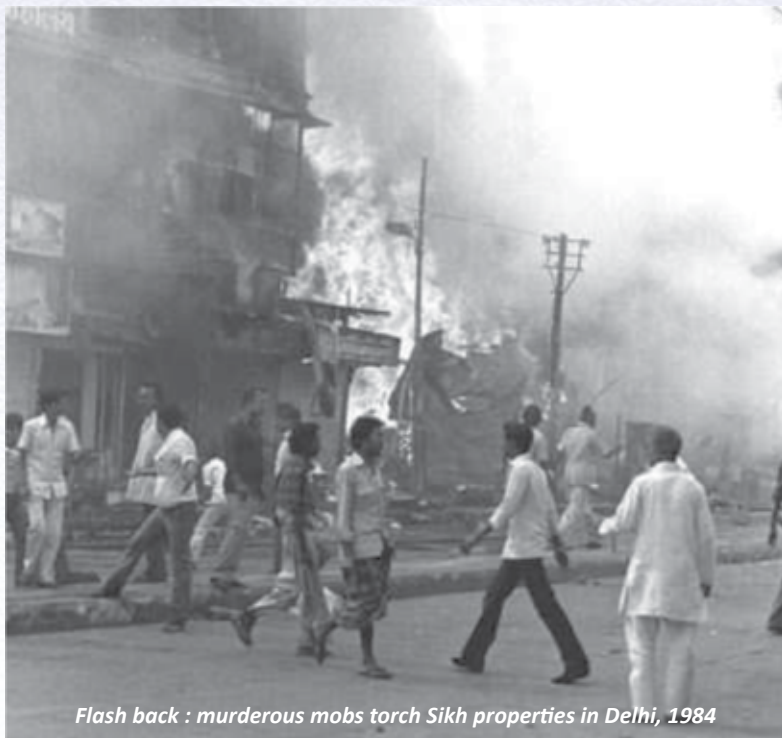
*Flash back : the terrible communal riots in Noakhali, 1946*



under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Bose. They had banished communalism wholly from their midst whilst they were under colours. *We had worked in the Indian National Army*, ran one of their manifestos, “and we are happy to be able to say that we had forgotten all distinctions of caste, creed or Province. It was Jai Hind for all of us. The memory of those days still persists.’ Before their final surrender, Netaji had told them by way of parting advice that on their return to India, they would have to convert themselves into soldiers of non-violence and take their orders from Gandhiji.”

This cameo was of Sikhs at the line of fire, quelling it. The second was of Sikhs again at the line of fire but receiving it. It comes from New Delhi in 1 November, 1984 and is of five Sikhs, including two famed for their heroism in war : the country’s only Marshal of the Indian Air Force, Arjan Singh and Lieutenant General Jagjit Singh Aurora, the hero of 1971. The other three were the writer Patwant Singh, the distinguished diplomat Gurbachan Singh, and Brigadier (retired) Sukhjit Singh of Kapurthala. Shocked into disbelief by the carnage and rapine let loose on Delhi’s Sikh population

after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the benumbed but determined group first called on the then president, Giani Zail Singh, who was agonised but immobile. Then on the then home minister, PV Narasimha Rao. “The Army will be called this evening,” the home minister told the group. Lt Gen Aurora asked, “How will it be deployed?” The minister said, “The Area Commander will meet the Lt Governor for this purpose.” Aurora responded grimly, “You have called the Army 30 hours too late.” A wound of incalculable pain was inflicted on Sikh India and remains.



Not until the former prime minister, Manmohan Singh, in an act as courageous as it was conscientious, apologised from the floor of Parliament for 1984, was the wound suffered by Sikhs in 1984 even addressed. Real healing would have come if, overcoming his personal bereavement, the just-inducted prime minister then, Rajiv Gandhi, had stepped out, gone to Trilokpuri, Jahangirpuri and other affected sites, embraced and addressed the victims as Jacinda Ardern did in Christchurch and, putting the fear of God in the murderers and rapists, assuaged the Sikh community. He must have wanted to do that, but was held back by political advisers.

Now the Sikhs, in a place as far from home as Christchurch is from Chandigarh, have brought with reflexive, imaginative,



sublimity, the great *shabad* on compassion to light and life. Becoming, in Pyarelal's memorable phrase, 'soldiers of non-violence', the Sikhs of New Zealand have created a history of sorts and we salute them !

Historical veracity requires that any narrative on the Sikhs to acknowledge that in the record of communal violence during the partitioning of India in 1947, Sikh India was not unstained. Likewise, the world's annals of terrorist violence include acts in the 1970s and 1980s, of those Sikhs who did not scruple to assassinate political adversaries, including security forces on duty and innocents. Caste discrimination has not been purged by Sikh India either.

And yet, there is that 'something' in the Sikh persona, illumined by the *shabad* and by its ten Gurus that, these painful and self-condemning transgressions notwithstanding, it continues to stand tall.

In a letter to Mahadev Desai written on 4 January 1936, Rabindranath Tagore said: "Sikhism has a brave message to the people and it has a noble record. How great would be its effect, if this religion is to get out of its geographical provincialism, shed its exclusiveness inevitable in a small community..."

Away from all geographical provincialism, New Zealand's 20,000 Sikhs and their 13 gurdwaras would have made Tagore very proud.

But, though reported in Indian media, this example of humanity, of courageous steadfast compassion, has been lost on us.

Why?

No deep introspection is required to answer that question.

We are practising the opposite of "They are us". We are getting used to "They are they, we are we". We are getting drilled, slowly but steadily, into ever wanting victory, triumph. Success is seen only in the *Other's* defeat, accomplishment in the *Other's* failure. Peace is pious, victory exciting. Reconciliation is found in dead texts, revenge in living media. Three Vs drive us now: Vengeance, Vanquishing, Victory. *Manava rasa* guided human help to victims of the massacre. But the *rasa* of our times in India is *vira rasa*.

And yet, somewhere, a vein of hope keeps a feeble pulse going — a miracle. And for that, again, we have Guru Nanak to believe in. Pulwama and Balakot notwithstanding, India and Pakistan have kept bilateral talks on the Kartarpur corridor continuing on track.

Lifelines can be slender. But they retrieve life from death. In this *Kali Yuga*, the light of the *shabad* referred to at the lead of this article, working at Christchurch and Kartarpur, must do that.

*Gopalkrishna Gandhi*



Corridor to peace: Gurdwara Sahib at Kartarpur, now in Pakistan



# A Spectre Not Yet Laid to Rest

Events of 1984 still scar the Punjab mindscape.  
A People's Commission and a Peace Memorial are needed.



The people of Punjab suffered indescribable hardship and trauma due to the chain of events culminating in *Operation Blue Star* in June 1984. The aftermath also left a trail of violence and misery, bitterness and alienation. Such periods invariably generate polarised perceptions and ideological stances.

But more than three decades later lessons of *Operation Blue Star* introduced restraint when the state confronted similar situations later, be it when terrorists entered the shrine of Hazratbal in Srinagar

or when attempts were made to condone the demolition of the Babri Masjid. It can be safely inferred that had the deadlier politics manifesting in *Operation Blue Star*, assassination of the then prime minister and Sikh massacre, not been unleashed, terrorism may have petered out in 1985.

The churning in civil society and politics has led to the hurt felt by members of the Sikh community and secularists to become universal. It transcended the boundaries of religion, region, political and social





affiliations. It has blemished the stature of leaders like Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. If Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale could not become an unquestioned icon of the Sikh masses, the legacy of the former Indian prime ministers responsible for Operation Blue Star and November 1984's brutal targeting of Sikhs has also been tarnished.

More than three decades later, Operation Blue Star has also outlived the relevance of superficial apologies and the documentation of painful memories. The state

has been shying away from fixing responsibility for the creation of conditions leading to Operation Blue Star. It has resorted to offering apologies without accountability.

Leaders and decision-makers responsible for causing violence conveniently tender apologies and consequently cause delay in the accountability processes. Punjab has witnessed this phenomenon in an aggravated form. For example, a section of political leaders responsible for the creation of conditions leading to Operation Blue Star in 1984, and the killings of Sikhs in November 1984, indulged in the politics of apology without accountability. The state has lacked seriousness in bringing people responsible for Operation Blue Star and the violence against Sikhs to justice.

This has led to the setting up of a number of committees and commissions of inquiry without delivering justice. It started with the Ved Marwah inquiry which was wound up without completing its report in 1985, followed by the Dhillon Committee in 1985, Ahuja Committee in February 1987, Jain-Banerjee Committee in February 1987, Jain-Aggarwal Committee in December 1990, Narula Committee in December 1993, Ranganath Mishra Commission in May 1985 and the Nanavati Commission in May 2000. The politics of inquiry commissions must be given a burial.

Elections to state assemblies and local bodies have been held. Religious, non-governmental organisations and the government have provided assistance to victims of the violence. A conducive political climate was created for the return of former militants like Wassan Singh Zaffarwal of Khalistan Commando Force from Switzerland on April 11, 2001. Jagjit Singh Chauhan returned in 2001 after 25 years of exile.

In a way, it weakened the divisive and separatist politics, but delayed initiatives for closure have provided a new lease of life to extremist and fundamentalist political tendencies. After having ignored twice the appeal of Dal Khalsa, a radical Sikh organisation, in 1985 and 2002 to raise a martyr's memorial at the Golden Temple, it was conceded by the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) in 2014.



We also witnessed the ceremonious conferment of martyrdom to Bhindranwale by the SGPC after 19 years. It is mainly because no concerted efforts were made to delegitimise violence and deliver restorative justice. The goals of closure – transparency, justice and reconciliation – were not addressed adequately.

Closure does not mean revenge. It also does not mean the registering of a claim that “my” use of violence is privileged and therefore cannot be brought to justice. The main focus of closure should be recognition of the atrocities committed and willingness to live with truth. This may involve setting up of documentation centres, museums of memories etc.

Efforts should be made to build a Peace Memorial, a monument in the memory of those who became victims of decade-long terror. The setting up of a People’s Commission is the need of the hour. Justice and reconciliation cannot be delivered unless preceded by transparency. Excessive use of violence led to the defeat of Khalistanis but at the same time excesses unleashed by the state increased support for their ideology. Legitimacy of both the state also declined due to the violation of human rights and it is in its own interest to evolve codes of conduct for peaceful closure. The Commission should fix responsibility for the unleashing of a deadly politics manifesting in the killing of innocents, security personnel and political activists.

The focus of closure should be the delegitimation of violence, the reducing of incentives to violence and delivery of restorative justice and reconciliation.

**Parmod Kumar**

*Director, Institute for Development and Communication (IDC), Chandigarh*







*At Darbar Sahib in Amritsar*



# Khimaa ਖਿਮਾ

## SS Ek Ong Kaar Khalsa Michaud and Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal on The Concept of Khimaa and Lives of the Gurus

**H**atred. Anger. Urge to Revenge. Despair. Pain. All of these emotions surface when something deeply traumatic is done to us or to those with whom we share a connection. Yet the Sikh *Ardaas* (prayer) is always for *Sarbat Da Bhalaa*. Goodwill to all people.

Goodwill to all. It is a noble sentiment. But is it realistic to have goodwill towards every single person, especially in the face of social illnesses such as racism, sexual violence, religious hatred or physical persecution?

Anger, grief, pain - these emotions surface naturally when we experience some kind of injury or trauma. Does *Sarbat Da Bhalaa* mean to not have those feelings? Do we pretend they don't exist or stuff them away to maintain appearances?

The teachings of the Sikh Gurus can often be misunderstood. When we get hurt, anger and pain are the emotions that inform us we are hurt. These feelings act as messengers, carrying vital information. Ignoring these emotions has the effect of blocking our ability to respond to the situation. This inability to feel our feelings and react to the information in an advantageous way causes us to live our lives in a state of emotional immobility.

But the Sikh Gurus offer us a method to feel the emotions and process them within a spiritual framework where the emotions can move and be transformed. We can acknowledge uncomfortable emotions within ourselves, such as anger, shame or grief; and then shift our consciousness to a vaster perspective. From that

broader framework, the emotions release and resolve into peace. This creates emotional health and maturity.

The teachings of the Sikh Gurus provide a sophisticated system to acknowledge and process our emotions within a spiritual framework that leads to emotional freedom and maturity. This framework does not deny the heavy emotions. Rather, it encourages us to find a place within ourselves where these challenging feelings can move through us. We discover the capacity to let go of animosity. To maintain compassion for ourselves and for others. And in the most egregious of circumstances, to experience *Nirbhao*, *Nirvair* - a state of divinely consciousness beyond both fear and vengeance.

This capacity to stay compassionately engaged even with those who have done harm to us is called, in Gurmukhi, *Khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ.

*Khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ sometimes gets translated as forgiveness. But when we look to the roots of what forgiveness means and we look at the spiritual framework the Sikh Gurus taught - *khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ is quite unique and the English term "forgiveness" does not quite do it justice. It is worth exploring what this difference looks like.

Before discussing *khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ, first let us reference the teaching that it is possible to view both friend and enemy as equivalent to one another. What does that mean?

Guru Arjan Dev ji describes the formula in the following shabad:



ਭੈਰਉ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥

**Bhairao Mehalaa 5 ||**

Bhairao, Fifth Mehl:

ਪ੍ਰਥਮੇ ਛੇਡੀ ਪਰਾਈ ਨਿੰਦਾ ॥

**Prathamae Shhoddee Paraaee Nindhaa ||**

*First, I gave up slandering others.*

ਉਤਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਮਨ ਕੀ ਚਿੰਦਾ ॥

**Outhar Gee Sabh Man Kee Chindhhaa ||**

*All the anxiety of my mind was dispelled.*

ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਸਭੁ ਕੀਨੇ ਦੂਰਿ ॥

**Lobh Mohu Sabh Keeno Dhoor ||**

*Greed and attachment were banished entirely.*

ਪਰਮ ਬੈਸਨੇ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਪੇਖਿ ਹਜੂਰਿ ॥੧॥

**Param Baisano Prabh Paekh Hajoor ||1||**

*I see God ever-present, close at hand; I have become a great devotee. ||1||*

ਐਸੇ ਤਿਆਗੀ ਵਿਰਲਾ ਕੋਇ ॥

**Aiso Thiaagee Viralaa Koe ||**

*Such a renunciate is very rare.*

ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪੈ ਜਨੁ ਸੋਇ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

**Har Har Naam Japai Jan Soe ||1|| Rehaao ||**

*Such a humble servant chants the Name of the Lord, Har, Har. ||1|| Pause and Reflect||*

ਅਹੰਬੁਧਿ ਕਾ ਛੇਡਿਆ ਸੰਗੁ ॥

**Ahanbudhh Kaa Shhoddiaa Sang ||**

*I have forsaken my egotistical intellect.*

ਕਾਮ ਕ੍ਰੋਧ ਕਾ ਉਤਰਿਆ ਰੰਗੁ ॥

**Kaam Krodhh Kaa Outhariaa Rang ||**

*The hue of sensual desire and anger has vanished.*

ਨਾਮ ਧਿਆਏ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਹਰੇ ॥

**Naam Dhhiaaeae Har Har Harae ||**

*I meditate on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, Har, Har.*

ਸਾਧ ਜਨਾ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਨਿਸਤਰੇ ॥੨॥

**Saadhh Janaa Kai Sang Nisatharae ||2||**

*In the Company of the Holy, I am emancipated. ||2||*

ਬੈਰੀ ਮੀਤ ਹੋਏ ਸੰਮਾਨ ॥

**Bairee Meeth Hoeae Sanmaan ||**

*Enemy and friends have become the same to me.*

ਸਰਬ ਮਹਿ ਪੂਰਨ ਭਗਵਾਨ ॥

**Sarab Mehi Pooran Bhagavaan ||**

*The Perfect Divine is permeating all.*

ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਮਾਨਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥

**Prabh Kee Aagiaa Maan Sukh Paaeiaa ||**

*Accepting the Will of the Divine, I have found peace.*

ਗੁਰਿ ਪੂਰੈ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਦਿੜਾਇਆ ॥੩॥

**Gur Poorai Har Naam Dhirraaeiaa ||3||**

*The Perfect Guru has implanted the Name of the Lord within me. ||3||*

ਕਰਿ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਸੁ ਰਾਖੈ ਆਪਿ ॥

**Kar Kirapaa Jis Raakhai Aap ||**

*That person, whom the Lord, in His Mercy, saves*

ਸੋਈ ਭਗਤੁ ਜਪੈ ਨਾਮ ਜਾਪ ॥

**Soee Bhagath Japai Naam Jaap ||**

*That devotee recites and goes deeper into the Naam.*

ਮਨਿ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸੁ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਮਤਿ ਲਈ ॥

**Man Pragaas Gur Thae Math Lee ||**

*That person who obtains understanding through the Guru's vision, his/her mind becomes illumined.*

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਪੂਰੀ ਪਈ ॥੪॥੨੭॥੪੦॥

**Kahu Naanak Thaa Kee Pooree Pee ||4||27||40||**

*- says Nanak, that person is totally fulfilled.*

॥4||27||40||

This **Shabad** is so very rich. Yet the one facet that struck us the deepest is the first line about slandering others. The Guru instructs that when we stop slandering others, the mind leaves behind anxiety, greed and attachment. It is fascinating to us to learn that peace begins with our own decision to stop speaking negatively about other people. That by not slandering them, the anxiety in my mind disappears.

When we experience trauma, fear or pain, the instinct to lash out, to blame someone,



shame someone, rage against someone, speak negatively about someone is a very normal way of life. Yet in this Shabad, the Guru seems to indicate that speaking negatively about others keeps the mind in a state of dis-ease. And that making a choice to not think or say anything negative brings the mind to ease.

When we curb our predisposition to speak negatively, it gives the ability for our sight to soften and widen. To “see the Perfect One permeating all.” If we choose to not speak negatively, and we choose to see the Divine in every heart - then it follows quite naturally what the Guru says. That “enemy and friends have become the same to me.”

In other words, it does not matter whether a person is an enemy or a friend. My mind responds with the same emotional equanimity to both.

Accessing this state of consciousness is a tall order, no doubt. How can we cultivate the habit of not speaking negatively about others? Rather than just biting our tongue, how do we genuinely come to the state of not having anything negative to say?

I think this *Shabad* by Guru Naanak Dev ji gives us a clue.

ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੧ ਦਖਣੀ ॥ SGGS, p. 1344  
**Prabhaathee Mehalaa 1 Dhakhane** ||  
 Prabhaatee, First Mehl, Dakhnee:

ਗੋਤਮੁ ਤਪਾ ਅਹਿਲਿਆ ਇਸਤ੍ਰੀ ਤਿਸੁ ਦੇਖਿ ਇੰਦੁ ਲੁਭਾਇਆ ॥  
**Gotham Thapaa Ahiliaa Eisathree This Dhaekh**  
**Eindhra Lubhaaeiaa** ||  
*Ahalyaa was the wife of Gautam, the seer. Seeing her,*  
*Indra was enticed.*

ਸਹਸ ਸਰੀਰ ਚਿਹਨ ਭਗ ਹੁਏ ਤਾ ਮਨਿ ਪਛੋਤਾਇਆ ॥੧॥  
**Sehas Sareer Chihan Bhag Hooeae Thaa Man**  
**Pashhothaaeiaa** ||1||  
*When he received a thousand marks of disgrace*  
*on his body, then he felt regret in his mind.* ||1||

ਕੋਈ ਜਾਣਿ ਨ ਭੁਲੈ ਭਾਈ ॥  
**Koe Jaan N Bhoolai Bhaae** ||  
*O Siblings of Destiny, no one knowingly makes*  
*mistakes.*

ਸੇ ਭੁਲੈ ਜਿਸੁ ਆਪਿ ਭੁਲਾਏ ਬੁਝੈ ਜਿਸੈ ਬੁਝਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥  
**So Bhoolai Jis Aap Bhulaaeae Boojhai Jisai**  
**Bujhaae** ||1|| **Rehaao** ||  
*He alone is mistaken, whom the Lord Himself makes*  
*so. He alone understands, whom the Lord causes to*  
*understand.* ||1|| *Pause and Reflect* ||

ਤਿਨਿ ਹਰੀਚੰਦਿ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੀ ਪਤਿ ਰਾਜੈ ਕਾਗਦਿ ਕੀਮ ਨ ਪਾਈ ॥  
**Thin Haree Chandh Prithhamee Path Raajai Kaagadh**  
**Keem N Paaee** ||  
*Harichand, the king, and ruler of his land did not*  
*appreciate the value of his pre-ordained destiny.*

ਅਉਗਣੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਤ ਪੁੰਨ ਕਰੇ ਕਿਉ ਕਿਉ ਨੇਖਾਸਿ ਬਿਕਾਈ ॥੨॥  
**Aougan Jaanai Th Punn Karae Kio Kio**  
**Naekhaas Bikaaee** ||2||  
*If he had known that it was a mistake, he would not*  
*have made such a show of giving in charity, and he*  
*would not have been sold in the market.* ||2||

ਕਰਉ ਅਦਾਈ ਧਰਤੀ ਮਾਂਗੀ ਬਾਵਨ ਰੂਪਿ ਬਹਾਨੈ ॥  
**Karo Adtaae Dhharathee Maangee Baavan**  
**Roop Behaanai** ||  
*The Lord took the form of a dwarf, and asked for some*  
*land.*

ਕਿਉ ਪਇਆਲਿ ਜਾਇ ਕਿਉ ਫਲੀਐ ਜੇ ਬਲਿ ਰੂਪੁ ਪਛਾਨੈ ॥੩॥  
**Kio Paeiaal Jae Kio Shhaleeai Jae Bal Roop**  
**Pashhaanai** ||3||  
*If Bal the king had recognized Him, he would not have*  
*been deceived and sent to the underworld.* ||3||

ਰਾਜਾ ਜਨਮੇਜਾ ਦੇ ਮਤੀ ਬਰਜਿ ਬਿਆਸਿ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਇਆ ॥  
**Raajaa Janamaejaa Dhae Mathanaee Baraj Biaas**  
**Parrhaaeiaa** ||  
*Vyaas taught and warned the king Janmayjaa not to do*  
*three things.*

ਤਿਨਿ ਕਰਿ ਜਗ ਅਠਾਰਹ ਘਾਏ ਕਿਰਤੁ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਚਲਾਇਆ ॥੪॥  
**Thinih Kar Jag Athaareh Ghaaeae Kirath N Chalai**  
**Chalaaeiaa** ||4||  
*But he performed the sacred feast and killed eighteen*



*Brahmins; the record of one's past deeds cannot be erased. ||4||*

ਗਣਤ ਨ ਗਣੀ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਾ ਬੋਲੀ ਭਾਇ ਸੁਭਾਈ ॥

**Ganath N Gananaee Hukam Pashhaanaa Bolee  
Bhaae Subhaae ||**

*I do not try to calculate the account; I accept the Hukam of the Divine's Command. I speak with intuitive love and respect all.*

ਜੇ ਕਛਿ ਵਰਤੈ ਤੁਧੈ ਸਲਾਹੀ ਸਭ ਤੇਰੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ॥੫॥

**Jo Kishh Varathai Thudhhai Salaahanaee Sabh  
Thaeree Vaddiaae ||5||**

*No matter what happens, I will praise the Divine. It is all Your Glorious Greatness, O Divine One. ||5||*

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅਲਿਪਤੁ ਲੇਪੁ ਕਦੇ ਨ ਲਾਗੈ ਸਦਾ ਰਹੈ ਸਰਣਾਈ ॥

**Gurmukh Alipath Laep Kadhae N Laagai Sadhaa  
Rehai Saranaae ||**

*The Gurmukh remains detached; filth never attaches itself to him. He remains forever in God's Sanctuary.*

ਮਨਮੁਖੁ ਮੁਗਧੁ ਆਗੈ ਚੇਤੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਦੁਖਿ ਲਾਗੈ ਪਛੁਤਾਈ ॥੬॥

**Manamukh Mugadhh Aagai Chaethai Naahee Dhukh  
Laagai Pashhuthaee ||6||**

*The foolish self-willed manmukh does not think of the future; that is overtaken by pain, and then regrets. ||6||*

ਆਪੇ ਕਰੇ ਕਰਾਏ ਕਰਤਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਏਹ ਰਚਨਾ ਰਚੀਐ ॥

**Aapae Karae Karaae Karathaa Jin Each Rachanaa  
Racheai ||**

*The Creator who created this creation acts, and causes all to act.*

ਹਰਿ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਜੀਅਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੇ ਪੈ ਪਚੀਐ ॥੭॥

**Har Abhimaan N Jaee Jeeahu Abhimaanae Pai  
Pacheai ||7||**

*O Divine One, our egotistical pride does not depart from the soul. Falling into egotistical pride, we are ruined. ||7||*

ਭੁਲਣ ਵਿਚਿ ਕੀਆ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ਕਰਤਾ ਆਪਿ ਨ ਭੁਲੈ ॥

**Bhulan Vich Keeaa Sabh Koe Karathaa  
Aap N Bhulai ||**

*Everyone makes mistakes; only the Creator does not make mistakes.*

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਨਿਸਤਾਰਾ ਕੇ ਗੁਰਪਰਸਾਦਿ ਅਘੁਲੈ ॥੮॥੪॥

**Naanak Sach Naam Nisathaaraa Ko Gur  
Parasaadh Aghulai ||8||4||**

*Says Nanak, salvation comes through the True Name. By Guru's Gift, one is released. ||8||4||*

The compassion in this **Shabad** is so powerful. And this compassion has its roots in a non-dualistic perception of life.

“...no one knowingly makes a mistake.... That one alone is mistaken whom the Divine makes so....The Creator acts and causes all to act....Everyone makes mistakes; only the Creator does not make mistakes....I do not try to calculate the account; I accept the Hukam of the Divine's Command. I speak with intuitive love and respect all.... No matter what happens, I will praise the Divine. It is all Your Glorious Greatness”

The lines from this **Shabad** convey the essence of non-dualistic compassion. That “I” have no power to compute the account. That the Divine is the Doer of everything. That whatever happens, happens in **Hukam** - in alignment with the Cosmic Play. That nobody chooses to make a mistake. Though we all do make mistakes.

This **Shabad** gives us very powerful, though challenging, psycho-spiritual medicine. To help us swallow this medicine, the Guru pulls examples from great myths and stories. King Janmayjaa, King Bal, Indra. It is not so much about whether these stories are literally true or not. What matters is the Guru saying - even Kings and Gods get deceived. Even they have no power to avoid mistakes. Focus your mind on the Doer of All and do not try to figure out why things happen, because **Hukam** is beyond our human capacity to compute.

Just keep appreciating. Just keep singing, in positive ways. Do not let the mind go into slander.



It is said that Guru Hargobind ji went on a friendly hunting trip with Emperor Jahangir only a few months after the torture and death of his father, Guru Arjan Dev ji by the Emperor's order. Similarly, Guru Gobind Singh ji presented a special Robe of Honour to Bahadur Shah when he succeeded the throne of his father, the Mogul King, Aurangzeb. Even though Aurangzeb had caused the martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh ji's father and mother, his four children and countless Sikhs.

This is very difficult to accept and understand if we look at the event through every-day eyes. Yet, the Guru's life stories exemplify the virtue of *khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ that was inculcated in the Sikh way of life. Guru Hargobind ji and Guru Gobind Singh ji had fully realised the truth embodied within the **Shabad Guru**. They had the character, courage and ability to look upon friend and enemy alike. They beheld everything that happened as **Hukam**, as part of the Divine Plan. This gave them the strength to stay positive in speech and action, to harbor no anxiety in their minds.

*Khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ is a very refined, emotionally mature and spiritually elevated point of view of Gurmat, the Guru's pathway. The capacity to be kind and positive, from the non-dualistic heart of compassion, even to the person who tortured your Beloved family to death.

The following passage from a **Shabad** by Guru Nanak, on page 1013 of the Guru Granth, uses the word *Khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ. And the context that

surrounds it has the qualities that we have been discussing.

ਸੇ ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ਜੇ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਸੇਵੈ ਵਿਚਰੁ ਆਪੁ ਗਵਾਏ ॥

**So Sanniaasee Jo Sathigur Saevai Vichahu**

**Aap Gavaaeae ||**

*That person alone is a Sannyasi, who serves the True Guru, and removes self-conceit from within.*

ਛਾਦਨ ਭੋਜਨ ਕੀ ਆਸ ਨ ਕਰਈ ਅਚਿੰਤੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਸੇ ਪਾਏ ॥

**Shhaadhan Bhojan Kee Aas N Karee Achinth Milai**

**So Paaeae ||**

*That person does not ask for clothes or food; without asking, they accept whatever they receive.*

ਬਕੈ ਨ ਬੋਲੈ ਖਿਮਾ ਧਨੁ ਸੰਗ੍ਰਹੈ ਤਾਮਸੁ ਨਾਮਿ ਜਲਾਏ ॥

**Bakai N Bolai Khimaa Dhhan Sangrehai Thaamas**

**Naam Jalaaeae ||**

*That person does not speak empty words; but gathers the wealth of tolerance (ਖਿਮਾ) and burns away their anger with the Naam.*

ਧਨੁ ਗਿਰਹੀ ਸੰਨਿਆਸੀ ਜੇਗੀ ਜਿ ਹਰਿ ਚਰਣੀ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਏ ॥੭॥

**Dhhan Girehee Sanniaasee Jogee J Har Charanee**

**Chith Laaeae ||7||**

*Blessed is such a householder, Sannyasi and Yogi, who focuses their consciousness on the Divine's feet. ||7||*

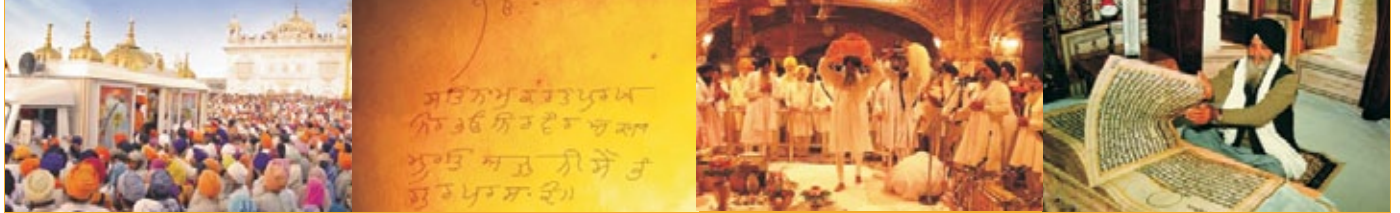
Accepting that what is given. Not speaking pointlessly. The wealth of *Khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ develops and with it we can burn away our anger and anxiety. Here - *Khimaa* ਖਿਮਾ is translated as "tolerance." But the context of it implies a compassionate, surrendered tolerance that creates a sense of forgiveness, and a willingness to engage others with a fully open heart.

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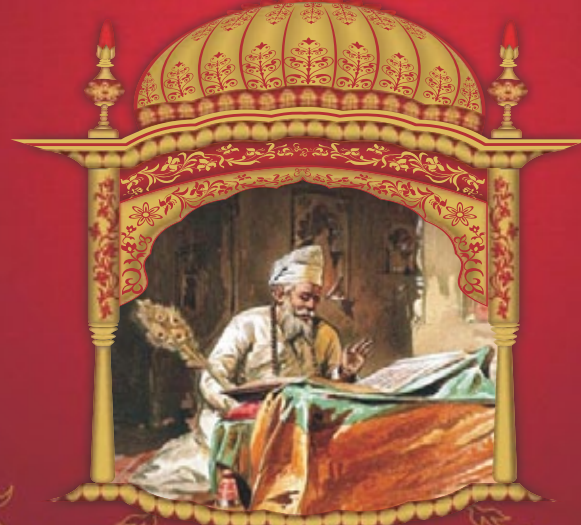


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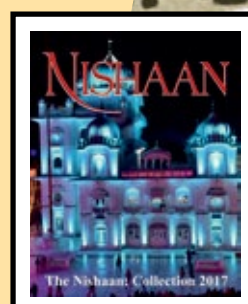
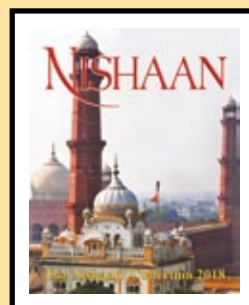
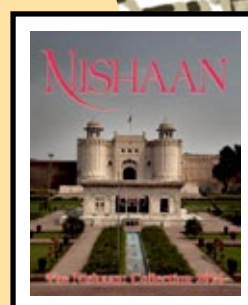
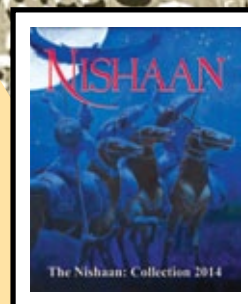
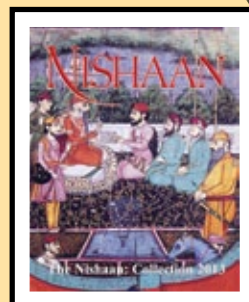
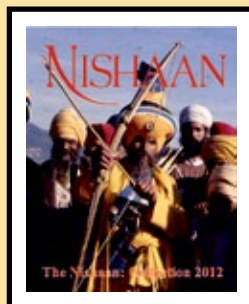
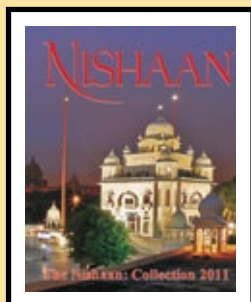
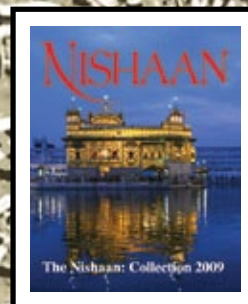
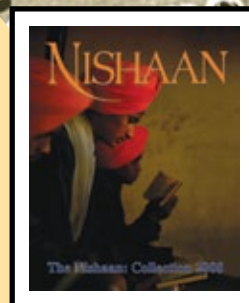
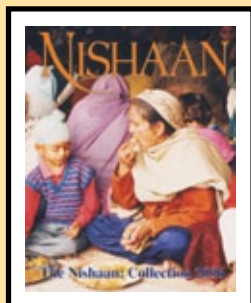
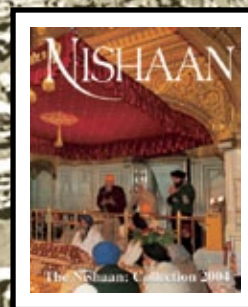
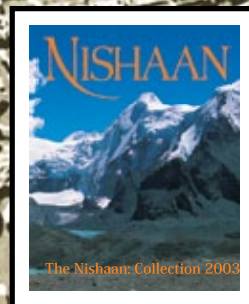
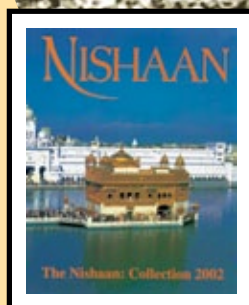
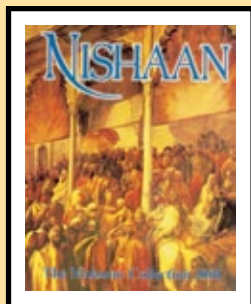
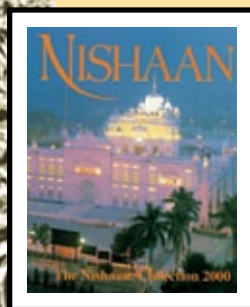
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