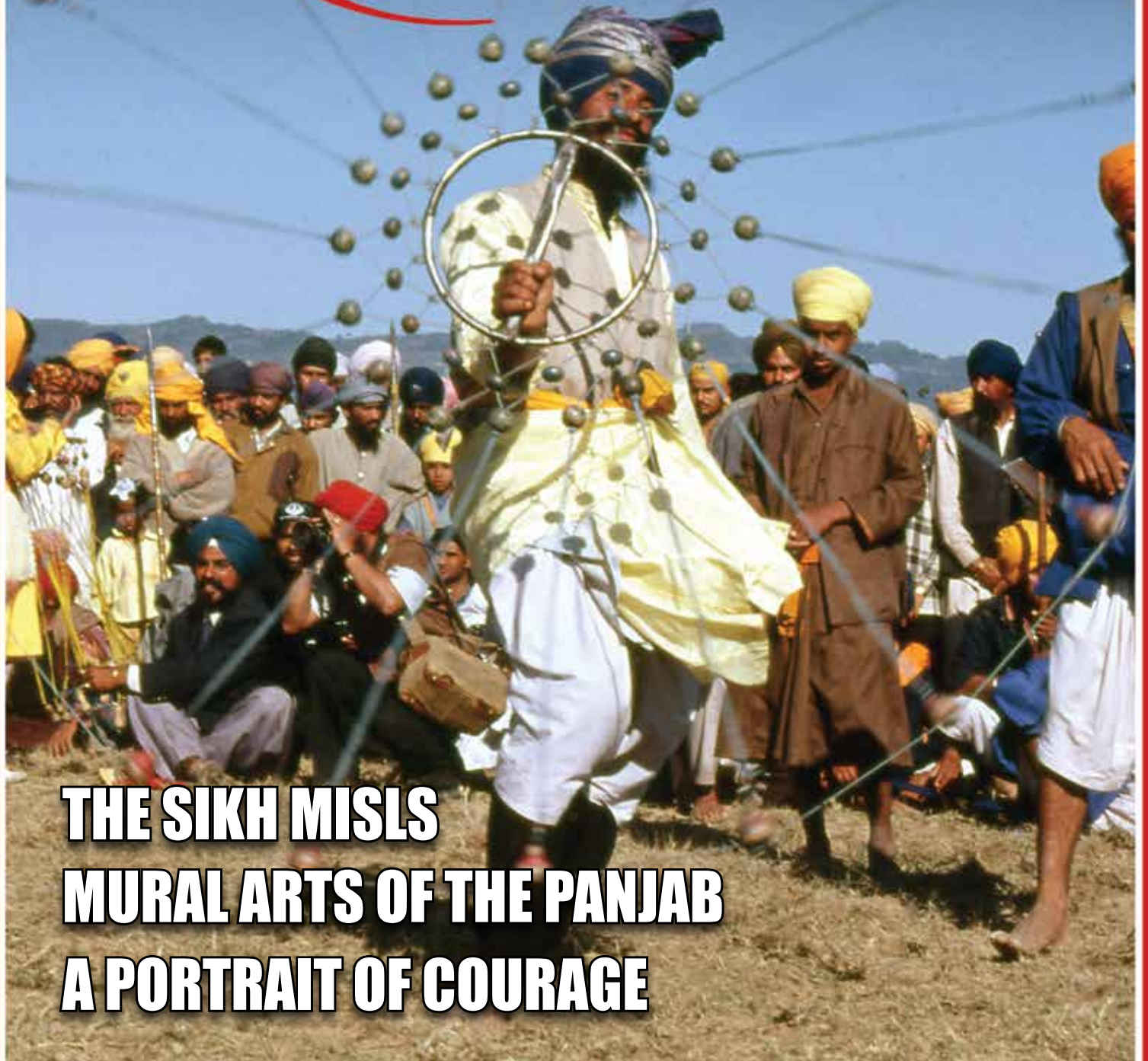


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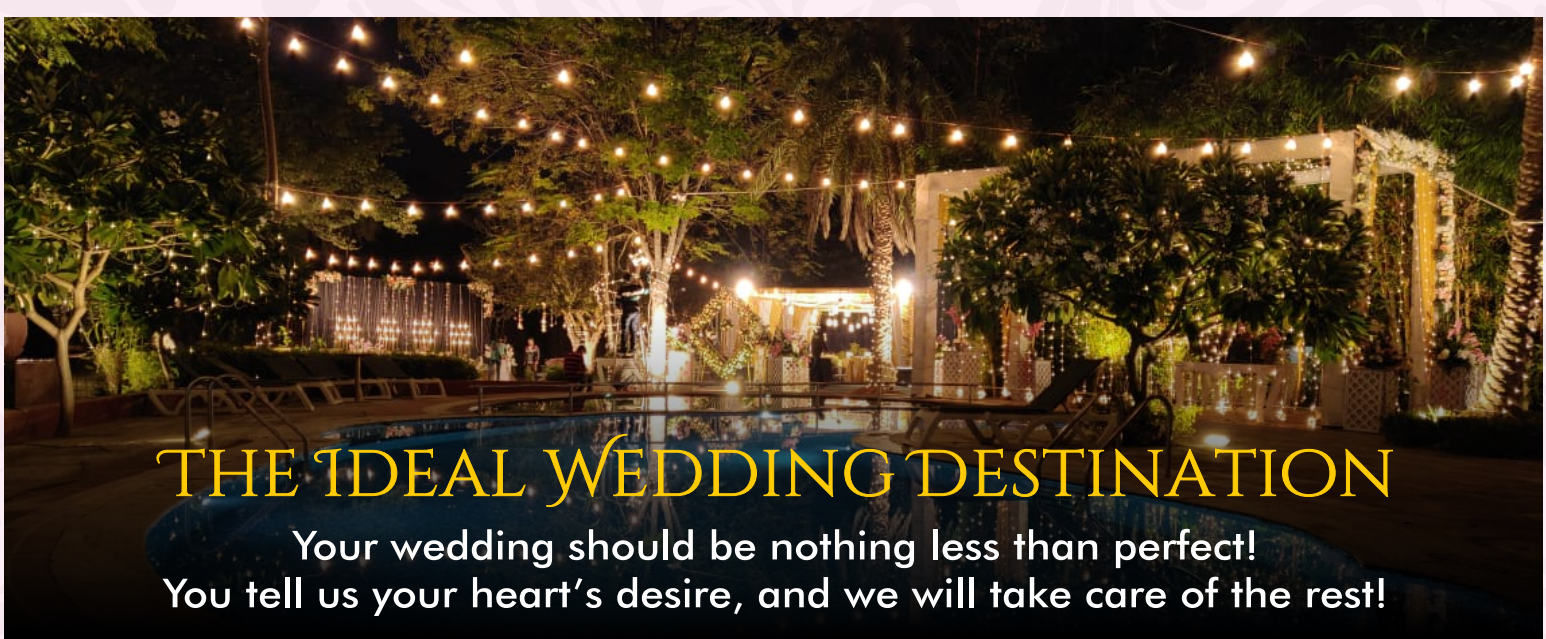
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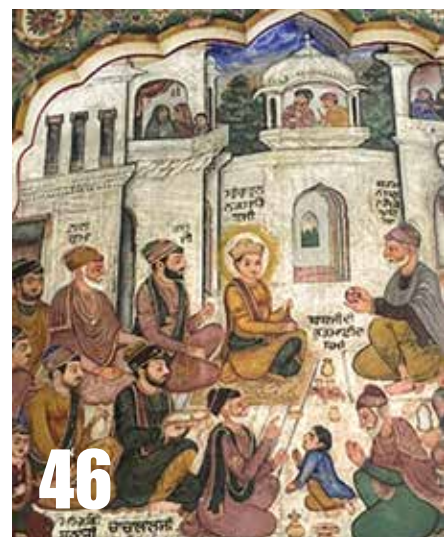
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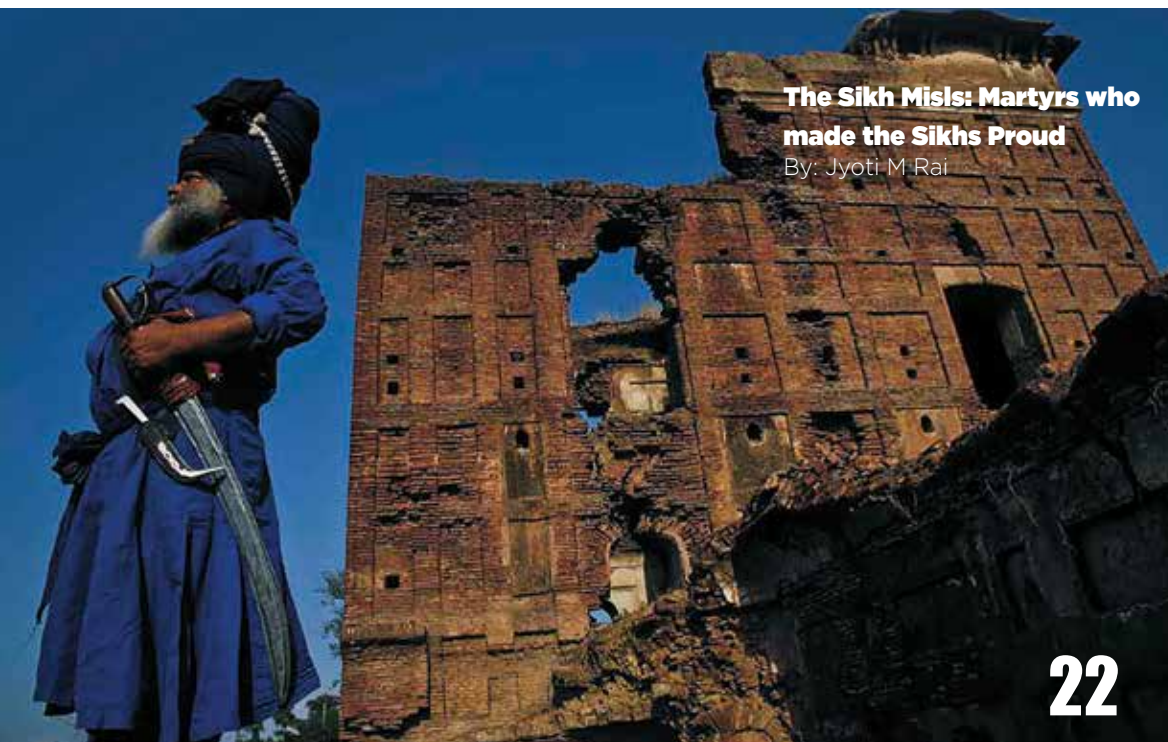
# CONTENTS

## ANNUAL ISSUE 2021

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Editorial</b>   | <b>03</b> |
| SABAD, SABD, SHABAD et al<br>Dr. I.J. Singh  |           |
| <b>Light the Lamp of Enlightenment</b>   | <b>04</b> |
| Bhupinder (Bo) Singh   |           |
| <b>Guru Nanak Dev ji &amp; Science</b>   | <b>07</b> |
| Dr. Harinder Singh Bedi  |           |
| <b>Sikhs of Norway</b>   | <b>08</b> |
| Bikramdeep Singh Pannu   |           |
| <b>Sikhi, Nature &amp; the Grandeur of Akal Purakh</b>                                     | <b>12</b> |
| Dr. Hardial Singh Dhillon  |           |
| <b>The Sikh Misl: Martyrs who made the Sikhs Proud</b>                                     | <b>22</b> |
| Jyoti M Rai  |           |
| <b>Book Review: Influences of the British Raj<br/>on the Attire and Textiles of Punjab</b> | <b>33</b> |
| Ganeev Kaur Dhillon  |           |
| <b>Fateh !<br/>A Visual Journey of the Farmers during the Year-long Protest</b>            | <b>38</b> |
| Photographs by: Tanny Kaler<br>Text by: Ganeev Kaur Dhillon                                |           |
| <b>The Mural Arts of Panjab</b>  | <b>46</b> |
| Artika Aurora Bakshi and Ganeev Kaur Dhillon   |           |
| <b>The Sun Rises in the East</b>   | <b>52</b> |
| Bobby Singh Bansal   |           |
| <b>A Portrait of Courage</b>   | <b>60</b> |
| Pushpindar Singh   |           |
| <b>Book Review: The Story of the Sikhs</b>   | <b>70</b> |
| Interview by: Artika Aurora Bakshi   |           |



46



**The Sikh Misl: Martyrs who  
made the Sikhs Proud**

By: Jyoti M Rai

22



08



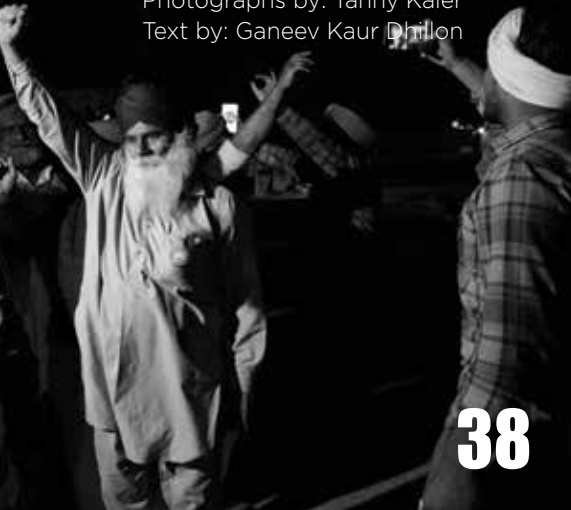
60

## Fateh !

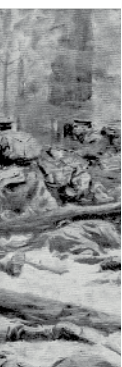
### A Visual Journey of the Farmers during the Year-long Protest

Photographs by: Tanny Kaler

Text by: Ganeev Kaur Dhillon



# 38



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# EDITORIAL

## SABAD, SABD, SHABAD et al

Many readers of Gurbani, particular those who proudly see themselves as superbly dedicated, when it comes to reading or writing Gurbani, become aggressively nit picking about the bases of the vocabulary of Gurbani – its pronunciation, precise unchanging interpretation, even possible translation, meaning, and applications.

Their care is genuine, deserving admiration. Yet, I wonder! Should we be so unchangingly bound to a rich and hoary past, even in grammar and usage. Each and every word then, with even the rarest suspicion of uncommon or untraditional usage is often credited with the stench of emerging sin. Hence, not approved. Is every departure from grammatical rules, enunciation and meaning always to be clearly so labeled, condemned and practice rejected most vigorously?

For Sikhs, every word of the Guru Granth Sahib is selected with total care meant for the holy. Such care is expected from the dedicated Sikh and that is as it ought to be. No departures from the specified specifics like enunciation, no luxurious sideroads with the language are to be entertained. Word(s) are expected to be read and sounded out as specified and translated with similar rigor.

But remember that in usage the Gurmukhi language changes like every language. Changes often reflect very specific, often meaningful variations. For instance, a particular part may indicate significant linguistic changes that are to be noted. For instance, do the particular words relate to Farsi linguistic roots or its Multani antecedents. The enunciation of common words varies, depending on whether you are speaking it in Lahore, Rawalpindi or Peshawar. Is the language of a certain locale more applicable, purer, better or holier? Sometimes yes; certainly not always is what I would say.

Just look at English as a living language that came to life centuries ago but even today continues to grow in usage and vocabulary worldwide. *It also continues to absorb words from other languages that enrich the existing English language.*

So, I wonder when I see gracefully adorned adults looking wise but acting otherwise when they begin harshly berating others about the correct spelling and pronunciation of some word. How can grownups argue and fight over whether it is SABD or SHABAD? As a community we have to reach at a common enunciation, the place of the word in speech and prose, and the meanings thereof. Languages keep growing unless they are dead.

Let's remember one unending lesson; Reading of the Guru Granth promotes peace and pleasure within and the urge to reread again. That enriches and expands our horizons. ***We must not deliberately and cheerfully cut Gurmukhi down to its narrowest, smallest existence.***

**I.J. Singh**

# LIGHT THE LAMP OF ENLIGHTENMENT

**Bhupinder (Bo) Singh**

The earthen lamp Deewa has become antiquated, thanks to the invention of electricity. Still one time of the year during Diwali, it makes a comeback as a gentle reminder of its earlier thriving heydays. But 550 years back it was ubiquitous, as well as a daily essential, providing illumination after darkness. The continued fast pace of technological advancement is soon going to relegate this icon of illumination to museums along with other displayed antique historical objects. How will the coming generation, not having experienced a Deewa could possibly relate to the metaphor of Deewa, when trying to understand explain something of supreme significance. So, this Diwali time let us explore the metaphor of Deewa to get the insight that Guru Ji is sharing with us. We still have many alive from that generation who had exposure to Deewa in their real lives and can relate to it.

Guru Nanak Dev Ji has shared the significance of light of the Deewa in this shabad as under to show how it dispels darkness:

“ਦੀਵਾ ਬਲੈ ਅੰਧੇਰਾ ਜਾਇ ॥  
ਬੇਦ ਪਾਠ ਮਤਿ ਪਾਪਾ ਖਾਇ ॥”  
“*Deewaa balai andheraa jai. Bedh paaTh mut paapaa khai.*”  
(SGGS, Pg. No. 791)

**Translation:** (Just as) when the lamp is lit, the darkness is dispelled; (similarly) reading the scriptures (not just the Veda's text per se, but the life molded by them) sinful intellect is purged.

Guru Ji has used the metaphor of lamp, to talk about the lamp of wisdom within. Guru Nanak Dev Ji's observation is of a common fact that the darkness is dispelled with light. Darkness does not have an independent existence of its own, it is simply absence of light. When the light enters that space, the phenomenon of dispelling the darkness is automatic. But what type of darkness is being referred to by Guru Ji here? Darkness here is not physical absence of light, but our dark nature as desires, greed, covetousness, temptation, ignorance, egotism, hypocrisy, lustfulness, selfishness, mental delusion etc. The darkness that engages our awareness so completely, overpowering it fully, and incapacitating its rationality. In short that life is an unenlightened existence.

In another place in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Ji has compared the life molded from attentive study of spiritual scriptures to that lamp of enlightenment. Guru Ji says:

“ਦੀਵਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਏਕੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਵਿਚਿ  
ਪਾਇਆ ਤੇਲੁ ॥ ਉਨਿ ਚਾਨਣਿ ਓਹੁ  
ਸੋਖਿਆ ਚੂਕਾ ਜਮ ਸਿਉ ਮੇਲੁ ॥੧॥”

“*Deewaa meraa aek naam dhukh vich paiaa tel. Aun chaanan oh sokhiala chookaa jam siau mel. 1.*”  
(SGGS, Pg. No. 358)

**Translation:** The Naam alone is my lamp; I have put the oil of (worldly) suffering into it. Its flame (which provides light in this world and the after world) has dried up this oil and I have escaped my meeting with the Messenger of Death. ||1||

Guru Ji says his lamp is “Naam”. “Naam” is the constant awareness of the Divine presence of the Creator in the creation. Naam is the awareness in which sins in life are not committed. The consequence of its light shining within is that the meeting with messengers of death does not take place. This educational aspect is not shared by our schools, higher educational institutions, parents, society, or the media. That unique awareness is only developed through life molded from the deep study of scriptures. “Naam” in turn consumed all the sufferings, just as the wick soaked in oil consumed it, in return providing us with the light. With “Naam” all the sufferings are gone. The sufferings in life which were stoically accepted, become the impetus for spiritual growth. The bigger benefit is that the constantly wavering mind is stilled and is not affected even with worldly enticements or threats. Let us ask Guru Ji to further clarify on the type of fuel he is referring to and explain about the wick as well. Guru Ji says:

“ਪੋਥੀ ਪੁਰਾਣ ਕਮਾਈਐ ॥  
ਭਉ ਵਟੀ ਇਤੁ ਤਨਿ ਪਾਈਐ ॥  
ਸਚੁ ਬੂਝਣੁ ਆਣਿ ਜਲਾਈਐ ॥੨॥”

“*Pothee puraana kamaieeaaai. Bhau vaTee it tan paieeaaai. Sach boojhaan aan jalaieeaaai. 2.*”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 25)

**Translation:** Let the implementation of the instructions of your prayer book be the oil and let the reverent fear of God be the wick for the lamp of this body. Light this lamp with the understanding of Truth. ||2||

Here Guru Ji is making it clear that scriptures are not merely to be read but internalized and implemented in life transforming it. The reverent fear acts as the wick of this body-lamp. So:

Lamp = Human Body  
 Oil (Fuel) = meditation and reflection on the scriptures removes suffering/worries

Wick = Reverent Fear

When this lamp is lighted within, that will make one a "Brahmgyani" or "Gurmukh", who is one with God, while alive. However, there is a strong impediment to its implementation in life. That hurdle is attachment to the illusion or "Maya". The physical world in which everything is perishable yet appears surreal, enticing, and lasting. It attracts us making us attached to its various forms. This illusion is perceived by the mind alone, in other words it is "Maya". What is the 'Modes Operandi' of Maya is clarified by Guru Ji as:

“ਏਹ ਮਾਇਆ ਜਿਤੁ ਹਰਿ ਵਿਸਰੈ ਮੋਹੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਭਾਉ ਦੂਜਾ ਲਾਇਆ ॥”  
*"Eh maiaa jit har visarai moh upajai bhaau dhoojaa laiaa."*  
 (SGGS, Pg. No. 921)

**Translation:** This is Maya, by which (1) "Hari" (Mool) is forsaken; (2) (worldly) attachment is born, and (3) the love of duality wells up within.

Anything that exists in the created world and attracts us to it is Maya. It takes us away from the remembrance of the Creator. When the camouflage of "Maya" is removed from over the creation, then its true essence is witnessed and experienced. Gurbani says that in order to drive away "Maya" the reverent fear needs to be inculcated. It is the fear that all my education, wealth, assets, power, position, family, wife, children, parents, relatives, and friends cannot help me in the world after. The fear that the inaction or inertia on my part can cost me my close relationship with my Guru. The fear that the rebirth in human form may not be

a future feasibility. This fear gives birth to a new awareness, capable of driving away all other worldly fears. These fears are going to make the seeker bold, fearless to the world. Guru Ji says that without this reverent fear, no one ever crosses across the world-ocean.

“ਭੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਲੰਘਸਿ ਪਾਰਿ ॥”  
*"Bhaai bin koi na langhas paar."*  
 (SGGS, Pg. No. 151)

**Translation:** Without the Fear (of God), no one crosses over the world-ocean.

This reverent fear will in turn give birth to the love for "Naam". Guru Ji has shared that aspect in these words:

“ਭੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਭਗਤਿ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਨਾਮਿ ਨ ਲਗੈ ਪਿਆਰੁ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਿ ਮਿਲਿਐ ਭਉ ਉਪਜੈ ਭੈ ਭਾਇ ਰੰਗੁ ਸਵਾਰਿ ॥”  
*"Bhaai bin bhagat na hoviee naam na lagai piaar. Satgur miliaai bhau uopajai bhaai bhai rang savaar."*  
 (SGGS, Pg. No. 788)

**Translation:** Without the (reverent)

Fear of God, there is no devotional worship, and no love for the Naam, the Name of the Lord. Meeting with the True Guru, the reverent Fear of God wells up, and one is embellished with the Fear and the Love of God.

When the lamp of wisdom is lighted within, its light, its illumination will shine all around dispelling darkness. Thus, darkness without any independent existence of its own, makes the absence of light as the prop for its existence. When that lamp is lighted, it cannot be extinguished as the fuel supply i.e. awareness is uninterrupted. All the darkness of the world fails to impact its light. Guru Ji has said that when that light is illumined, it can even dim the other light sources. Guru Ji provides the analogy of the light of the sun and how it overwhelms the moon in the sky rendering it invisible.

“ਉਗਵੈ ਸੂਰੁ ਨ ਜਾਪੈ ਚੰਦੁ ॥ ਜਹ ਗਿਆਨ ਪ੍ਰਗਾਸੁ ਅਗਿਆਨੁ ਮਿਟੰਤੁ ॥”  
*"Ugavaai soor na jaapai chand. Jeh giaan pragaas agiaan miTant."*  
 (SGGS, Pg. No. 791)



Guru Nanak with Bhai Mardana. Victoria Memorial Museum, Kolkata.

**Translation:** (Just as) when the sun rises, the moon succumbs (by becoming invisible). (Similarly,) wherever spiritual wisdom glows, ignorance is dispelled.

Here, Guru Ji has given the example of the sun to explain a phenomenon and its effect. When the spiritual (divine) wisdom appears, the mental ignorance is dispelled, along with its grip and power. This is the ignorance which gave birth to the attachment to the false or the perishable, with greed as its collateral effect. Attachment to the world was the cause of this darkness, which is now dispelled. Now, let us see what Guru Ji is saying in the subsequent lines of the shabad:

“ਬੇਦ ਪਾਠ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕੀ ਕਾਰ ॥  
ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਪੜ੍ਹਿ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਕਰਹਿ ਬੀਚਾਰ ॥”  
“*Bedh paaTh sansaar kee kaar.*  
*PaRi(h) paRi(h) pundit kareh*  
*beechar.*”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 791)

**Translation:** Reading the Vedas (has) become the world’s occupation; the Pundits read them, study them and hold discourses on them.

Guru Ji is talking here about the scripture of the Vedas, which are read as an academic endeavor, and debates based on the in-depth understanding amongst the scholars ensues. But this mental acrobatics is a meaningless exhibition of academic acumen as no transformation has taken place within. Essentially Guru Ji is not in favor of such scholastic endeavors. For Guru Ji, study should bring the change within.

“ਬਿਨੁ ਬੂਝੇ ਸਭ ਹੋਇ ਖੁਆਰ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਉਤਰਸਿ ਪਾਰਿ ॥੧॥”  
“*Bin boojhe sabh hoi khuaar. Nanak*  
*gurmukh utaras paar. 1.*”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 791)

**Translation:** Without the understanding and transformation brought by it, all are ruined. O Nanak, the Gurmukh is carried across (as

with their new awareness they do not tread the path of sins). ||1||

Those who turned their face towards Guru, becoming Gurmukh, have implemented Guru Ji’s teachings in their lives, transforming it. When the lamp is lighted, all plans, actions are weighed in under its light. As a result of it sins are not committed out of ignorance. Thus, the light of the scriptures destroyed the evil intellect. But let us try to find what those Gurmukhs acquired when this lamp was lit within. Guru Nanak Ji says:

“ਪਾਇਆ ਰਤਨੁ ਘਰਾਹੁ ਦੀਵਾ  
ਬਾਲਿਆ ॥”  
“*Paiaa rattan gharaahu deewaa*  
*baaliaa.*”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 149)

**Translation:** I have found the jewel (of Naam) within the home of my own self; the lamp within has been lit.

When that lamp of “Naam” is lighted within, then one meets the Lord within as Guru Ji shares with us:

“ਕਰਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤਉ ਮਿਲੈ ॥੧॥  
ਰਹਾਉ ॥”  
“*Kar chaanan saahib tau milai. 1.*  
*Rahaau.*”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 25)

**Translation:** Light it (within) and meet your Lord and Master. ||1||Pause||

When the lamp of awareness is lit within, the meeting and merger with God will take place; nothing else is left to be accomplished in human life. The achievement means living a life cognizant of the constant awareness of the Creator. This is the true lamp or a compass which will keep everything in life pointing north or Holy principled. The following steps have been taken to get here:

1. Study of Scriptures
2. Resulted in a new Awareness of presence of consciousness in entire creation
3. Implementation of Do’s and Don’ts in life from study of

Scriptures

4. Inculcated healthy fear of Divine
5. Lifestyle transformed from indulgence to detachment
6. Life became principled and dedicated to selfless service

The devotee is honored in the house of the Lord with His divine grace becoming one with Him. When the spirit is awakened in life, it transforms life making it principled. It is Deewali not just on a particular day of the year, but every day, every moment, as every action is principled. All the decisions in life are now made with that illumination within. A vision expansion has taken place within and now the boundary of the self is stretched out beyond the skin boundary to encompass the entire creation. That is the merger with the divine. Guru Ji explains:

“ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਭਗਤਿ ਘਟਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਹੋਇ ॥  
ਆਪੁ ਪਛਾਣਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸੋਇ ॥1॥  
ਰਹਾਉ ॥”  
“*Gurmukh bhagat ghaT channan*  
*hoi. Aap pachhaan milai prabh soi.*  
*1. Rahaau.*”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 364)

**Translation:** The Gurmukh has the light of devotional worship within his heart. Understanding his own self, he meets God. ||1||Pause||

When that achievement has taken place, the lamp has been lighted within and nothing else is left to be achieved in life. That life is truly a successful life. The state of mind is charged with positivity and constant adoration takes place within. When the lamp of wisdom has been lighted within, enlightenment will be experienced while alive, not after death.

Bhupinder Singh is a Houston-based business man, an engineer by profession. He hails from Myan-mar, was educated in India, and started his career there. He has a keen interest on Sikh history, motivation and spirituality. He is author of 7 books and has co-authored one. His articles have been featured in print media and web portals.



# GURU NANAK DEV JI & SCIENCE

**Dr. Harinder Singh Bedi**

I get asked a number of times – “You are a man of science – how can you believe in the concept of God?”. I think it is just the reverse – a true scientist knows that nothing is random – the complexity of the Universe shows that there has to be someone who planned it down to the minutest details – like a master web designer !



**G**uru Nanak’s teachings do not disagree with science. In fact we scientists are just now discovering the concepts that were written by Guru Nanak centuries ago. Sikh Gurus told us not to smoke, do drugs or alcohol long long ago. My cardiac scientist colleagues confirm now after years of painstaking research that drinking alcohol, smoking and consuming drugs have harmful effects on the body.

Sikh beliefs have not been disproved by science in any form. Scientific facts support the teachings of Guru Nanak. Sri Guru Granth Sahib (SGGS) Ji states, "There are planets, solar systems and galaxies. If one speaks of them, there is no limit, no end. There are worlds upon worlds of His creation. As He commands, so they exist. He watches over all, and contemplating the creation, (GGS8). Nanak says "There are billions of regions and planets. There are billions of moons, suns and stars" (GGS 275).

The above is so uncannily true as present day science confirms.

Guru Nanak states that God created this Universe billions of years ago. Furthermore, this is not the first time God created this Universe, He has done so many times. Life not only exists on Earth alone but many other planets (this is still unconfirmed by science – fingers crossed for the future!). Scientists have found that there are billions of galaxies, each galaxy containing billions of stars and millions of planets revolving around those stars with millions of moons revolving around those planets. Our galaxy, the Milky Way, has approximately 200 billions stars and millions of planets from which few are known. There are billions of galaxies like ours in the universe and this is just now being realized by modern science, where as Guru Nanak mentioned it long before its discovery.

Scientists are slowly attempting to unravel the creation of God but the whole creation is so vast that currently it is beyond what we humans can explore. Scientists study the creation of God and try to comprehend the mysteries of His creation. The

more they learn, the more they are amazed.

I was earlier a hard core ‘scientist’ atheist till I became a cardio-vascular surgeon. So many times I (and equally my colleagues) have seen that though we replicate in minute details a complex surgery factoring in all patient variables – the results can vary vastly. Thus a case which seemed hopeless miraculously turns around and recovers. Some intervention beyond our current science is the only explanation that all our complex computer algorithms can come up with. Science has painstakingly progressed – but our knowledge is still a drop in the ocean. We are at page 1 of a 100 page instruction manual. The Master smiles indulgently while our ATGC DNA code slowly awakens (or follows its pre – programmed time bound course?).

---

*Dr Harinder Singh Bedi is Director Cardiac Sciences at Ivy Hospital, Mohali, Punjab, India. He can be contacted at 9814060480, beatingheartsurgery@gmail.com*

# SIKHS OF NORWAY

**Bikramdeep Singh Pannu**

**“F**or each and every person, our Lord and Master provides sustenance. Why are you so afraid, O mind? The flamingos fly hundreds of miles, leaving their young ones behind. Who feeds them, and who teaches them to feed themselves? Have you ever thought of this in your mind?”

Guru Nanak Dev ji, Sri Guru Granth Sahib

The Sikh community is known to adapt and adopt to foreign lands and cultures in case the need arises to leave their birthplace. The Sikh community of Norway is a perfect example of the spirit of ‘Chardi Kala!’

There is a Norwegian TV-show by the name of *‘Der ingen skulle tru at nokon kunne bu’* and it can roughly be translated to ‘You would not believe anyone could live there’. The show is about people living in the most remote places of Norway, often with no or very little connection with civilisation. Every time we watched this show, we would be surprised that anyone could live in a remote place like that. People in India would be equally surprised when we, during our trips back home to Punjab in the 90s, would tell them that we lived in Norway. I can still recall from our first trip back when a friend of my dad asked, “Harjeet, Norway Amreeka da ik sooba hai?” (Harjeet, is Norway a state in America?). After explaining the geographical placement of the country, the usual remark would be “Achha, kadi suneya nai”. (Oh,

never heard of it). The very few who would have known about Norway would ask, “Achha, jithe 6 mahine din, 6 mahine raat hundi?” (Oh, the place where it is daylight for 6 months and night for 6 months).

Fast-forward 25 years and we can see the results of how the Internet and globalisation have made the world a whole lot smaller. The 1994 Winter Olympics in Lillehammer, the Nobel Peace Prize, fjords, Vikings, salmon and the land of midnight sun have become familiar Norwegian references for Indians. Some would even surprise me with the knowledge about the famous writer Henrik Ibsen, and Norway having the world’s largest sovereign wealth fund.

## The Early Years

The situation must have been quite challenging for the first Sikhs who arrived in Norway in the 1960s. Even though the cultural differences have shrunk over the years, language barriers were hard to breach all through the 70s and 80s. Not only was Norwegian a new and difficult language, but most of the early Sikh immigrants also worked at factories and farms where they had little or no exposure to the local language. The Freia chocolate factory, H.P. Henrichson’s brush factory, Standard Telefon og Kabelfabrikk (telephone and cable factory) and bakeries were some of the places that offered jobs to the new settlers in the capital city of Oslo. Working at bakeries was extremely tough for these early Sikh settlers as it

mandated a typical 8 pm to 4 am night shift. With no bus service available until 7-8 am and no one in possession of a car, they would sleep on the floor of the bakery until the bus service was up and running in the morning. Some would then go directly to a second shift at the day job. Meanwhile in Drammen, a city 40-50 km south-west of Oslo, they worked at farms. In both Oslo and Drammen, they would team up into groups of 5-10 and arrange some sort of shared housing.

In the mid-70s, they were able to invite their families from India. Some of the women started working at Oslo Flaggfabrikk (Oslo Flag Factory), while others pursued their studies at the local university, and





(Above) "Turban is forbidden. Indian denied taxi job" – the front-page headline from the newspaper "Arbeiderbladet" 30.06.1977 with picture of Harbir Singh Sawhney and his taxi.

(Below) Gurduara Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji, Oslo (picture credit Rune Aakvoik)



some were housewives, who would babysit the children of those who were working.

### Stirring the Cultural Cauldron

The first organisation established by the Indians in Norway was the Indian Welfare Society (IWS), which was founded in 1971. IWS would hire rooms at schools and libraries for sangats celebrating Gurburab and other festivals like Vaiskahi, Diwali etc. A few years later, the first edition of the 'Parichay' magazine was published by IWS. It was handwritten, until they acquired a Gurmukhi typewriter in the late 70s, and published in Punjabi, Hindi, Norwegian and English. Another magazine, named 'Pehchaan' started publishing in the late 70s. In 1977, the Oslo Gurdwara Committee was formed and given the task to establish a gurdwara for the Sikh community in Oslo. After six years of fundraising and hard work to find a suitable location, Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji was established as the first gurdwara in Norway at Alnabru in Oslo in 1983.

Sundays were dedicated to the gurdwara. At the end of 1984, Punjabi classes for children were also set up as an addition to the Sunday diwaan. Even though the

gurdwara was established, there were no *raagis* here. *Raagis*, *dhaadis* and *parcharaks* were occasionally invited from the UK, amongst whom, Gian Singh Surjit and Balwant Singh Derby travelled to Norway most frequently.

### The English Connection

The English influence was quite evident in many ways. As the local magazines 'Paricha' and 'Pehchaan' faded away, they were replaced by two UK-based magazines, 'Des Pardes' (weekly) and 'Awaz-E-Qaum' (monthly). Indian groceries like lentils, spices, rice and wheat were also imported from the UK. The Norwegian Sikh community would turn to the UK when they faced any kind of difficulties or challenges in Norway. One particular case was when Harbir Singh Sawhney, in 1977, was banned from driving his taxi while wearing a turban. His taxi company argued that the turban was not a part of the uniform. Mr. Sawhney turned to the UK to show examples of turban wearing Sikhs in the Army and Police, as well as those who worked as mailmen and taxi drivers. He eventually won the case and the turban was included as a part of the uniform. More cases regarding the turban, for example in the army and for bus drivers, were fought and won during the following years.

### The Achievers

More than a decade of struggle and hard work ensured financial independence for the years to come. There was a boom in grocery stores owned by Sikhs in the early 80s. Owning their own shops also resulted in creating workplaces for other Sikhs who had recently arrived in Norway. A new wave of Sikhs came to Norway after Operation Blue Star in 1984 and the insurgency that followed for a decade in India. Harinder Singh



was chargé d'affaires at the Indian embassy in Oslo during the time of Operation Blue Star. He resigned from his position in protest against the Indian government and applied for political stay in Norway. He moved back to India in 1990 where he engaged himself in politics and was elected as an MP twice: for the Shiromani Akali Dal in 1996 and the Aam Admi Party in 2014. There is another, sadder, connection between Norway and 1984. Harbir Singh Sawhney had gone back to India to visit his family in Delhi when he was caught up in the riots against the Sikhs after the killing of Indira Gandhi. Mr. Sawhney was one

of many thousand Sikhs who were brutally killed by mobs in Delhi and other Indian cities.

### Birth of a Society

The new wave of Sikhs, who reached Norway after 1984, mostly seeking political asylum, resulted in a very vibrant environment amongst the children at the gurdwara. Sikh children born in Norway, who hadn't been exposed to Punjabi culture, could now interact directly with children born and brought up in Punjab. This led to much improvement in Punjabi speaking skills of Norwegian born Sikh children. This was extremely important as Punjabi classes had

been cancelled at the gurdwara since the early 90s. At the same time, this interaction made it easier for the Punjab-born children to learn the Norwegian language. The enterprising couple Avtar Singh and Balwinder Kaur started running Punjabi classes in 1996 by teaching a handful of children for two hours every Friday and the school was named 'Panjabi School Norway.' The number of students rapidly increased during the next few months. Panjabi School has also been arranging festivals, functions and sports tournaments for its students ever since 1996. Later, Panjabi schools were also established in other cities in Norway.

Investing time and resources in the younger generations resulted in a thriving and vibrant batch of youngsters, who were very passionate about their religion and culture. The Gurdwara committee established a youth organisation called 'Unge Sikher' (Young Sikh) where new young leaders would be groomed, and amongst these was Sumeet Singh, who came up with an innovative idea in 2010. He said, "Rather than waiting for the Norwegian people to come to us at the gurdwara to get to know us better, why don't we reach out to people?"

This was the beginning of the Norwegian Turban Day, which was started in 2010. The idea was to put up a tent where Norwegians could get turbans tied on their heads. By doing so they would be able to understand Sikhs and the importance of the turban in a better way. It started with a few hundred turbans being tied the first year and ended up growing bigger and bigger as the years went by. Eleven years later, it has become one of Oslo's main attractions with as many as 20,000 visitors. Norwegian Turban



*On Turban Day, people from the Sikh community in Norway inform the public about what it is to be a Sikh & the importance of turbans. Picture above shows the volunteers who made Turban Day possible (image by: Tina Kjensli)*

Day is arranged annually on the first Saturday after Vaisakhi, and 350 volunteers, mostly Sikh youth, are involved in this event. Some of the

biggest Norwegian companies are associated with this huge cultural occasion. Flytoget (the Airport Express Train), offers free travel

for everyone wearing a turban on this day. Paleet, a mall right next to the location where this event is held, offers discount to turbaned shoppers.

Sikhs in Norway have come a long way since their early days of working at factories and farms in the 60s and 70s. They have overcome hardships like the cold climate, linguistic and cultural barriers and social and judicial challenges regarding their identity. They have gone from fighting for the right to wear a turban on duty to creating such a great event where Norwegians line up for hours to get a turban tied on their head. The grit and fighting spirit of the first generation created a solid platform for the coming generations and the present generation are thriving in a warm, welcoming and well-developed ecosystem marked by socio-economic prosperity and a bright future ahead.



Numero Uno (NU), one of India's first indigenously manufactured denim brands, was incorporated in 1987. Over the years, Numero Uno has transformed into a dynamic and preferred brand for the youth. Today, it has the privilege of being one of the few power brands that fuses international trends, innovative fabrics, washes, treatments and competitive pricing. Under the leadership of its CMD Mr. Narinder Singh Dhingra, the brand, over the years has managed to build a strong brand in an industry otherwise difficult to penetrate, and has created a special place for itself among all the global denim brands as well as Indian brands.

Numero Uno's current offerings include denims, trousers, shirts, t-shirts, jackets, knitwear & active wear for both men and women along with accessories like belts, wallets, socks, deodorants, caps and footwear. With a major contribution in sales, denim is NU's core category. With more than 34 years in denim making, NU has created a legacy of sorts in the craft of denim designing & production.

The brand is positioned as The Real Denim. The positioning emphasises the rich legacy & continuous premium quality denim promise. It targets young, aspirational, fashion conscious and upwardly mobile consumers, in the age bracket of 16 to 30, who are self assured with access to technology and propensity to spend on lifestyle.

The brand has its headquarters at Gurugram, Haryana and an expansive yet environment friendly manufacturing facility at Selaqui near Dehradun. It has an extensive distribution network with 260+ exclusive stores, 87 LFS counters and presence in over 800 MBO retail outlets pan-India. In addition to these, the brand is also doing great on e-commerce platforms including its own e-store [www.numerounojeanswear.com](http://www.numerounojeanswear.com). It has plans to strengthen their current presence & explore new territories. The brand is always working hard to improve the overall shopping experience at all the stores & spaces its present at.

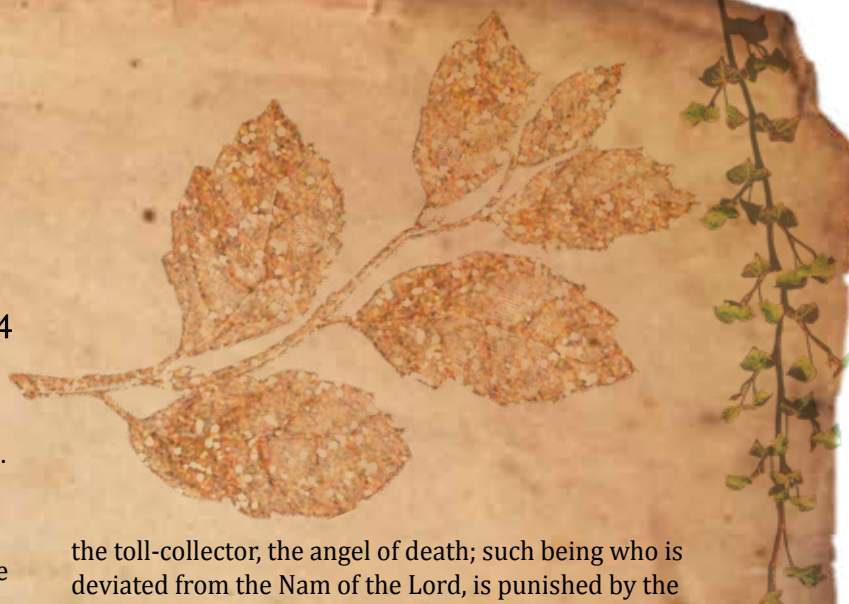
# SIKHI, NATURE & THE GRANDEUR OF AKAL PURAKH

Dr. Hardial Singh Dhillon

There is a growing trend of interpretation by some Dehra (Centres) chiefs and by some younger Sikh preachers and followers alike, of Gurbani, who advocate that there is no accountability of organisms hereafter; whatever it is, it is here and now. This is a very worrying situation indeed, since it only paints half of the picture. It is very easy to select one-sided quotations from The Guru Granth Sahib to prove one's view. In fact, one Dehra chief went as far as to say that the origin of organisms doesn't require some separate entity; take a bucket of water and place it in the open for a couple of weeks, and, first smaller and then larger organisms, appear in it. Hence Nature itself, and not any other separate entity, is God. So, he says, if organisms are born in this way and die in the world, there is no accountability anywhere.

Equally disturbed are some groups of scientists, who are set to interpret Gurbani in the light of scientific knowledge and want to leave no stone unturned, to unravel the true picture...It is beyond the scope of this article to prove either way; it merits as a separate topic, elsewhere. But it leaves some bitter taste in the mouth. In the following pages, I shall try to offer some answers and ask some further questions, but satisfaction, for everyone, is not guaranteed!

On my recent visit to Pakistan, to mark the 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, last year, while seated in the sangat in the foreground of Gurdwara Sacha Sauda, I could not help noticing the following lines from Guru Nanak Dev Ji, inscribed on top of the door-way leading to Darbar Sahib:



ਪਉੜੀ ॥ ਕਪੜੁ ਰੂਪੁ ਸੁਹਾਵਣਾ ਛਡਿ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਅੰਦਰਿ  
ਜਾਵਣਾ ॥  
ਮੰਦਾ ਚੰਗਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਕੀਤਾ ਪਾਵਣਾ ॥ ... ॥ 14  
॥

Paurhi II (The beings) would have to abandon this beautiful bodily cloth here in this world before departure. (Every being shall) reap the fruit of its own good or bad deeds...II14II M:1, Rag Assa, Paurhi 14, GGSJ/470

If everything was to end here, then according to the above quotation, where does one go to be accountable for one's good and evil deeds? And again:

ਮਾਝ ਮਹਲਾ 3 ॥ ..ਦੇਹੀ ਜਾਤਿ ਨ ਆਗੈ ਜਾਏ ॥ ਜਿਥੈ  
ਲੇਖਾ ਮੰਗੀਐ ਤਿਥੈ ਛੁਟੈ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਏ  
॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸੇਵਨਿ ਸੇ ਧਨਵੰਤੈ ਐਥੈ ਓਥੈ ਨਾਮਿ  
ਸਮਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ 5 | 4 | 8 | ... | 3 ॥

Majh Mahala 3 II ...The body (of the being) cannot go in the divine presence, let alone (one's) noble caste (upon which one is so proud of). Where, (hereafter, every being) is accountable (for the deeds it committed), there the only way to be absolved is by exchanging the earnest labour of remembrance of the Nam of the eternal Lord. Those folks who do service to the Guru, they are enriched (by the wealth of Lord's Nam); they always remain absorbed, both here and hereafter, with the Nam of the Lord II3II... II8II4II5II M:3, Majh, Ashtpadian, GGSJ/112

The above passage clearly indicates that there is an accountability, the only way to be absolved is by engaging in remembrance of the eternal Nam; there, neither the pride of one's body nor noble birth is helpful. If it wasn't so, then why should anyone need to live a virtuous life. Science day by day provides us with numerous amenities to entertain the body and mind, why one should seek redemption (and from what) or a spiritual life, (and for what)?

Says Gurbani, that thou shall be accountable for every moment and instance measured ever so minutely down to every masha and tola of thy deeds:

ਮਾਝ ਮਹਲਾ 3 ॥ ...ਘੜੀ ਮੁਹਤ ਕਾ ਲੇਖਾ ਲੇਵੈ  
ਰਤੀਅਹੁ ਮਾਸਾ ਤੋਲ ਕਢਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ | 8 | ... | 5  
29 | 28 ॥

Majh Mahala 3 II ...The being who remains (entrapped) by the attachment of maya, (such being) pays the toll to

the toll-collector, the angel of death; such being who is deviated from the Nam of the Lord, is punished by the angel of death. The angel of death, the toll-collector, takes account of every single moment and instance of such being's life. The account of its life-deeds is measured ever so minutely, (in ratties\* and mashes\*\*) II5II...II8II28II29II GGSJ/126

Note - [the use of the phrase 'the angel of death' is a metaphor; 1 Ratti = 8 grains of rice (0.1215g); 8 ratties = 1 Masha (0.972g); 12 Masha = 1 Tola]

Gurbani clearly indicates that there is a creator that is a separate entity from Nature:

ਪਉੜੀ ॥ ਆਪੀਨੈ ਆਪੁ ਸਾਜਿਓ ਆਪੀਨੈ ਰਚਿਓ ਨਾਉ  
॥ ਦੁਯੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਾਜੀਐ ਕਰਿ ਆਸਣੁ ਡਿਠੋ ਚਾਉ ॥  
ਦਾਤਾ ਕਰਤਾ ਆਪਿ ਤੂੰ ਤੁਸਿ ਦੇਵਹਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਪਸਾਉ ॥  
ਤੂੰ ਜਾਣੇਈ ਸਭਸੈ ਦੇ ਲੈਸਹਿ ਜਿੰਦੁ ਕਵਾਉ ॥  
ਕਰਿ ਆਸਣੁ ਡਿਠੋ ਚਾਉ ॥ 1 ॥

Paurhi II The Akal Purakh established itself, and set the level of its own esteem. Then it created the (firmament of) nature and established itself (within) to witness (i.e by pervading all) the melodrama (of the world).

(O, Lord!) Thou alone are the creator of the beings and bestowed them with the bounties. Thou bestow (the beings) out of thy mercy and bless them. Thou are omniscient of all the beings; thou are the Giveth and the Taker of beings' soul and body (i.e it is thysel who grant the beings with soul and body and take them away too). Seated (in nature), thou witness the melodrama II1II M: 1, Rag Assa, Paurhi 1, GGSJ/463

If Nature itself 'produces' all organisms, this clearly contradicts the above lines of Gurbani (and many more like these in the Granth Sahib); moreover, according to Guru Nanak, who is 'all-pervasive' in its creation? Notice also from the above Paurhi that, it is the Creator who created 'Duyi Kudrat' (i.e the Nature is not a creator but a second in command after the creator), and is present

within Nature, it is still the Lord who is dictating all.

According to Guru Nanak Dev Ji, it is the Lord who is the creator of Nature:

ਪਉੜੀ ॥ ਆਪੇ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਾਜਿ ਕੈ ਆਪੇ ਕਰੇ ਬੀਚਾਰੁ ॥  
ਇਕਿ ਖੋਟੇ ਇਕਿ ਖਰੇ ਆਪੇ ਪਰਖਣਹਾਰੁ ॥ ਖਰੇ ਖਜਾਨੈ  
ਪਾਈਅਹਿ ਖੋਟੇ ਸਟੀਅਹਿ ਬਾਹਰ ਵਾਰਿ ॥ ਖੋਟੇ ਸਚੀ  
ਦਰਗਹ ਸੁਟੀਅਹਿ ਕਿਸੁ ਆਗੈ ਕਰਹਿ ਪੁਕਾਰ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ  
ਪਿਛੈ ਭਜਿ ਪਵਹਿ ਏਹਾ ਕਰਣੀ ਸਾਰੁ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ  
ਖੋਟਿਅਹੁ ਖਰੇ ਕਰੇ ਸਬਦਿ ਸਵਾਰਣਹਾਰੁ ॥ ਸਚੀ ਦਰਗਹ  
ਮੰਨੀਅਨਿ ਗੁਰ ਕੈ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਪਿਆਰਿ ॥ ਗਣਤ ਤਿਨਾ ਦੀ ਕੇ  
ਕਿਆ ਕਰੇ ਜੋ ਆਪਿ ਬਖਸੇ ਕਰਤਾਰਿ ॥ 12 ॥

Pauri II Having created the world, the Lord takes care of it too, (but here) some beings are counterfeit (i.e fall below the expected measured human behaviour) and some, (like the royal mint) are pure; the Lord alone adjudges (them all). (Like the good coins), the good folks are added to the (Lord's) treasury (i.e their lives are approved and) the fake ones are thrown away/outside (i.e they are not allowed to mingle with the noble folks), they are thrown out of the eternal court; there is no other place where they can appeal (for help).

The best thing (for such hollow beings) would be to seek the sanctuary of the Satguru. The Guru is empowered to reform the counterfeits into real ones (because the Guru) through (its) shabad is competent to make them worthy. (Such beings then) gain honour in the court of the Lord, through the blessings of devotion that the Guru imparted them with, and those whom the Lord has forgiven, who would dare to blemish them? II12II M:1, Majh ki Var, Paurhi 12, GGSJ/143

In the words of Guru Amar Das:

ਤੁਧੁ ਜੇਵਡੁ ਮੈ ਹੋਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ ॥  
ਤੁਧੁ ਆਪੇ ਸਿਰਜੀ ਆਪੇ ਗੋਈ ॥  
ਤੂੰ ਆਪੇ ਹੀ ਘੜਿ ਭੰਨਿ ਸਵਾਰਹਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮਿ  
ਸੁਹਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ 6 | 5 | 8 ॥

Majh Mahala 3 II...O, Lord! I see no other parred with thee; thou alone create and destroy the creation.

O, Nanak! (Say – O, Lord!) Thou alone mould/fashion, through construction and reformation; thou alone, with the bless of thy Nam, reform and alleviate (the lives of the beings) II8II5II6II Majh M: 3, Ashtpadian, GGSJ/112

Says Gurbani, it is the Lord who created Nature and not vice-versa; how can such evidence be ignored?

ਮਾਝ ਮਹਲਾ 3 ॥ ... ਏਕਮ ਏਕੈ ਆਪੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥  
ਦੁਬਿਧਾ ਦੁਜਾ ਤ੍ਰਿਬਿਧਿ ਮਾਇਆ ॥  
ਚਉਥੀ ਪਉੜੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਊਚੀ ਸਚੇ ਸਚੁ ਕਮਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ 4  
॥ ਜੀਅ ਜੰਤ ਸਭਿ ਸਰਣਿ ਤੁਮਾਰੀ ॥  
ਆਪੇ ਧਰਿ ਦੇਖਹਿ ਕਚੀ ਪਕੀ ਸਾਰੀ ॥ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਆਪੇ ਕਾਰ  
ਕਰਾਏ ਆਪੇ ਮੇਲਿ ਮਿਲਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ 1 6 | 8 | ... | 7  
7 ॥

Ab initio, was the Lord, all by itself (the invisible-embodiment), then it revealed itself, thus taking duel format (the invisible-embodiment and the visible-manifest), and it thus enacted the tri-virtuous maya.

The being who lives its life in accordance with the consonants of the Guru, its spiritual level remains higher than the (effect of) the three virtues/states of maya. Such being always remains engaged in the earnest labour of the Nam of the eternal Lord II4II...II8II6II7II Majh M:3, GGSJ/117.

Again, listen to Guru Amar Das Ji:

ਮਾਝ ਮਹਲਾ 3 ॥ ਉਤਪਤਿ ਪਰਲਉ ਸਬਦੇ ਹੋਵੈ ॥ ਸਬਦੇ  
ਹੀ ਫਿਰਿ ਓਪਤਿ ਹੋਵੈ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਵਰਤੈ ਸਭੁ ਆਪੇ ਸਚਾ  
ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਉਪਾਇ ਸਮਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ 1 ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਧਰਤੀ  
ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਾਣੀ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਵਣੁ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਖੇਲੈ ਵਿਡਾਣੀ ॥  
ਸੋ ਨਿਗੁਰਾ ਜੋ ਮਰਿ ਮਰਿ ਜੰਮੈ ਨਿਗੁਰੇ ਆਵਣ ਜਾਵਣਿਆ ॥  
14 | 13 | 8 | ... | 2 ॥

Majh Mahala 3 II

The worlds creation and destruction are governed by the divine command; (after destruction), re-creation of the world too is under the divine command. The being who follows the consonants of the Guru, begins to realise that the eternal Lord itself is pervading everywhere; having enacted the world, the Lord remains absorbed within the same II1II

The being who follows the consonants of the Guru, knows that the Lord, by (manifesting within) earth, water, air and fire, is playing an astounding game of (worldly-) melodrama. The being who is deviated from the Guru, by embracing spiritual demise, continues through the repeat cycles of birth and death; the being who is devoid of the Guru is never free from the transmigration cycles of birth and death II2II...II8II13II14II Rag Majh, M:1, GGSJ/143.

Moreover, one could ask, who is 'AjUni' in the Mool-Mantar (The basic belief of Sikhi)? Clearly, the creator is not like us at all. If the Lord is 'AjUni' a non-transmigration entity, then we are the ones who transmigrate through the cycles of birth and death into countless lives/species.



There are numerous such examples that are deliberately being ignored to reveal the 'whole truth'.



The Dehra Chief, who has created organisms in a fresh-water bucket within two weeks, clearly forgot to set control(s), to see if any microorganisms were not present already in the fresh water, by taking a sample under a microscope. Yes, a little knowledge can be a dangerous thing; in this case, especially if the audience lack basic understanding of science too, it would be easier to convince a scientist than a novice (because of its belief). An army of followers like these can destroy any religion.

A similar problem had arisen with Louis Pasteur in France in the 19th century, when, working as a French Government advisor, he was faced with angry farmers who said their meat is destroyed by mice, which, according to them, instantly/spontaneously appeared from somewhere. Louis Pasteur's pasteurisation process for milk is well known and used the world over today which proved that the organisms do not just appear out of nowhere instantly; in fact, pasteurised milk can last much longer. One thing he did say, however, was that 'I cannot rule it out altogether that it never happened in the history of the earth.' This indeed, is a remarkable statement, coming from a scientist of his calibre, because even biology fails to solve this riddle: did we get here by evolution or creation or both? According to biology, only 'a living organism can give rise to another,' taking this maxim as the datum, biology fails to say how the first organism came into existence. And in this context, 'evolution' and 'creation' are not synonymous; evolution can only evolve if something is already there 'to be evolved' - it is not a process of creation.

Equally, it is futile to think that scientific interpretation would solve everything. Refinement of Gurbani interpretation would be needed from time to time, but Gurbani and its language has deep roots in Indian culture and history and the two cannot be separated; it is worth noting that Gurbani redefines concepts which in Hinduism, have different meanings. For instance, Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh are the three supreme deities in Hinduism, while in Gurbani, they are just three instruments of Nature (the acts of creation, sustainability and demise working under the divine command of the Akal Purakh).

See Bhagat Kabir's shabad below:

...ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਪਾਤੀ ਬਿਸਨੁ ਡਾਰੀ ਫੂਲ ਸੰਕਰਦੇਉ ॥ ਤੀਨਿ ਦੇਵ  
ਪ੍ਰਤਖਿ ਤੋਰਹਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਕਿਸ ਕੀ ਸੇਉ ॥

14 | 1 | 5 | ..... | 2 ॥

...O, florist! The leaves are an embodiment of Brahma (equivalent to the creative force), the branches are an embodiment of Vishnu representing sustenance and the flowers embody Shiv-deity (destruction). In front of thy very eyes, thou have annihilated/obliterated all three deities, to whom are thou (then) venerating? II2II.. II4II1II14II Kabir, Rag Assa, GGSJ/479

ਮ:3 ॥ ...ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਆਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥  
ਮਨ ਹਰਿ ਜੀ ਤੇਰੈ ਨਾਲਿ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਰੰਗੁ ਮਾਣੁ ॥ ਮੂਲੁ  
ਪਛਾਣਹਿ ਤਾਂ ਸਹੁ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਮਰਣ ਜੀਵਣ ਕੀ ਸੋਈ ਹੋਈ ॥  
ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਣਹਿ ਤਾਂ ਦੂਜਾ ਭਾਉ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥ ਮਨਿ  
ਸਾਂਤਿ ਆਈ ਵਜੀ ਵਧਾਈ ਤਾ ਹੋਆ ਪਰਵਾਣੁ ॥ ਇਉ ਕਰੈ  
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਮਨ ਤੂੰ ਜੋਤਿ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੈ ਅਪਣਾ ਮੂਲੁ ਪਛਾਣੁ ॥

7 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 2 | 10 | ... | 5 ॥

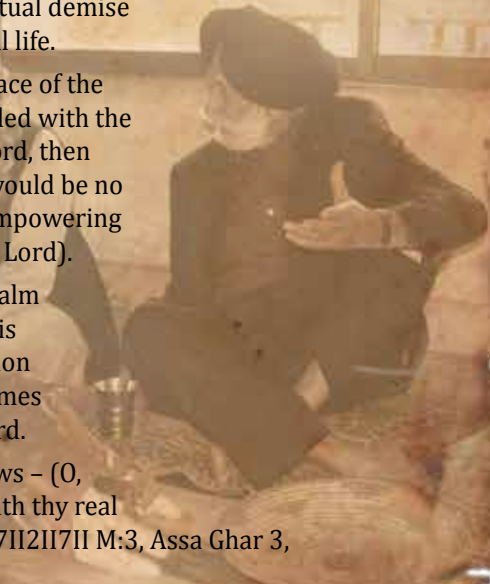
Science can only go as far as the reason within the mind can take it; while rational thinking can solve most problems, the revelation of Akal Purakh, says Gurbani, is beyond the capacity of the sense organs and the mind.

O, my mind! Thou are the progeny/offspring of the Akal Purakh itself (i.e thou are the effulgence of the embodiment of the Lord) who is totally a pure effulgence; (O, mind!) Be united with thy real self. O mind! The Lord is always intimately residing with thee; enjoy the relish of its union by adopting the wisdom of the Guru. O, mind! If thou realise thy real self, then thou be intimated with the Master-Lord; then thou shall also realise what is spiritual demise and what is spiritual life.

O mind! If by the grace of the Guru, thou are bonded with the one and only, the Lord, then within thee, there would be no more attachment empowering thee (except for the Lord).

When the being is calm in the mind, then it is empowered by elation within, it then becomes approved by the Lord.

Says Nanak as follows - (O, mind!) Be united with thy real self II5II... II10II2II7II2II7II M:3, Assa Ghar 3, Cchant, GGSJ/440



And, clearly according to Gurbani, the human mind is below the level of revelation of Gurbani:

ਜਿਨਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਮਨ ਬਨਤ ਬਨਾਈ ॥ ਉਠਤ ਬੈਠਤ ਸਦ  
ਤਿਸਹਿ ਧਿਆਈ ॥  
ਤਿਸਹਿ ਧਿਆਇ ਜੋ ਏਕ ਅਲਖੈ ॥ ਈਹਾ ਊਹਾ ਨਾਨਕ  
ਤੇਰੀ ਰਖੈ ॥ 6।8।...। 4॥

...O, my mind! Always recite the Lord, your Creator, during your daily chores (e.g. the acts of rising and sitting down). O, Nanak! Remember the indescribable One, who protects your honour both here (in this world) and hereafter (beyond) II4II...II8II6II M: 5, Rag Gaurhi, GGSJ/270-71

And what about:

ਅਗਮ ਅਗੋਚਰਾ ਤੇਰਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ ॥ ਅੰਤੋ ਨ  
ਪਾਇਆ ਕਿਨੈ ਤੇਰਾ ਆਪਣਾ ਆਪੁ ਤੂ ਜਾਣਹੇ ॥ ਜੀਅ  
ਜੰਤੁ ਸਭਿ ਖੇਲੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਕਿਆ ਕੋ ਆਖਿ ਵਖਾਣੇ ॥  
ਆਖਹਿ ਤ ਵੇਖਹਿ ਸਭੁ ਤੂਹੈ ਜਿਨਿ ਜਗਤੁ ਉਪਾਇਆ ॥  
ਕਹੈ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਤੂ ਸਦਾ ਅਗੰਮੁ ਹੈ ਤੇਰਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਪਾਇਆ  
॥ 12 ॥

(O, my beloved mind! Always keep the lasting remembrance of the Lord within, and pray): O, unattainable and inconceivable Lord! Nobody has found the limit of (thy virtues). None has found thy limit (because) thou are the only one who know thy (real-) self; no other being is capable of counting thy virtues. How could any being describe thy virtues, O, Lord? The organisms themselves are thy enacted melodrama. Thou are the one who speaks through every being; thou are the one who cares for every being; (Thou are the one) who created the world. Says Nanak - (O, my beloved mind, pray to the Lord): Thou are unattainable, no (being has ever) found the limit (of thy virtues) II12II M:3, Ramkali, Anand Sahib, Paurhi 12, GGSJ/917

So, to attain the spiritual bliss, one always needs to pray at the door of the Lord: the infinite, who speaks within every being; who cares for every organism.

Let us be 'reasonable'; Gurbani does not avoid rationality but says search beyond for the creator; beyond rationality where the mind surrenders and the shabad of the Guru takes the command.

Says Guru Arjan Dev ji:

ਮੈ ਖੋਜਤ ਖੋਜਤ ਜੀ ਹਰਿ ਨਿਹਚਲੁ ਸੁ ਘਰੁ ਪਾਇਆ ॥  
ਸਭਿ ਅਧੁਵ ਡਿਠੇ ਜੀਉ ਤਾ ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲ ਚਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ  
॥ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਅਬਿਨਾਸੀ ਹਉ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਦਾਸੀ ਮਰੈ ਨ ਆਵੈ

ਜਾਏ ॥ ਧਰਮ ਅਰਥ ਕਾਮ ਸਭਿ ਪੂਰਨ ਮਨਿ ਚਿੰਦੀ  
ਇਛੁ ਪੁਜਾਏ ॥ ਸੁਤਿ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਕਰਤੇ ਸਿਧ  
ਸਾਧਿਕ ਮੁਨਿ ਜਨ ਧਿਆਇਆ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਰਨਿ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ  
ਨਿਧਿ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਵਡਭਾਗੀ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਗਾਇਆ ॥ । 4  
11 । 1 ॥

After a continuous search I have found the equipoise-abode of the Akal Purakh. When I realised that all (the material-goods of the world) are perishable, then I united my mind with the graceful wisdom of the Lord.

O, brother! The Lord is immortal, I have become the Lord's devotee, the Lord never transmigrates through the cycle of birth and death. (The familiar grand comforts, like) righteousness, financial-viability, procreation (and redemption etc.) are all present (within the Lord); the Lord fulfils every desire contemplated by the mind (of the being).

O, brother! (From time immemorial, the olden religious texts, like) the Smiritis and the Vedas (etc) continue to sing the virtues of the Lord; the supreme competent Masters of yog, the yogis who practise the art of yog, all the silent-sages, continue to engage in remembrance (of the Nam of the Lord). O, Nanak! The Lord is a treasure of grace, only with an immense fortune the being seeks its sanctuary, and, engages in its praise II4II1II11II Rag Suhi, M: 5, Cchant, GGSJ/784. Again,

ਬਿਲਾਵਲੁ ਮਹਲਾ 5 ॥ ...ਖੋਜਤ ਖੋਜਤ ਖੋਜਿਆ ਨਾਮੈ  
ਬਿਨੁ ਕੁਰੁ ॥ ਜੀਵਨ ਸੁਖੁ ਸਭੁ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਨਸਾ  
ਪੂਰੁ ॥ 42 । 12 । 4 ।...। 2 ॥

Bilaval Mahala 5 II ...O, Akal Purakh! (At last), my continuous quest has led (to this) that without (thy) Nam, (all else) is perishable. The entire comfort of life is (to be found) within the sadh-sangat. O, Lord! (Please continue to keep me united too) with the sadh-sangat; please fulfil (this) ambition/longing (of mine) II2II...II4II12II42II Bilaval Mahal 5, GGSJ/811

Says Guru Nanak Dev Ji:

ਮਃ 1 ॥ ...ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥ ਨਦਰੀ  
ਕਰਮਿ ਲਘਾਏ ਪਾਰਿ ॥...॥ 2 ॥ ...ਪਉੜੀ 5 ॥

M:1 II ...Those who have reflected upon the wisdom of the Guru, they, by the blessing, by the merciful insight of the Lord, are redeemed from the world ocean...II2II Shlok M:1, with Paurhi II5II GGSJ/465

So, in essence, Sikhi does not forbid anyone to be logical, rational or scientific. It just says that the entity of the Lord is beyond human senses and

ਬਿਲਾਵਲੁ ਮਹਲਾ 5 ॥ ...ਖੋਜਤ ਖੋਜਤ  
 ਖੋਜਿਆ ਨਾਮੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਕੂਰੁ ॥ ਜੀਵਨ ਸੁਖੁ  
 ਸਭੁ ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਨਸਾ ਪੂਰੁ ॥  
 42 | 12 | 4 | ... | 2 ॥

*Bilaval Mahala 5 II ...O, Akal Purakh! (At last), my continuous quest has led (to this) that without (thy) Nam, (all else) is perishable. The entire comfort of life is (to be found) within the sadh-sangat. O, Lord! (Please continue to keep me united too) with the sadh-sangat; please fulfil (this) ambition/longing (of mine) II2II...II4II12II42II Bilaval Mahal 5, GGSJ/811*

therefore incomprehensible through rational means, since rationality is the product of the mind.

What is needed is a careful analysis at each stage, not denial of the Lord; scientific analysis would be a step forward, but one thing is clear neither is science religion nor would religion ever be totally science; a scientifically alert mind, coupled with the science of the language(s) used and the grammar, would solve the problem; the denial of the Vedas, Koran or Purans would solve nothing; remember says Kabir:

ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤੀ ॥ ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਕਹਹੁ ਮਤ ਝੂਠੇ ਝੂਠਾ ਜੋ ਨ ਬਿਚਾਰੈ  
 ॥4 | 4 | ... | 1 ॥

Parbhathi II (O, Hindu and Muslim brethren!) Don't commit blasphemy (of calling each other's) religious scriptures (i.e the Vedas and the Ketabs) to be false; hypocrite is the one who does not sincerely reflect upon their essence. ... II1II ...II4II4II Kabir, Rag Parbhathi, GGSJ/1350

But the Lord itself is beyond our senses: beyond our recollection; all rationales, reasons and logics fail. There is a fascinating account of it in the Japji Sahib, Paurhi 22:



ਪਾਤਾਲਾ ਪਾਤਾਲ ਲਖ, ਆਗਾਸਾ ਆਗਾਸ ॥ ਓੜਕ ਓੜਕ  
 ਭਾਲਿ ਥਕੇ ਵੇਦ ਕਹਨਿ ਇਕ ਵਾਤ ॥ ਸਹਸ ਅਠਾਰਹ ਕਹਨਿ  
 ਕਤੇਬਾ, ਅਸੁਲੂ ਇਕੁ ਧਾਤੁ ॥ ਲੇਖਾ ਹੋਇ ਤ ਲਿਖੀਐ, ਲੇਖੇ  
 ਹੋਇ ਵਿਣਾਸੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਵਡਾ ਆਖੀਐ, ਆਪੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਆਪੁ ॥  
 22 ॥

(All) the Vedas speak with one voice: 'there are myriads upon myriads of nether worlds and thousands of skies upon skies above. (Countless sages have) fallen weary while searching their end (but all in vain).'

(The four books of the Semitic religions – the Muslims, the Christians and the Jews) – 'the Kteban say that there are in total eighteen thousand worlds whose foundation is Akal Purakh alone'. (But in essence, even the use of the

words like 'thousands,' or 'hundred-thousands' in keeping an account of nature is inappropriate. The account could only be given if one could do the counting (of Akal Purakh's creation); (this account can never be complete, whilst counting, both the figures/numerals and the accounts cease).

O, Nanak! The Akal Purakh who is known to be grand (throughout the creation), alone knows its own self (i.e. the Lord knows its own glory). II22II M: 1, GGSJ/5, Japji, Paurhi 22.

ਮਾਝ ਮਹਲਾ 3 ॥ ...ਲੇਖਾ ਪੜੀਐ ਜੇ ਲੇਖੇ ਵਿਚਿ ਹੋਵੈ ॥  
ਓਹੁ ਅਗਮੁ ਅਗੋਚਰੁ ਸਬਦਿ ਸੁਪਿ ਹੋਵੈ ॥ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਸਚ  
ਸਬਦਿ ਸਾਲਾਹੀ ਹੋਰ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਪਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ 6 ॥  
ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਥਾਕੇ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਨ ਆਈ ॥ ਤ੍ਰਿਸਨਾ ਜਾਲੇ ਸੁਪਿ ਨ ਕਾਈ ॥  
ਬਿਖੁ ਬਿਹਾਝਹਿ ਬਿਖੁ ਮੋਹ ਪਿਆਸੇ ਕੂੜੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਬਿਖੁ  
ਪਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ 7 ॥

#### Solution:

ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਣਾ ॥ ਦੂਜਾ ਮਾਰਿ ਮਨੁ ਸਚਿ ਸਮਾਣਾ ॥  
ਨਾਨਕ ਏਕੋ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਰਤੈ ਮਨ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਗੁਰ ਪਰਸਾਦੀ  
ਪਾਵਣਿਆ ॥ 18 | 17 | 8 ॥

Majh Mahala 3 II ...(O, brother!) Futile are such acts of endeavours through which one tries to measure the eminences of Lord's nature, its stature and the fuller knowledge of its virtues; its embodiment is beyond such accounts. The Lord is inaccessible, beyond the capacity of the sense organs, but (this unfathomable) realisation comes through the shabad of the Guru.

I am always engaged in praising the Lord, through the praises of its bani. There is no one else that can be at par with the Lord II6II

(To discover the limits of the Lord, the scholarly-folks) have become weary after studying (numerous books, and they neither comprehended the embodiment of the Lord) nor attained any spiritual equipoise; instead, they remained ruined by (the fire of) greed (of maya). They continued gathering the poison of maya that demises their spirituality; they are always craving more for the enticement of maya. Through falsehood, they continue to make the venom of maya to be their (spiritual food) II7II

#### The solution is:

O, Nanak! The being who, by the grace of the Guru, became intimated with the Akal Purakh only, and by subduing all other types of temptations, except devotion to the Lord, such being's mind becomes absorbed with the eternal Lord.

Those in whose mind, dwells the Nam of the Lord only, they, by the grace of the Guru, attain union (with Lord's wisdom) II8II17II18II Rag Majh, Ashtpadian, M:3,

GGSJ/119

So, how grand is the glory of the Akal Purakh that the Guru Granth Sahib mentions? Guru Nanak Dev Ji gives us some idea through the following passage, by taking a plunge through countless universes:

ਸਲੋਕ ਮਃ 1 ॥ ਪੁਰਖਾਂ ਬਿਰਖਾਂ ਤੀਰਥਾਂ ਤਟਾਂ ਮੇਘਾਂ ਖੇਤਾਂਗ  
॥ ਦੀਪਾਂ ਲੋਆਂ ਮੰਡਲਾਂ ਖੰਡਾਂ ਵਰਭੰਡਾਂਗ ॥ ਅੰਡਜ ਜੇਰਜ  
ਉਤਭੁਜਾਂ ਖਾਣੀ ਸੇਤਜਾਂਗ ॥ ਸੋ ਮਿਤਿ ਜਾਣੈ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਸਰਾਂ  
ਮੇਰਾਂ ਜੰਤਾਗ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੰਤ ਉਪਾਇ ਕੈ ਸੰਮਾਲੇ ਸਭਨਾਗ ॥  
ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰਤੈ ਕਰਣਾ ਕੀਆ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਭਿ ਕਰਣੀ ਤਾਗ ॥ ਸੋ  
ਕਰਤਾ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਕਰੇ ਜਿਨਿ ਉਪਾਇਆ ਜਗੁ ॥ ਤਿਸੁ ਜੋਹਾਰੀ  
ਸੁਅਸਤਿ ਤਿਸੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਦੀਬਾਣੁ ਅਭਗੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚੇ ਨਾਮ  
ਬਿਨੁ ਕਿਆ ਟਿਕਾ ਕਿਆ ਤਗੁ ॥ 1 ॥

Shloke M:1 II The humans, trees, pilgrimages, the shores/brinks (of rivers), clouds, fields, islands, worlds, (celestial) spheres, the solar systems and universes; the lakes, mountains like the Meru mountain etc., and the organisms, created by (the four sources, namely), the eggs, placental, seeds and binary fission, the estimated account of these, only the Lord (who created them) knows.

O, Nanak! Having created all the organisms, the Lord sustains them too. The Lord who established the whole creation, alone knows how to sustain it all. The Lord who created it all, cares for them too; I am grateful to such Lord, I am glorified to such Lord (i.e. praise such Lord); its protection (for the organisms) is eternal. O, Nanak! Without reciting the eternal Nam of such Lord, the iconic frontal mark on the forehead and the sacred thread are but futile and meaningless gestures II11II Assa di Var, M:1, GGSJ/467

Again, at Shiri Rag, Says Guru Nanak:

ਸਿਰੀ ਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ 1 ॥ ਕੋਟਿ ਕੋਟੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਰਜਾ ਪਵਣੁ  
ਪੀਅਣੁ ਅਪਿਆਉ ॥ ਚੰਦੁ ਸੂਰਜੁ ਦੁਇ ਗੁਫੈ ਨ ਦੇਖਾ ਸੁਪਨੈ  
ਸਉਣ ਨ ਥਾਉ ॥ ਭੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨਾ ਪਵੈ ਹਉ ਕੇਵਡੁ ਆਖਾ  
ਨਾਉ ॥ 1 ॥ ਸਾਚਾ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰੁ ਨਿਜ ਥਾਇ ॥ ਸੁਣਿ ਸੁਣਿ  
ਆਖਣੁ ਆਖਣਾ ਜੇ ਭਾਵੈ ਕਰੇ ਤਮਾਇ ॥ 1 ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥  
ਕੁਸਾ ਕਟੀਆ ਵਾਰ ਵਾਰ ਪੀਸਣਿ ਪੀਸਾ ਪਾਇ ॥ ਅਗੀ ਸੇਤੀ  
ਜਾਲੀਆ ਭਸਮ ਸੇਤੀ ਰਲਿ ਜਾਉ ॥ ਭੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨਾ ਪਵੈ  
ਹਉ ਕੇਵਡੁ ਆਖਾ ਨਾਉ ॥ 2 ॥ ਪੰਖੀ ਹੋਇ ਕੈ ਜੇ ਭਵਾ ਸੈ  
ਅਸਮਾਨੀ ਜਾਉ ॥ ਨਦਰੀ ਕਿਸੈ ਨ ਆਵਉ ਨਾ ਕਿਛੁ ਪੀਆ ਨ  
ਖਾਉ ॥ ਭੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨਾ ਪਵੈ ਹਉ ਕੇਵਡੁ ਆਖਾ ਨਾਉ ॥  
3 ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਾਗਦ ਲਖ ਮਣਾ ਪੜਿ ਪੜਿ ਕੀਚੈ ਭਾਉ ॥ ਮਸੂ  
ਤੋਟਿ ਨ ਆਵਈ ਲੇਖਣਿ ਪਉਣੁ ਚਲਾਉ ॥  
ਭੀ ਤੇਰੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨਾ ਪਵੈ ਹਉ ਕੇਵਡੁ ਆਖਾ ਨਾਉ ॥ 2 | 4 ॥

Shiri Rag Mahala 1 II If my age could extend over millions of years, if the air was my sustenance (i.e if I could live with the air alone), if (my stance was) in (some) cave where I could not see the Moon and the Sun ever (i.e being in the cave I was in meditation day and night upon end), if I did not fall sleep, even in my dreams (i.e if I never slept), even then (O, Akal Purakh! With such long meditational stances) I could not value thee (I would not be able to find someone of thy calibre), how much thy grandeur I could describe? (I am unable to describe thy grandeur) II1II

The eternal Lord is all by itself (it needs no support from anyone). We beings describe (its trait) by just hearing from each other (but none can describe how great is the Lord). If it please the Lord, it creates the longing (of praising of its virtues) within the being II1II Pause II

If I ruin (my body by enduring the anguish of penances), repeatedly cut it piece by piece, grind it with the grinding wheel, immolate, and reduce (myself) to ashes (even with such penances, O, Akal Purakh!) I would be unable to find someone of thy equal; I am unable to describe thy grandeur II2II

If I was a bird and could fly, and reached hundreds of skies thus, (if with my flight, I reached so high) that I was invisible to everyone, neither ate nor drank anything, (even with such competency, O, Akal Purakh!) I would be unable to find thy equal; I am unable to describe thy grandeur II3II

O, Nanak! (Say - O, Akal Purakh!) Even if I had hundreds and thousands of weights of papers, inscribed with thy grandeur, and reflected upon them repeatedly (too); if I could make air to be the pen (to inscribe thy grandeur), and (while inscribing I had) a limitless ink, even then (O, Lord!) I would be unable to find thy equal; I am unable to describe thy grandeur II4II2II Shiri Rag, M:1, GGSJ/14/15.

Thus, if through continuous meditation for millions of years one was to acquire the insight, by enduring various penances, if by flying one was to reach the limits of hundreds of skies to find the end of the creation, attributable to the Lord, if one was to write continuously with a limitless ink, the grandeur of the Lord upon hundreds of weights of papers; even then no being would be able to find the limit of its grandeur. Such formless Lord is all by itself, there is no one to support it as a next of kin. Only through its grace, the being engages in praising it.

Bhagat Kabir concurs with this as well:

ਕਬੀਰ ਸਾਤ ਸਮੁੰਦਰਿ ਮਸੁ ਕਰਉ ਕਲਮ ਕਰਉ ਬਨਰਾਇ ॥  
ਬਸੁਧਾ ਕਾਗਦੁ ਜਉ ਕਰਉ ਹਰਿ ਜਸੁ ਲਿਖਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਇ ॥ 81 ॥

O, Kabir! If I make an ink out of (waters of) all seven oceans of the world and make pens out of all the vegetation, and let the whole Earth to be my paper, even then, the Lord's virtues cannot be (fully) scribed- (the being is to sing the virtues of the Lord; its purpose is not to indulge in discovering its limit to describe them) II81II Shlokes Kabir, GGSJ/1368

So how should such Lord be worshipped, the Lord who is distinct from Nature itself but is manifested through each and every part of Nature? Say Bhagat Ravidas that an ultimate worship is the Nam of the Lord (the glory of the Akal Purakh):

ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਆਰਤੀ ਮਜਨੁ ਮੁਰਾਰੇ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕੇ ਨਾਮ ਬਿਨੁ  
ਝੂਠੇ ਸਗਲ ਪਾਸਾਰੇ ॥ 1 ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਆਸਨੇ  
ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਉਰਸਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਕੇਸਰੋ ਲੇ ਛਿਟਕਾਰੇ ॥ ਨਾਮੁ  
ਤੇਰਾ ਅੰਭੁਲਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਚੰਦਨੇ ਘਸਿ ਜਪੇ ਨਾਮੁ ਲੇ ਤੁਝਹਿ  
ਕਉ ਚਾਰੇ ॥ 1 ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਦੀਵਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਬਾਤੀ ਨਾਮੁ  
ਤੇਰੇ ਤੇਲੁ ਲੇ ਮਾਹਿ ਪਸਾਰੇ ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਕੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਲਗਾਈ  
ਭਇਓ ਉਜਿਆਰੇ ਭਵਨ ਸਗਲਾਰੇ ॥ 2 ॥ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਤਾਗਾ  
ਨਾਮੁ ਫੂਲ ਮਾਲਾ ਭਾਰ ਅਠਾਰਹ ਸਗਲ ਜੂਠਾਰੇ ॥ ਤੇਰੇ ਕੀਆ  
ਤੁਝਹਿ ਕਿਆ ਅਰਪਉ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰਾ ਤੁਹੀ ਚਵਰ ਢੋਲਾਰੇ ॥ 3  
॥ ਦਸ ਅਠਾ ਅਠਸਠੇ ਚਾਰੇ ਖਾਣੀ ਇਹੈ ਵਰਤਣਿ ਹੈ ਸਗਲ  
ਸੰਸਾਰੇ ॥

ਕਹੈ ਰਵਿਦਾਸੁ ਨਾਮੁ ਤੇਰੇ ਆਰਤੀ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ ਹਰਿ ਭੋਗ  
ਤੁਹਾਰੇ ॥ 3 | 4 ॥

O, Lord! (Only naïve folks perform arti of the deities - i.e wavering of lights before an image/statue), (but for me thy) Nam is (thy) arti/adoration, as well as pilgrim-bathing. (O, brother!) Aside Lord's Nam, all else are false deeds II1II Pause II

(For me) thy Nam is the stance (that the Pundit utilises) for performing thy arti, thy Nam is the stone (upon which sandalwood is grounded). (The worshipper of a deity after grinding the saffron then) sprinkles (it on the deity) but for me, thy Nam is the saffron too. (O, Murarh!) (One who killed demon-Murarh - the Lord) Thy Nam is the water and the sandalwood (that is) by grinding (the Nam-like sandalwood with the Nam-like water) I sprinkle the sandalwood-Nam of remembrance upon thee II1II

O, Lord! Thy Nam is the beacon, the wick (of the beacon) and the oil within, which I have dispensed into (the Nam-beacon); I have lit the flame of thy Nam (by the bless of which) all worlds/realms are illuminated II2II

From thy Nam, I have made the thread, from which I have created the garland of (thy) Nam by using flowers of (thy) Nam; (compared to thy Nam), all other vegetation (from which folks take flowers to offer to the deities) is defiled.

What do I offer to thee from thy nature (since it is all thy creation)? So, I wave the chaur (an icon of Imperial power) of thy Nam upon you II3II

The daily chore of the whole world is (having forsaken thy Nam) to be entertained by listening to the stories narrated in the 18 Puranas, to regard the bathing at 68 pilgrimage places to be the virtuous acts, and consequently, the beings transmigrate through many different species of the four major sources (of life).

Says, Ravidas – O, Lord! (For me) thy Nam is thy arti. I always offer thy eternal Nam (as a food to thee).  
Dhanasari Ravidas Ji, GGSJ/664

For Guru Nanak, total surrender of the mind is the only way to endure the bliss of the Akal Purakh; such is the Lord Master of us all. Once again, with the aid of nature, Guru Ji takes several examples such as the water and lotus flower, fish, malkoha, milk; between the rays of the Sun and partridge etc.

ਸਿਰੀ ਰਾਗੁ ਮਹਲਾ 1 ॥ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਐਸੀ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ  
ਕਰਿ ਜੈਸੀ ਜਲ ਕਮਲੇਹਿ ॥ ਲਹਰੀ ਨਾਲਿ ਪਛਾੜੀਐ ਭੀ  
ਵਿਗਸੈ ਅਸਨੇਹਿ ॥ ਜਲ ਮਹਿ ਜੀਅ ਉਪਾਇ ਕੈ ਬਿਨੁ ਜਲ  
ਮਰਣੁ ਤਿਨੇਹਿ ॥ 1 ॥ ਮਨ ਰੇ ਕਿਉ ਛੂਟਹਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਪਿਆਰ  
॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਰਵਿ ਰਹਿਆ ਬਖਸੇ ਭਗਤਿ ਭੰਡਾਰ ॥  
1 ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਐਸੀ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਜੈਸੀ  
ਮਛਲੀ ਨੀਰ ॥ ਜਿਉ ਅਧਿਕਉ ਤਿਉ ਸੁਖੁ ਘਣੇ ਮਨਿ ਤਨਿ  
ਸਾਂਤਿ ਸਰੀਰ ॥ ਬਿਨੁ ਜਲ ਘੜੀ ਨ ਜੀਵਈ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਅਭ  
ਪੀਰ ॥ 2 ॥ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਐਸੀ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਜੈਸੀ  
ਚਾੜ੍ਹਕ ਮੇਹ ॥ ਸਰ ਭਰਿ ਥਲ ਹਰੀਆਵਲੇ ਇਕ ਬੁੰਦ ਨ  
ਪਵਈ ਕੇਹ ॥ ਕਰਮਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਸੋ ਪਾਈਐ ਕਿਰਤੁ ਪਇਆ  
ਸਿਰਿ ਦੇਹ ॥ 3 ॥ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਐਸੀ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਕਰਿ  
ਜੈਸੀ ਜਲ ਦੁਧ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਆਵਟਣੁ ਆਪੇ ਖਵੈ ਦੁਧ ਕਉ ਖਪਣਿ  
ਨ ਦੇਇ ॥ ਆਪੇ ਮੇਲਿ ਵਿਛੁੰਨਿਆ ਸਚਿ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਦੇਇ ॥  
4 ॥ ਰੇ ਮਨ ਐਸੀ ਹਰਿ ਸਿਉ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਜੈਸੀ ਚਕਵੀ ਸੂਰ  
॥ ਖਿਨੁ ਪਲੁ ਨੀਦ ਨ ਸੋਵਈ ਜਾਣੈ ਦੂਰਿ ਹਜੂਰਿ ॥ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ  
ਸੋਝੀ ਨਾ ਪਵੈ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਸਦਾ ਹਜੂਰਿ ॥ 5 ॥ ਮਨਮੁਖਿ ਗਣਤ  
ਗਣਾਵਣੀ ਕਰਤਾ ਕਰੇ ਸੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਨਾ ਪਵੈ ਜੇ  
ਲੋਚੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਇ ॥

ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਹੋਇ ਤ ਪਾਈਐ ਸਚਿ ਮਿਲੈ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ॥ 1 6

11 | 10 | ... ॥

Shiri Rag Mahal 1 II O, (my) mind! Love the Lord, like that which exists between water and the lotus flower (and vice versa). The lotus flower is jolted with the water waves, but even then (due to mutual) love, still blossoms (too, and minds not being pushed and shoved). Having created the lives (of the lotus-flowers) in water (the Lord

is playing such a game that) without water (the lotus-flowers) die II1II

O, (my) mind! Without loving (the Lord) thou cannot escape (from counter attacks of maya, but such devotion is not attained without seeking the sanctuary of the Guru). Folks who live their lives in consonants of the Guru, (through Guru's grace, they are so devotionally bonded within that) the Lord always remains present; the Guru bestows upon them the treasure of Lord's devotion II1II  
Pause II

O, (my) mind! Love the Lord, as fish loves water. The greater the abundancy of the water, the greater is the comfort and bliss that the fish experiences; there is a calmness in the mind and body of the fish. Without water, even for a moment, the fish cannot survive. Only the Lord (itself) hears such prayer of the fish II2II

O, (my) mind! Love the Lord, as the rain-bird/malkoha (Rhopodytes viridirostris) loves the raindrop. The lakes may be over-flowing (with water), the Earth may appear green/verdant (with the bless of the water), but if the (malkoha) doesn't have (a life-imparting) drop of rain (in its mouth), then the rest of the water is of no use to it. (But, O (my) mind! What can thou do! The Lord) is only attained by its own mercy, (otherwise), the previously committed deeds are to be endured upon one's mind and body II3II

O, (my) mind! Create love for the Lord, like the one that exists between water and milk. (The water blends with the milk, takes sanctuary with the milk, and the latter assimilates it within its own form. When the milk is heated, then the water) bears the heat of being boiled, thus saving the milk from being burnt. (Likewise, if the beings sacrifice themselves, the Lord) grants honour (both here and hereafter) to the departed beings by uniting them with its eternal Nam II4II

O, (my) mind! Create love for the Lord, as the partridge (Indian red legged partridge which is said to be enamoured of the Sun) loves the Sun. (When the Sun sets, and is away from the partridge's visuality, then) not even for one moment, it sleeps; (beyond its reach) far away, it assumes (is the hidden Sun) to be around her. (Likewise) the being who lives its life in consonants of the Guru, such being sees the Lord to be intimate with itself, but the self-centred being (the man-mukh) is unable to realise this II5II

The self-centred being only praises itself (but the being is helpless; what can it do?); only that happens what the Lord (itself) causes (to happen). If someone even tries (without the mercy of the Lord) to abandon self-praising, and endeavours to appreciate Lord's virtues, even then) it would not be able to appreciate Lord's virtues. (The

appreciation for Lord's virtues) is only attained, when the Guru's guidance is attained. (Only upon attaining the Guru's guidance that the being unites with the eternal-Nam of the Lord, and endures the spiritual bliss) II6II... II10II11II Shiri Rag Ashtpadian Mahala 1, Ashtpadi 11, GGSJ/59

How can anyone ignore and fail to see the Lord, who is so evidenced through Nature and is always abiding within.

ਮ:1 ॥ ...ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਵਸਿਆ ॥ ਤੇਰਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ ॥ 1 ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਜਾਤਿ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਮਹਿ ਜਾਤਾ ਅਕਲ ਕਲਾ ਭਰਪੂਰਿ ਰਹਿਆ ॥ ਤੂੰ ਸਚਾ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਸੁਆਲਿਉ ਜਿਨਿ ਕੀਤੀ ਸੇ ਪਾਰਿ ਪਇਆ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਰਤੇ ਕੀਆ ਬਾਤਾ ਜੇ ਕਿਛੁ ਕਰਣਾ ਸੁ ਕਰਿ ਰਹਿਆ ॥ 2 ॥

M:1 II...O, Lord, pervasive of thy creation! I am sacrificed to thee; thou are boundless II1II Pause II In all cosmos, thy effulgence prevails; within all beings, it is thy illumination. Thou are constantly and uniformly pervading all places. O, Lord! Thou are eternal, and graceful are thy grandeurs. Whosoever has praised thy virtues, has redeemed from the world-ocean. O, Nanak! (You too) praise the Lord (and say that) the Lord is doing, whatever pleases it (i.e its tasks are uninfluenced by anyone) II2II M:1, Rag Assa, Shloke, GGSJ/469

The Lord is managing and dictating each and every element of Nature:

ਗੁਉੜੀ ਗੁਆਰੇਰੀ ਮਹਲਾ 3 ॥ ਏਕਸੁ ਤੇ ਸਭਿ ਰੂਪ ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗਾ ॥ ਪਉਣੁ ਪਾਣੀ ਬੈਸੰਤਰੁ ਸਭਿ ਸਹਲੰਗਾ ॥ ਭਿੰਨ ਭਿੰਨ ਵੇਖੈ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਰੰਗਾ ॥ 1 ॥ ਏਕੁ ਅਚਰਜੁ ਏਕੋ ਹੈ ਸੋਈ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਵੀਚਾਰੇ ਵਿਰਲਾ ਕੋਈ ॥ 1 ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥ ਸਹਜਿ ਭਵੈ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸਭਨੀ ਥਾਈ ॥ ਕਹਾ ਗੁਪਤੁ ਪ੍ਰਗਟੁ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਬਣਤ ਬਣਾਈ ॥ ਆਪੇ ਸੁਤਿਆ ਦੇਇ ਜਗਾਈ ॥ 2 ॥ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਕੀਮਤਿ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਹੋਈ ॥ ਕਹਿ ਕਹਿ ਕਥਨੁ ਕਹੈ ਸਭੁ ਕੋਈ ॥ ਗੁਰ ਸਬਦਿ ਸਮਾਵੈ ਬੂਝੈ ਹਰਿ ਸੋਈ ॥ 3 ॥ ਸੁਣਿ ਸੁਣਿ ਵੇਖੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਮਿਲਾਏ ॥

ਵਡੀ ਵਡਿਆਈ ਗੁਰ ਸੇਵਾ ਤੇ ਪਾਏ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮਿ ਰਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮਿ ਸਮਾਏ ॥ 29 | 9 | 4 ॥

Rag Gaurhi Gaureri Mahala 3 II It is an astounding charisma that (everywhere, in this multi-form panoramic world) the Lord itself is present. Rare is the individual who, in the sanctuary of the Guru, contemplates (upon this astonishing mystery) II1II Pause II

All the (different) forms and appearances (that are visible in the world) stem from the same Lord. It is the one from whom came air, water and fire; and all (these elements of

different appearances) are blended (in all the organisms). It is the Lord itself who takes care of the (beings of) multitude colours II1I

(Seated) in the state of spiritual equipoise, (it is) the Lord (itself who) is present everywhere; somewhere concealed and somewhere apparent. The whole of this worldly melodrama is the Lord's own creation. The Lord itself awakes those beings who are in (induced)-sleep (of enticement of maya) II2II

Every being tries (itself) to describe through utterance (the virtues of the Lord), but none can invaluablely appreciate it. (But) the being who unites itself with the shabad of the Guru, such being is able to intimate with the Lord II3II

(The Master of this multi-coloured world, the Lord), cares (for every being) by hearing (everyone's) prayers, (and thereby) unites (the being) with the Guru. (By uniting with the shabad of the Guru, and) performing the service guided by the Guru, (the being) attains an immense grace and honour (both in the here and the hereafter).

O, Nanak! (By the bless of the shabad of the Guru, countless beings) become imbued by (the devotion of the) Nam of the Lord, (and) become absorbed in the Nam II4II9II29II GGSJ/160

ਮ:1 ॥ ...ਜੇ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡਿ ਖੰਡਿ ਸੋ ਜਾਣਹੁ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੁਝਹੁ ਸਬਦਿ ਪਛਾਣਹੁ ॥ ਘਟਿ ਘਟਿ ਭੋਗੇ ਭੋਗਣਹਾਰਾ ਰਹੈ ਅਤੀਤੁ ਸਬਾਇਆ ॥ 14 20 | 3 | 15 | ... | ॥

The truth is: M:1 II...The Lord who pervades all the cosmos, know it to be present within thy body too; realise this mystery through the sanctuary of the Guru: recognise this truth by uniting with Guru's shabad. The Lord, rejoices all worldly goods, is relishing all by pervading all entities, and yet remains detached II14II...II15II3II20II M:1, Maru, GGSJ/1041

Just like the wonderous Nature, the Lord is there; simply because its invisible it doesn't mean that it is absent; remember, 'absence of evidence is no evidence of its absence.' The Lord and Nature are not the same, but so inter-twined are they, that the former is visible through the latter. We need both, for interaction through Nature leads us to the Akal Purakh, the ultimate reality.

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# THE SIKH MISLS: MARTYRS WHO MADE THE SIKHS PROUD

Jyoti M Rai

**G**uru Gobind Singh had prepared his people well for the 90 years of strife with the Mughals and their satraps as well as the Afghans, the Persians and other marauders from the north, who regularly invaded India, between his death in 1708 and the founding of the Sikh kingdom by Ranjit Singh in 1801. The fellowship of the Khalsa, the principle of *meeri-peeri* (the temporal and spiritual underpinnings of the faith), and the paramountcy of the Guru Granth Sahib ensured an unshakeable commitment to the tenets of Sikhism. The Sikhs had been given a distinct physical identity and were prepared to uphold the sanctity of their beliefs by sacrificing their lives whenever required.

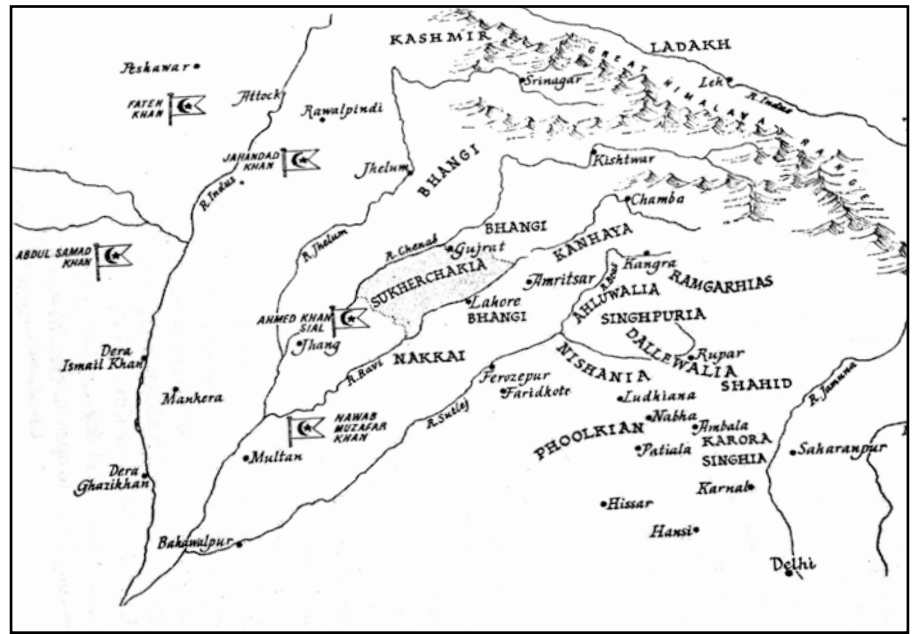
Just before his death Guru Gobind Singh, with his unerring instinct, had sensed in Banda Singh Bahadur the qualifications and capabilities of a future leader. Banda, believed to born in Kashmir, was at ease everywhere, which was how he had come to settle in Nanded. He had been a farmer and a hunter, and had earned a reputation as a formidable fighter. At the same time, he possessed the willpower and the discipline to practise yoga and live an ascetic life.

Burning with hatred for those who had perpetrated such vile crimes against a noble and courageous leader like Guru Gobind Singh and his family, Banda was determined





(Below) Haveli Diwan Todar Mall: Diwan Todar Mall was a wealthy merchant of Sarhind, who on 13 December 1705 performed cremation of the martyred younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Zorawar Singh aged about 6, Fateh Singh aged about 9 and their grandmother, Mata Gujari.



(Above) A map of the Sikh Misls in the Late Eighteenth Century

on vengeance. He set out for Punjab, almost 1500 miles away, with only 25 armed followers. But he was also armed with Gobind Singh's *hukamnamahs* (directives) to all Sikh *sangats* to rally round his banner. The Guru had given him five arrows from his own quiver, a *nishan sahib* (flag) and a *nagara* (war drum) as symbols of authority. Banda's tiny force soon swelled with the addition of warriors eager to strike back at their Mughal tormentors.

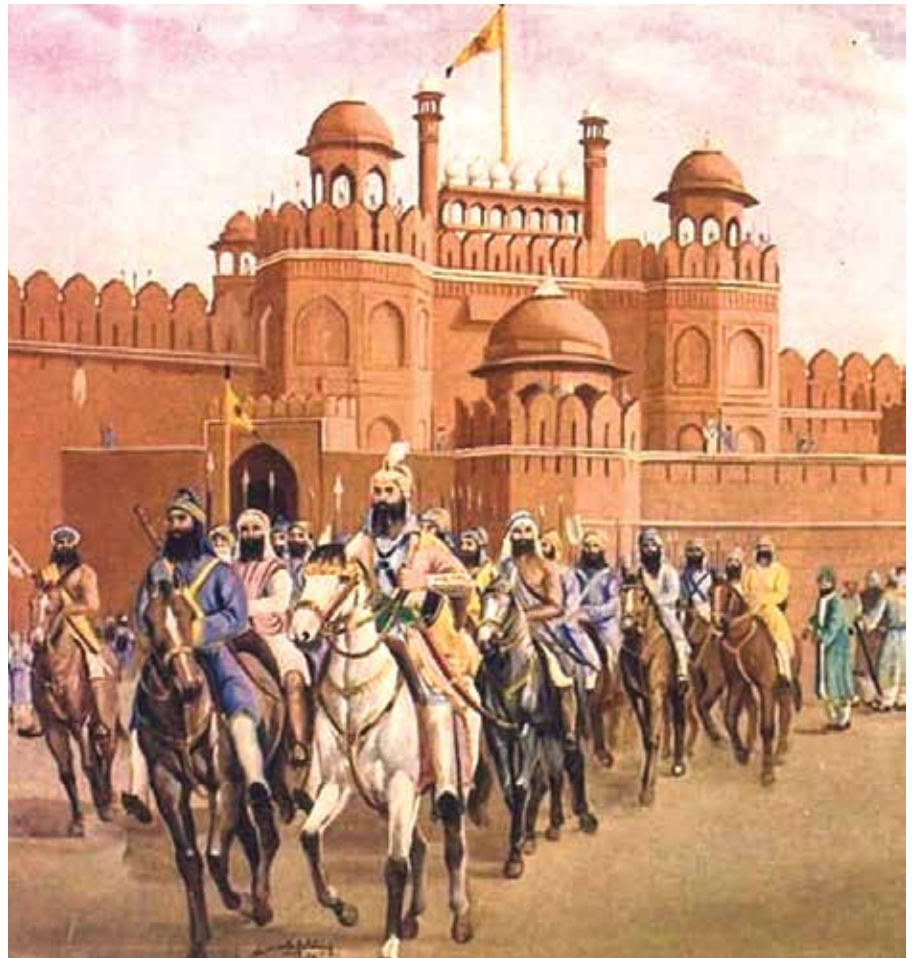
They reached Punjab after a journey of several months. After many armed clashes on the way. Banda and his men arrived at the gates of Samana (near Patiala), home of Sayyed Jalal-ud-din, Guru Tegh Bahadur's executioner, and Shashal Beg, who had executed Guru Gobind Singh's two sons. An unexpected dawn attack on the heavily fortified town of Samana killed over 10,000 of its defenders according to one estimate of the time. The force that had been contemptuously written off by the town's military commander was joined by an oppressed peasantry, who poured into the

**Attacks and counterattacks between the Sikhs & their persecutors formed a continuing dance of death on the landscape of Punjab, culminating in the *wada ghalughara* of February 1762**

Mughal citadel to wreak their own vengeance. Other towns fell before Banda's men - Ghuram, Thaska, Mustafabad, Kapuri, Sadhaura and finally Sirhind, the town whose governor Wazir Khan had ordered the deaths of Guru Gobind Singh's two younger sons. He had then sent two assassins to Nanded to kill the Guru. Given the extent to which Sikh anger would boil over at the very mention of Sirhind, the outcome of the first savage battle that took place at Chappar Chiri, some 10 miles from the city, was never in doubt, Wazir Khan's well-equipped army of 20,000 men fought a far smaller Sikh force, but he was killed and a Muslim chronicler thus described the outcome: 'Not a man of the army of Islam escaped with more than his life and the clothes he stood in.'

In May 1710, Sirhind itself was taken after a two-day siege but at a high cost to the Sikhs, who lost 500 men before the fort's heavy guns were silenced. The destruction of the town was not permitted following a fervent appeal by its Hindu population. Because of its notorious past, however, it was not spared about half a century later when Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's forces marched on it.

In six years Banda's sweep of victories - after Sirhind he captured Rai Kot, Saharanpur, Jalalabad, Ludhiana, Jullundur, Hoshiarpur, Batala, Kalanaur and Pathankot - brought the Sikhs to the gates of Lahore, a city symbolic of Mughal and Afghan authority in India. In one of his most audacious campaigns, Banda captured the fortress of Mukhlispur built on a promontory on the lower reaches of the Himalayas. He renamed it Lohgarh and flew the flag of the Khalsa over it. He announced that Lohgarh would henceforth represent Sikh authority over the regions now under their control, and seals and



*An artist's recreation of Sardar Baghel Singh's army that had invaded Delhi and captured parts of the Shahdara region. By 11 March 1783, the Nishan Sahib could be seen flying at the Red Fort.*

coins were struck to celebrate Sikh rule.

An incensed Emperor Bahadur Shah, with a force of 60,000 horsemen, now laid siege to Lohgarh. The Sikh forces consisted of around 3000 horsemen and foot soldiers combined. In the vicious hand-to-hand fighting, while a majority of Banda's soldiers held the enemy at bay, he and a few of his men escaped. When Banda Singh was finally captured in the siege of the town of Gurdas Nangal (which was taken on 17 December 1715), the Mughals outdid themselves in barbarity. While 300 Sikhs were summarily executed and their heads stuffed with hay, mounted on spears and carried in a victory procession to Lahore, Banda was

chained, shackled and locked in a cage, which was then carried on an elephant's back along with the heads stuffed with hay. After Lahore had celebrated this spectacle the procession then left for Delhi. After spells of torture alternating with attempts to buy him off, the prisoner was finally taken to the Qutub Minar (a thirteenth-century stone tower, 239 feet in height) where 'they had him dismount, placed his child in his arms and bade him kill it. Then, as he shrank with horror from the act, they ripped open the child before the father's eyes, thrust his quivering flesh into his mouth and hacked him to pieces limb by limb'.

After their humiliation under Banda, however, the Mughals could never

regain their former pomp, glory and authority. The power of the Khalsa can be judged from this inventory of the weapons and wealth recovered from Gurdas Nangal when it fell after the siege that lasted eight months: '1000 swords, 278 shields, 173 bows and quivers, 180 matchlocks, 114 daggers, 217 long knives, 23 gold mohars, 600 rupees and a few gold ornaments'.

The Sikhs now faced the most savage persecution in their history. With the death of Bahadur Shah in 1712 and the accession of Farrukh Siyar to the throne in 1713, the Mughal empire came to be headed by a man who outstripped all his predecessors in exhibiting gratuitous cruelty. His governors and commanders curried favour with him by sending him severed Sikh heads 'for his pleasure'. When once Zakariya Khan (who was later to become governor of Lahore under him), presented Emperor Farrukh Siyar in Delhi with a particularly large number of Sikh heads, the overjoyed emperor raised Zakariya's rank and loaded him with presents. Zakariya vowed to leave no Sikh alive in the Mughal empire, and ordered his men to arrest Sikhs wherever they saw them and bring them to Lahore for daily public executions. He also announced a reward of 50 rupees for every Sikh head brought to him.

But the headhunters' policies and tactics made the Sikhs even more determined to make the administration pay for its misdeeds. Zakariya Khan, disconcerted by the unending plunder of his treasuries and arsenals and the loss of a number of his men, now tried appeasing the Sikhs. In 1733 he offered them a large jagir (assigned land), which they willingly accepted. This appeasement posed as grievous an error for Zakariya Khan in the long run as his attempts to terrorize them. Here, the Sikhs saw an opportunity

## Understanding the Sikh Misls through their Coins

After Banda Singh Bahadur's death, the *Misls* banded together to achieve their common goal, which was annexing the cities in Punjab that were under Afghan and Mughal rule. They emerged victorious after taking Lahore in 1765, and minted coins as a mark of their sovereignty. The couplet used on these coins was taken from the official seal of Banda Bahadur (patterned after Guru Gobind Singh's seal) which he used on *hukamnamas* and *farmans* - edicts and orders. The legend on these coins was in Persian as well:

Obverse: *Deg Teg O Fateh Nusrat Be-dirang*  
*Yaft Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*  
 Abundance, the sword, victory and help without delay  
 Guru Gobind Singh obtained from Nanak.

The Kanahiya and Bhangi *Misls* kept up a steady flow of coinage through the years after 1765 even while having to defend Lahore against the Afghans. In 1772, after taking Multan, the Sikhs issued silver rupees from there until 1779, when the city was taken back by the Afghans. In 1775 coins were issued for the first time from the sacred city of Amritsar. Once they had achieved paramountcy in Punjab, the Sikhs kept the mints at Amritsar, Lahore and Multan fully employed in striking coins in praise of the Gurus. The legend used was taken from Banda Bahadur's coins.

Reverse: *Sri Amratsarjio zarb [Vikramditya Samvat... year]*  
*Maimanat Julus Bakht Akal Takht*  
*Struck at revered [city of] Amritsar*  
 During the tranquil reign of the Akal Takht.

The history of the major misls can be traced through their coins. Although the coinage from Amritsar, Lahore and Multan is attributed to the Bhangi *misl*, there is enough evidence to believe that other *misls* too minted coins in these cities, especially Amritsar.

There were four different types of rupees being minted simultaneously from this sacred city, some coin types for a short period of time only. These mints in all likelihood were set up by two of the Bhangi chiefs, at least, whilst occupying different parts of the city. The Kanhaiya and the Sukarchakia Misls may have also minted from here from time to time. As for Lahore, it was captured by Lehna Singh and Gujjar Singh Bhangi on 16 April 1765. In all probability the first Sikh coin was struck by them, but as other Misls joined them almost immediately, it is difficult to be accurate. On 25 December 1772 Multan was taken by the Bhangi Misl chiefs Jhanda Singh, Ganda Singh and Lehna Singh. The mintage from here was sporadic as there was constant warfare going on with the displaced Afghans.

Because the couplets were in praise of the Gurus, the coins came to be known as *Gobindshahis* and *Nanakshahis*. The *Misls* played a significant role in propagating their faith, and continued to mint coins till the ascendancy of Ranjit Singh.

Cont. on page no. 26

for rigorous institutionalization of their activities relating to the larger purpose of safeguarding the faith and its followers from genocidal Mughal attacks. Kapur Singh was the man chosen to head this programme. A tough, self-assured and experienced warrior, he was also deeply devout, and dedicated to building solid institutions that would protect the Sikhs.

Within a year of receiving the *jagir*, he had organized the Sikhs into different groupings or *dals*. Veterans over 40 were inducted into the Budha Dal and those below that age into the Taruna Dal. The two *dals* which would later be merged into the Dal Khalsa, took on responsibilities ranging from armed resistance against the Mughal state and guarding Sikh places of worship to attending to conversions and performing baptisms. The Taruna Dal relished the opportunity of dealing with the Mughal military; the years of Mughal oppression had hardened Sikh farmers into a motivated potential soldiery, with able-bodied men keeping lance and sword by them as they worked on their land. As its membership increased to 12,000, the *dal* was further divided into five sections, each having its individual commander with his own banner and drum besides administrative control of the territories annexed by him.

These five sections, along with several more which would be formed as time went on led to the formation of the Sikh *misl*s. (The word *misl* in Arabic means 'equal'.) The term was first used by Guru Gobind Singh in 1688 during the battle of Bhangani (now in Himachal Pradesh) against the hill rajas, when he organised the Sikhs into groups, each under their own leader with equal power and authority. These groups eventually took the form of twelve *misl*s, which

### Lahore Mint

This is the first *Misl* coin. The Lahore rupees minted by the *Misl*s at Lahore were made of silver, with each coin weighing about 10.7gms. The obverse of these coins carried the bearing of the *Gobindshahi* couplet. The reverse carried the date VS 1822 (AD 1765).



### Multan Mint

There are very few of the coins from the Multan mint available. Similar to the coins of the Lahore mint, these coins were also silver rupees and weighed roughly 11 gms. This coin is dated VS 1832 (AD 1775).



### Amritsar Mint

Unlike the coins from the Lahore and Multan mints, the coins from the Amritsar mint were interesting and different. Some of these silver coins had a 'hand' or '*Punja*' on the obverse. Maharaja Ranjit Singh's *hukumnamas* had a *punja* dipped in saffron as his signature. The date mentioned on the coin is VS 1859 (AD 1802). This date signifies the year Maharaj Ranjit Singh took over Amritsar. These coins were also minted in silver, the grammage similar to the coins of Lahore and Multan.



### Amritsar Mint (Guru Nanak Era)

From the Amritsar Mint, came the Guru Nanak Era coins. The figures 316 added on the obverse of the coin signifies the Guru Nanak Era. One added 316 to the date of Guru Nanak Dev's birth, which give you the actual date of VS 1842 (AD 1785), which is mentioned on the reverse of the coin. These coins carry the *Nanakshahi* couplet.

derived their names from their villages or leaders. The twelve *misls* were: Ahluwalia, Bhangi, Ramgarhia, Faizullapuria, Kanhayia. Sukerchakia, Dallewalia, Shahid or Nihang, Nakkai, Nishanwalia, Karorsinghia and Phulkian. The *misl* chiefs, who have been compared to the barons of medieval times, had complete control over their territories and their own cavalry and infantry units, essentially to discourage any defiance of their authority. They had absolute autonomy, but in times of war, they pooled their resources to take on the enemy. In times of peace, they often fought each other.

The *misl* warrior was a soldier of fortune, a horseman who owned his own mount and equipment, armed with matchlock, spear and sword. Infantry and artillery were virtually unknown to the Sikhs for serious purposes before the rule of Ranjit Singh. Sikh soldiers despised 'footmen', who were assigned the meaner duties - garrison tasks provisioning and taking care of the women. 'The Sikh horseman,' according to historian Bikrama Jit Hasrat, 'was theoretically a soldier of the Khalsa, fired by the mystic ideals of Gobind which he little understood, and he had no politics. He was also a soldier of the Panth [Sikh community], out to destroy the enemies of the Faith in all religious fervour and patriotism. Above all, he was a freelance, a republican with a revolutionary impulse... The armies of the Dal Khalsa, unencumbered by heavy ordnance, possessed an amazing manoeuvrability. [They] were sturdy and agile men who could swiftly load their matchlocks on horseback and charge the enemy at top speed, repeating the operation several times. They looked down upon the comforts of the tents, carrying their and their animals' rations of grains in a knapsack, and

Obverse



Reverse



### Amritsar mint

This coin shows a *katar* or dagger on the reverse. There was a continuous flow of these coin with the symbol coming out of the Amritsar mint. This *katar* shows the fighting spirit during those times.

Obverse



Reverse



### Anandgarh Mint

This Anandgarh coin is special because it has three dates. It carries an AH date of 1198 on the top end of the obverse. On the reverse the VS date of 1841 (AD 1784) and *Ahad* or renal year is given. Though it carries the mint name of Anandgarh on the reverse, there is speculation that it could have been struck from another Amritsar mint.

Obverse



Reverse

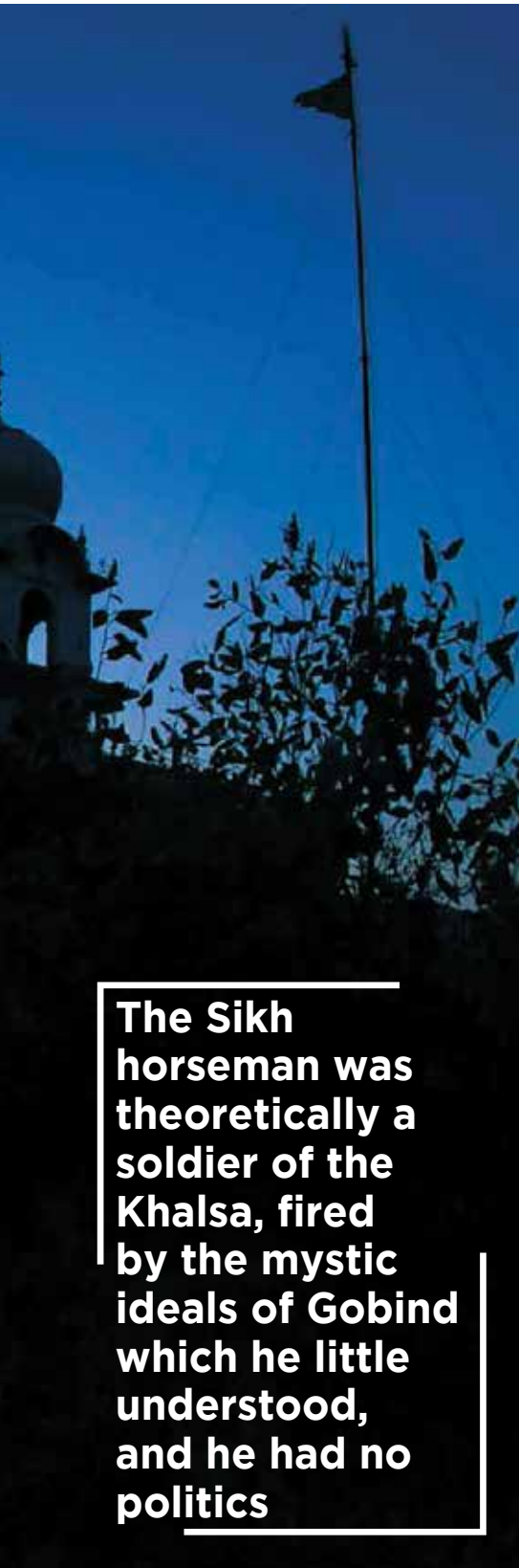


Interestingly, a hoard of coin from the *Misl* period found together had just two dates VS 1854 (AD 1797) and VS 1859 (AD 1802). Some on the reverse have been struck with a worn die. This is significant as it shows the *Misls* were on the move so the die was difficult to replace.



*A wealth deposit of coins belonging to the Misl period.*





**The Sikh  
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with two blankets under the saddle as their bedding, they marched off with lightning rapidity In and out of battle'. At the height of their power in the latter part of the eighteenth century, the *misl*s could muster around 70,000 such horsemen.

The Sikhs at that time accounted for only 7 per cent of the population of Punjab, as against 50 per cent Muslims and 42 percent Hindus. Before attaining their 'golden period', they had to face huge and continuing adversity. To start with, Zakariya Khan, having given them a *jagir* as a peace offering, sent a force two years later to reoccupy it. Given his sadistic characteristics, he had the scholar Bhai Mani Singh, who had been a close companion of Guru Gobind Singh, taken into custody and cut to pieces without purpose or provocation. He then laid siege to Amritsar, plundered the Harmandir Sahib, filled the pool with slaughtered animals and desecrated its relics.

When Zakariya Khan died in 1745 and his son Shah Nawaz Khan succeeded him as governor of Lahore, the progeny proved worse than the parent. Nawaz Khan's favourite pastime appears to have been to watch the bellies of captive Sikhs being ripped open and iron pegs stuck into their heads. On 10 March 1746, the first of the two *ghalugharas* (holocaust) took place: a large body of Mughal troops under Yahiya Khan massacred 7000 Sikhs, while an additional 3000 were captured and taken to Lahore for public execution. This came to be known as the *chhota* (small) *ghalughara*. The *wada ghalughara* or great holocaust - to be described later - took place in February 1762, this time at the hands of the Afghan invader Ahmad Shah Abdali, the founder of the Durrani dynasty.

The 16 years between the two

*ghalugharas* saw copious bloodshed in Punjab, with the forces of the Khalsa continually set upon by one or another of their enemies. While Nadir Shah of Persia, in repeated incursions into the subcontinent, played havoc with the seat of the Mughal Empire at Delhi, he dealt more sagaciously with the Sikhs, despite the fact that they plundered the loot he was returning home with; he was perceptive enough to avoid armed conflict with people whose homes were their saddles.

Ahmad Shah Abdali of Afghanistan was less perceptive. He invaded India eight times between 1748 and 1768, and while he brought the beleaguered Mughals to their knees, his attempts to destroy the Sikhs did not succeed despite his best efforts. To irk the Mughals, in 1748, he audaciously declared Punjab to be a territory of a new Afghanistan after decisively defeating the Lahore governor. Punjab now became the setting for a triangular struggle among the Afghans, Sikhs and Mughals. Abdali and the Mughals wanted to see the end of the Sikhs, but the Khalsa was willing to take on both adversaries.

Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, head of the Ahluwalia *misl*, liberated the Golden Temple from Mughal control and restored the shrine to its former glory. In 1752 the new governor of Lahore, Mir Mannu, a particularly duplicitous and sadistic man who had defected from the Mughals to the Afghans and was keen to curry favour with Abdali, now officially proclaimed Punjab to be an Afghan province. This act was in defiance of the declared Sikh sovereignty over several regions and towns of Punjab dating from Banda Singh's time, and indeed of their plans to annex more territory. The Sikhs' stand was anathema to Abdali. The last straw came when in 1757, they waylaid his baggage train full of the wealth



he had plundered from Delhi, Mathura and Vrindavan. The Sikhs also rescued hundreds of captive Hindu girls and returned them to their homes. This was especially humiliating for the Afghans as it occurred during the year in which the Mughal emperor agreed to the annexation of Lahore by Abdali. Incensed, Abdali now told his son Timor Shah, the governor of Lahore to eliminate the 'accursed infidels' and their Golden Temple once and for all.

Attacks and counterattacks between the Sikhs and their persecutors

formed a continuing dance of death on the landscape of Punjab, culminating in the *wada ghalughara* on 5 February 1762. In a surprise attack on a large assembly of Sikhs at Kup near Sirhind, Abdali's army, having covered 110 miles in two days, massacred 10,000 to 30,000 Sikhs (estimates vary), a very large number of whom were women and children being escorted to a safer region. In the ferocious fighting, the odds were heavily stacked against the Sikhs.

Abdali next headed for the Golden Temple and struck on 10 April

*(Above) Sikh General Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, who was the head of Ramgarhia confederacy in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, built this three-storied complex as watch towers and station sentinels to keep watch against possible enemy attack.*





1762, at a time when thousands had gathered there for the Baisakhi celebrations, which included the most sacred ritual of a dip in the holy pool. The bloodbath was horrific. The Harmandir was blown apart with gunpowder. The pool was filled with the debris of destroyed buildings, mutilated human bodies, carcasses of cows and much else. Topping it all, a pyramid of Sikh heads was erected. Within a few months, however, early in 1763, Charat Singh, head of the Sukerchakia *misl* - whose grandson Ranjit Singh was to be born one and a half decades later - managed

to wrest back control of the Golden Temple.

The very next year, Abdali was back in India - and once more bore down on the Sikh shrine. Each of the 30 Sikhs present died, defending the sacred edifice, which was once again demolished and defiled. The Sikhs were determined this was the last time the Afghans or the Mughals would ever set foot in it. To drive home this point to their adversaries, the Sikhs, in a swift military action, not only annexed Lahore on 16 April 1765, but also declared their sovereignty over the whole of Punjab. To make absolutely clear that political power in the region now rested with them, they struck coins and declared Lahore the mint city, *Dar-ul Sultanate* (Seat of Sikh Power).

Having brought Punjab under its control, in addition to large parts of what is now Pakistan, plus the present day states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Haryana, the Khalsa now-emerged as a significant and substantial territorial power. The process was helped by the economic activities of the 12 *misls*, which were beginning to prosper as major cultivators of crops such as wheat, rice, pulses, barley, sugarcane, cotton, indigo and jaggery in addition to a wide variety of fruit. Nor were manufacturing, crafts, construction of townships or internal and external trade neglected. Exports were sent to Persia, Arabia, Yarkand, Afghanistan, Chinese Turkestan, Turfan and Bokhara. Lahore and Amritsar, between them, also produced increasingly fine silks, shawls, woollen materials, carpets and metalware. The Sikhs, with their entrepreneurial drive and inclination to spend well and indulge themselves fully, were changing the character of Punjab.

In March 1783 an event took place that would have been inconceivable a few years earlier. A combined *misl* force under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, outstanding among the Sikh chiefs for his qualities of leadership, entered Delhi, the imperial seat of the once mighty Mughals. Some of the *misl* leaders arrived at the Red Fort, which represented Mughal power, and walked into the emperor's audience hall where Jassa Singh had himself installed on the imperial throne. It was a symbolic move but its meaning was clear to all. The Khalsa withdrew only after the emperor agreed to an annual tribute. But when he broke his promise in 1785 the Sikhs returned to Delhi and subjugated it once again. They had no wish to take permanent possession of the city, but they made the emperor agree - which he readily did - to the construction of eight gurdwaras, each built on a site with a special significance for the Sikhs, one of them being Gurdwara Sis Ganj, on the spot where Emperor Aurangzeb had had Guru Tegh Bahadur, father of Guru Gobind Singh, tortured and beheaded in November 1675.

What the arrival of Sikh contingents in Delhi made clear to everyone was how far the Sikhs had come from the day Guru Nanak had founded the faith, despite the persecution they had faced over the centuries. Having forced their way to the heart of the Mughal empire, unfazed by the odds, they made their entrance with supreme aplomb. Even more impressive was the extent to which the secular and civilized principles of their religious teachings were maintained. No orgy of bloodshed was indulged in despite the number of revered Sikhs who had been brought to Delhi over the years to be barbarically put to death by successive Mughal rulers.

The *misls* contributed significantly

to the Sikh vision, with its moral underpinnings. Each of them consolidated Sikh power in Punjab by imaginatively developing their territories and providing just administration. 'In all contemporary records, mostly in Persian', one modern historian points out, 'written generally by Muslims as well as by Maratha agents posted at a number of places in Northern India, there is not a single instance either in Delhi or elsewhere in which Sikhs raised a finger against women....' And as we have seen, with Sikh rule now established over large parts of the Punjab, its people experienced a sense of security and witnessed a rapid increase in prosperity to a much greater degree than over the past half a century.

Two Afghan rulers, however, still had to be dealt with: Abdali's son Timur Shah, who succeeded him in 1772, and Timur's son Zaman Shah, who ascended the throne after his father's death in 1793. While Timur Shah avoided the Sikhs as far as possible, Zaman Shah, during one of his invasions, briefly occupied Lahore before being thrown out (events of this period will be described later. Notwithstanding the help he received from some Hindu *rajās* and various Muslim rulers, and from the British whose expanding hold over India was being helped by India's unending infighting, Zaman too failed to consolidate his position. His failure was in fact accelerated by the British - past masters in the art of



*The Akalis, watercolour by Emily Eden 1838.*

deceitful diplomacy - who got an Iranian adventurer in their pay to persuade the Persian King Fateh Ali Shah to march into Afghanistan while Zaman was in India and to prevail on Prince Mahmud of Herat to revolt against the Afghans. Zaman's ardour for his fourth and last invasion of India rapidly cooled as he hurried back to deal with the disastrous turn of events at home.

The eighteenth century was a costly one for the Sikhs. It has been estimated that Guru Gobind Singh, in his battles with the Mughals, lost about 5000 men, and Banda Singh at least 25,000. After Banda Singh's execution, Abdus Samad Khan, governor of Lahore (1713-26), killed not less than 20,000 Sikhs and his son and successor Zakariya Khan (1726-45) an equal

number. Yahiya Khan (1746-47) accounted for some 10,000 Sikhs in a single campaign after the *chotta ghalughara*, the first holocaust. His brother Shah Nawaz Khan assassinated nearly 1000 Sikhs in 1747 and his brother-in-law Muin-ul-Mulk, between 1748 and 1753, more than 30,000.

Muin-ul-Malik, better known as Mir Mannu, earned no laurels on the battlefield but indulged his sadistic instincts in his sinecure as governor of Punjab. This period is held to be the darkest in Punjab's history. The price for every Sikh head brought to this governor was Rs 10 and his inhumane treatment of those brought to him alive was legendary.

These rulers and interlopers were mostly Central Asians or Turks.

Adeena Beg Khan, a Punjabi Arain, put to death at least 5000 Sikhs in 1758. Ahmad Shah Abdali and his Afghan governors killed around 60,000 Sikhs between 1753 and 1767. Abdali's deputy, Najib-ud-Daulah, also an Afghan, slew nearly 20,000. 'Petty officials and the public' may have killed 4,000.

To this total of over 200,000 Sikhs killed over the first 70 years of the eighteenth century must be added the casualties of the clashes with Timur Shah and Zaman Shah.

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(Extract from: *The Empire of the Sikhs: The Life and Times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh* by Patwant Singh and Jyoti M Rai).

Jyoti M Rai is a renowned Numismatist specialising in coins of the Sikh period since the 1980's.

# BOOK REVIEW: INFLUENCES OF THE BRITISH RAJ ON THE ATTIRE AND TEXTILES OF PUNJAB

Ganeev Kaur Dhillon

The British colonial rule left a deep impact on all aspects of Indian culture - food, education, religion, geographies - and much has been written about it. But one neglected aspect has been its impact on Indian clothes.

Even as in an increasingly globalised world, attire has lost its distinctive character, traditional clothes continue to be worn with aplomb at weddings and special occasions. But one needs to take a closer look at how what we consider “traditional” was changed by the coming of the British.

In ‘Influences of the British Raj on the Attire and Textiles of Punjab’, Jasvinder Kaur brings together the stories of the achkan, sari, blouse, waistcoats, turbans, purses and shoes and socks to provide a refreshing insight into the clothes of Panjab. It is a rich book, filled with photographs and lesser known knowledge packed into short, quick chapters. Written with a personal touch, often bringing in her memories of her childhood, it reminded me of family photo albums and stories I’d heard growing up. The book is broadly divided into sections on Men’s Clothing, Women’s Clothing, Accessories, Materials, Acquiring Goods, and Embroidery and Handwork.

The achkan or the sherwani is today the quintessential formal Indian dress for men, worn in slight variations, across the subcontinent. It can be dressed up in rich brocades for the groom’s wedding dress or sobered down in blacks and greys for the fanciest of formal dinners. But the achkan/sherwani as we know it today is not indigenous to the subcontinent, but is an amalgamation of Indian and British dress. This is one of my



*A blue velvet achkan from Jalandhar district from the early 20th century. The embroidery on the shoulders recreates the shoulder pads in western coats.*



*Groom's party in the 1940s, Arnauli. The various styles of the achkan can be seen in this photograph, as well as the in-roads made by western-wear: trousers with a buttoned coat and tie.*

favourite accounts from the book. Traditional Indian clothes like the choga were loose fitting, and the achkan/sherwani finds no mention in the early accounts of the attire in India. The achkan/sherwani becomes popular only around the late nineteenth century, by which time the British have extended their influence through all of the subcontinent. The achkan takes its collar from high-necked coats popular amongst the British at the time, and as in European-styled coats, is buttoned down the front centre. However, the length is much longer than a conventional European coat, and is a style taken from the traditional Indian garments such as the angrakha, chapkan and chogas.

In the beginning, the luxurious brocades and velvets that were used for traditional clothing continued to be used for the achkan/sherwani; however, as time passed, sober colours (also adopted from European fashions) became more prominent and popular.

Another personally exciting

realisation from the book was that the popularly called Nehru-jacket type "basket" is not a weird usage of the said English word but Indianisation of the word "waistcoat"! It was also incorporated into women's clothing by the late nineteenth century, and was worn over the kurta.

Women's kurtas too went through a shift, and began to imitate European-style collars and cuffs.

Even as women continued to wear the salwar kameez/sari, changes were seen in the cloth material, prints, blouse styles (for instance, puffy sleeves tight at the wrist being the rage in the Edwardian years) and the accessories carried. These included purses, wristwatches and brooches. High-heeled shoes started making an appearance. Make-up became acceptable. Women started wearing European-style jackets and coats, often fur coats, especially over their saris for a fancy evening out.

The book also looks at the coming of newer materials into the sub-



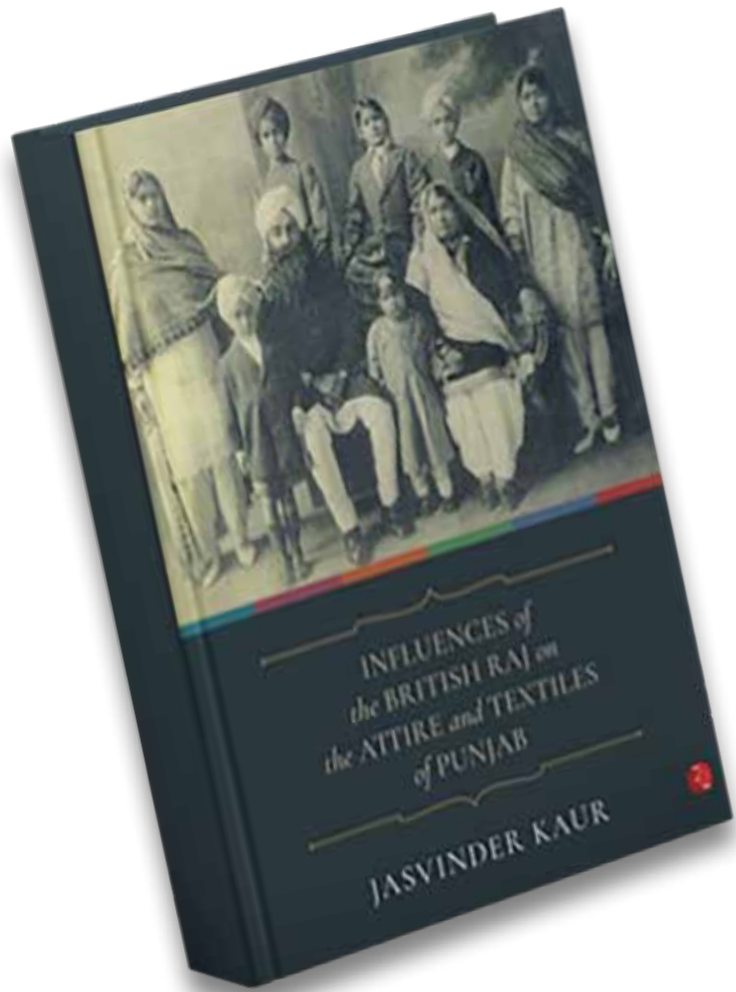
*Ladies wearing chiffon or georgette saris with western-style blouses, while the gentleman is wearing a tweed coat, sweater, waistcoat and birjiz (breeches).*



*The lady is wearing a sari with a brooch, high-heeled shoes and, has curled and styled her hair in the style prevalent in Europe. 1930s, Ferzoeapur.*



1930s, Arnauli. A young lady in lace-trimmed clothes. She is wearing a brooch to hold the head-covering. The sleeves and the collars also have lace trimmings.



This women's vaskat from the Jalandhar district, from the 20th century also depicts a embroidered pocket watch, attesting to its popularity at the time.

continent with patterns, designs and fabrics coming from abroad. Lace, velvet, net, silks, and after World War II, the intriguing 'parachute cloth' are discussed in light of their impact on Panjabi fashion.

The last section looks at the changes that came into the Embroidery and Handwork undertaken by women. Dasooti and Bharnvi embroidery often showed idyllic English scenes and European flowers. Crochet, ribbon-work and smocking, bead work and white-work all became a part of the skill set expected of women. Another

fascinating fact I learnt—Knitting came to India only during the Raj!

Jasvinder has shared numerous such facts and features of our clothes and lifestyles that we take for granted today. The abundance of photographs makes the book particularly engaging and helps to easily understand the changes in attire and textiles that she mentions. I have started looking at old photographs in a new light after reading the book, concentrating on the attire of the people in the photograph! While the book is in a sumptuous coffee-table book format, it left me wanting to know more and go deeper into the subject. I look forward to more work by Jasvinder Kaur (and others!) into this less-explored field.

*(Jasvinder Kaur is on instagram at: @jasvinder\_kaur\_textiles)*

*Photo credits: All photos shared kindly by Jasvinder Kaur*

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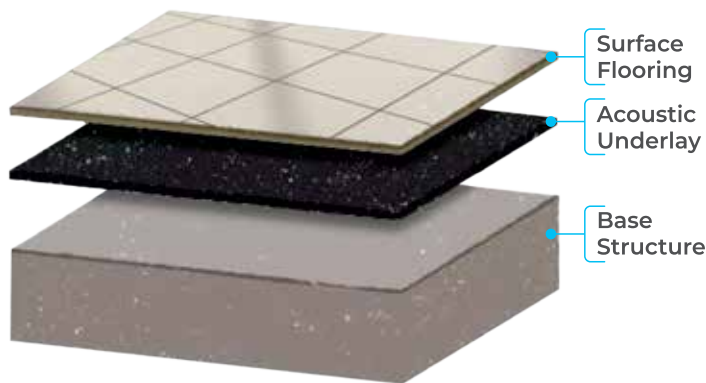
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**Iqbal Singh Anand**  
Chairman – ALP Group

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Mr. Anand graduated from the University of Delhi and inherited the business of automobile trade from his father, Late Dr. Rattan Singh Anand, a visionary who ventured into the trading in the automotive components way back immediately after independence when the automobile industry was at a nascent stage in India.

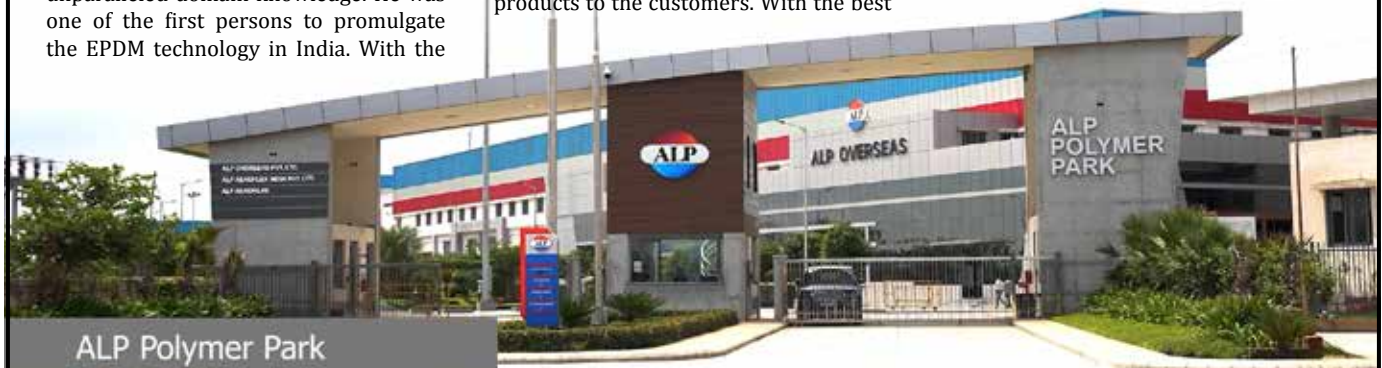
The biggest strength of the group lies in our state-of-the-art Research and Development (R&D) & Design departments of the ALP Group which offer quality design and development capabilities. The Group has developed these departments over the years with an objective to produce import alternatives and quality innovation in India itself, which also is completely in-line with the Make in India initiative. The DSIR, Government of India approved, R&D Units are established with modern infrastructure and testing equipment. The facilities are engaged in research, design development & Introduction of innovative products for Automotive industries, Bus body manufacturer, Construction, Glass industries to name a few across Domestic & International markets. Strong focus on R&D and the end-to-end solutions strengthen company's commitment towards client satisfaction and provide quality products to the customers. With the best

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As part of our core philosophy, sustainability remains an essential element of our business practices. The ALP Group is responsibly committed to contribute towards a greener future through sustainable development practices. Our leadership and teams are constantly focusing on resource conservation, Greenhouse gas abatement and pollutant reduction. Our efforts include Green buildings, solar power generation, tree plantation, innovative environment friendly process and products such as Bio-degradable yoga mats, flooring solutions made of scrap, stronger material made of recycled rubber for heavy duty mud flaps to name a few.

Mr. Iqbal believes that the current scenario has compelled people all over the world to make changes in their way of working and living. The pandemic has forced us to rethink about many business strategies and we have witnessed a paradigm shift in the way we live, we work, and in the way we connect, engage, and collaborate with people. The Indian economy faced multiple headwinds but on the optimistic side, the rapidly globalizing world is opening newer avenues. A systematic approach is highly required to conquer times like these. He is certain that over the next decade, newer opportunities for businesses are going to open up, marking it an era of opportunity and growth.

For more information visit: [www.alpgroup.in](http://www.alpgroup.in) or write to us at [marcom@alpoverseas.com](mailto:marcom@alpoverseas.com).



ALP Polymer Park

# FATEH!

## A VISUAL JOURNEY OF THE FARMERS DURING THE YEAR-LONG PROTEST

**Photographs by: Tanny Kaler**  
**Text by: Ganeev Kaur Dhillon**

The farmers who had been camping at Delhi's borders for 380 days, finally returned home after Prime Minister Modi announced that the laws would be repealed and the Government of India sent a formal letter agreeing to several pending demands of the Farmer Unions. As the farmers returned to their homes in Haryana, Panjab and Western U.P., they received exuberant welcomes and were showered with flowers. These photographs were taken over the course of the year and capture the various moods of the protest, culminating in the victorious celebrations as the protest sites erupted in joy.

*Tanny Kaler is an amateur photographer who developed his skills over the past year while taking part in the farmers protest at Tikri Border. He was an integral part of the team running the Nanak Hut and Library, doing sewa of basic essentials as well as running a library at Tikri. You can follow his work on instagram at: @tanny\_kaler. All photographs copyright of Tanny Kaler.*









*(Above) The farmers begin packing up their belongings to return home. Water coolers and ACs had been brought to deal with the intense heat of North Indian summers. While leaving, many of the farmers gave away their utilities, including the beds, fans, coolers etc., to the local people and slum-dwellers who had supported and been supported by the protests over the year.*

*(Left) Life at the morcha settled into its own rhythms over the past year. A farmer ties his turban using the rear view mirror on his tractor.*



*(Above) Women were an integral part of the farmers protest, both at the morcha where they stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the men, as well as back home, where they took charge of running the household and shouldering the responsibilities while the menfolk were away.*



*(Above) Young men walking to the Tikri protest site, carrying their bags and flags, from the Bahadurgarh railway station. The Bahadurgarh railway station was located close to the Tikri protest site, and allowed relatively easy access to reach Tikri.*

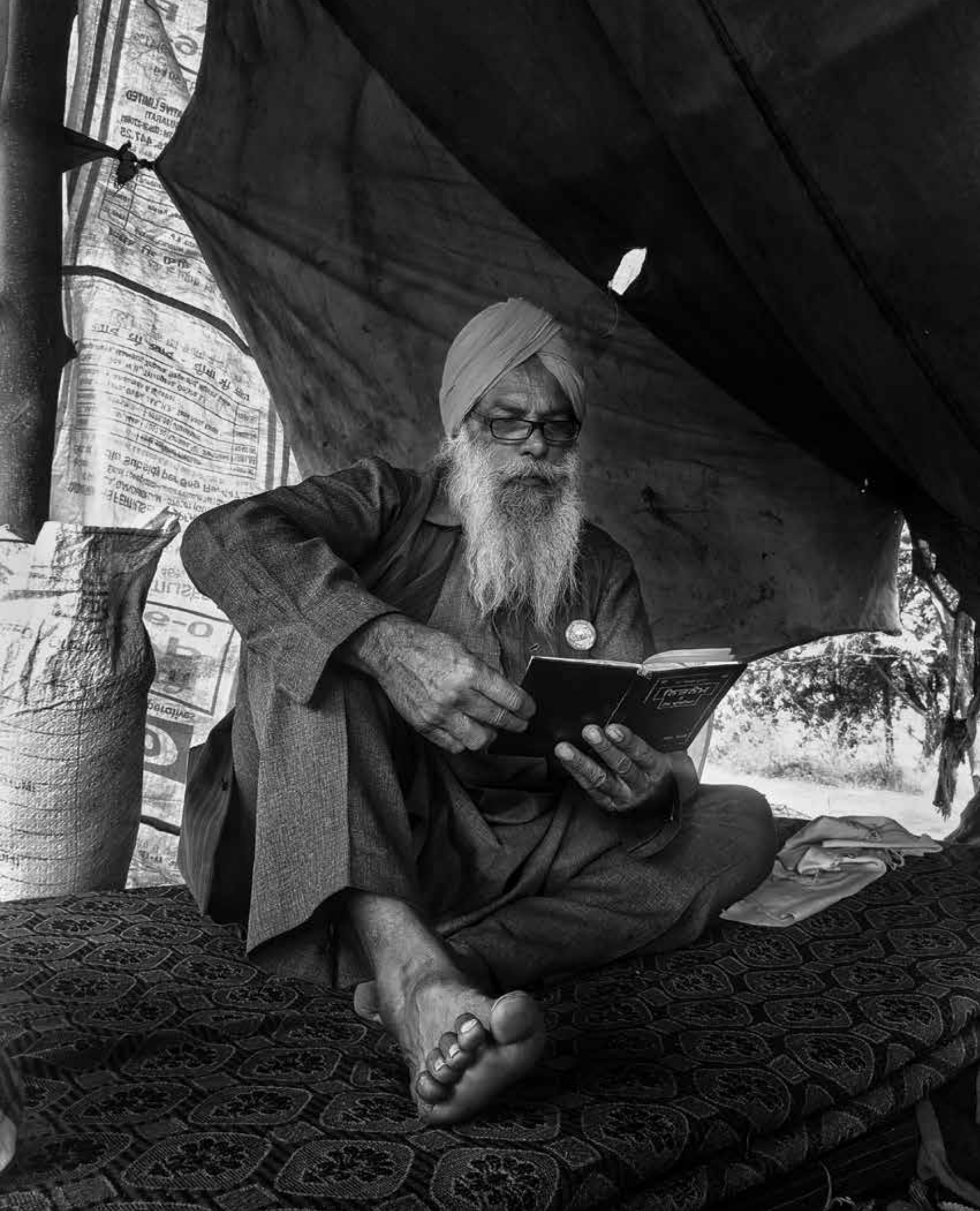


*(Above) People stand in line with their utensils in hand to collect milk being distributed at the morcha. Every morning and evening, fresh milk would be delivered at the morchas from neighbouring and distant villages for the protestors.*



*(Above) No one slept the last night before leaving the borders of Delhi, as celebrations continued into the morning.*

*(Right) A farmer does his daily prayers seated in a makeshift tent at the protest site.*



# THE MURAL ARTS OF PANJAB

**Artika Aurora Bakshi & Ganeev Kaur Dhillon**

Panjab had a rich tradition of arts and craftsmanship that reached its zenith during the rule of Ranjit Singh. Mural Arts had become common in Panjab from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, but flourished in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Ranjit Singh patronised the arts, especially in Amritsar, and taking cues from the most powerful ruler and the most important city, the mural arts permeated throughout society and came to grace almost every important building in Punjab. Murals and frescoes existed in all prominent buildings such as shrines, gurdwaras, temples, deras, and akharas. The havelis and the bungas constructed by the Sardars around the Golden Temple were decorated with the same arts as those that graced the Golden Temple itself. In her acclaimed book 'Royals and Rebels', Priya Atwal mention that Mai Nakain (one of the senior wives of Ranjit Singh) restored the haveli and the fort of Sheikhpura for her personal use, and specially commissioned Pahari artists to decorate the interior apartments.

The Golden Temple itself had been successively destroyed during the Afghan invasions in 1757, 1762, and 1764 and subsequently rebuilt. When Ranjit Singh began the work of beautifying and gilding it around 1803 A.D., he invited master craftsmen from Chiniot (now in Pakistan) who were known for their woodwork, to Amritsar, to work in the Golden Temple. Another

important development was the extension of Ranjit Singh's kingdom over the hill rajas, including Kangra, Guler, Basohli, Chamba etc., which had a vibrant art culture. This meant that the artists of the Pahari School of Art became closely associated with the arts developing under the Sikhs in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Panjab, and many of these artists settled in Amritsar and Lahore.

The surviving frescoes in the Golden Temple and in the other buildings in Amritsar constitute a very small percentage of the murals that would have existed in their heyday in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the mural work that existed inside the Golden Temple had begun to disappear as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, when marble slabs began to be affixed to the walls painted with frescoes. Over the years, the murals and frescoes of Amritsar (and Panjab) have been lost to the ravages of time and the uncaring

restorations of the kar sewa babas. Murals are amongst the most delicate of the crafts and are susceptible to spoilage due to weather and other natural causes. While the traditional paints could withstand time for much longer than the chemical paints used today, they do require regular care and attention, using skills that have almost been lost to us.

Even as late as the 1970s, there



*(Above) Murals at Gurdwara Darshani Deorhi, Mai Sewan Bazar, Amritsar*



were about 50 buildings of religious as well as secular nature in Amritsar that continued to have extant paintings.

Today, Gurdwara Baba Atal is one of the few gurdwaras where one can see a range of murals still in existence dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These are believed to have been made by one Mehtab Singh. However, “renovations” in the 1970s resulted in these murals being painted over in gaudy modern colours. The most recent round of restorations over the last few years was again carried out without any thought to protecting or conserving the existing murals, which have continued to disappear over the years.

### *The Mural Arts*

The Golden Temple showcases a variety of arts and craftsmanship that are closely allied and come under the general term of mural arts. Besides fresco-painting, these include works in embossed copper, *gach*, *tukri*, *jaratkari* and ivory inlay.

Mohra-kashi or Fresco-painting is a long, complex process that begins by drawing the design on a fairly thick piece of paper in pencil or charcoal. This drawing is then perforated and is called a “Khaka”. Charcoal dust was rubbed over the perforated sheet to make a copy of the design on the base wall. The base wall was made of fresh-red coloured bricks that were laid in limestone mortar. Slaked lime and sand were then used to plaster the walls, to cover the masonry and to form the base on which the painting would be done. According one of the last mural painters, the Bhai Gian Singh Naqqash, traditionally only six colours were used in wall paintings – blue, green, red, yellow, black and white – and all of them were prepared from organic materials, including from semi-



*(Above) Murals have survived on the first floor of Gurdwara Baba Atal, Amritsar. However, a few decades ago, they were restored using improper techniques.*

*(Below) Mural on the first floor of Gurdwara Baba Atal, Amritsar, showing Guru Nanak at the Modikhana*





(Above) Mural on the first floor of Gurdwara Baba Atal, Amritsar depicting the engagement of Guru Nanak.



(Above) Remains of frescoes below a balcony at the entrance of a house in Amritsar, depicting scenes from the life of Krishna.

precious stones. The colours were applied to the plaster while it was still wet, which resulted in the paint permeating through the lime. This is the reason why traditionally painted murals retain their freshness and colours even after centuries. The murals represented varying themes including tales from the janamsakhis, portraits of the gurus, martyrs from Sikh history, other distinguished men from Sikh history, such as Baba Budha ji, stories of Hindu gods, and Muslim holy men, battle scenes, 19<sup>th</sup> century royalty and nobility, as well as erotic scenes in some private chambers.

There are about 300 different patterns on the walls of the Golden Temple. Seen from a distance, they resemble hung Persian carpets. The *naqqashes* had developed their own terminology for the various designs. For instance, *Gharwanjh* shows different animals grappling with each other, such as tigers, cobras etc., and *Patta* is a decorative border design used around the edges and often depicted through creepers.

*Gach* is a kind of stone or gypsum which was made into a paste and applied on the wall. Then it was fashioned into various designs using specific implements. When *Gach* work is inlaid with mirrors, it is known as *Tukri* work.

*Jaratkari* is the inlaying of coloured stones in marble to make various designs. This can be seen on the ground floor of the Golden Temple on its exterior walls. The inlay is done with semi-precious stones such as onyx and lapis lazuli.

*Who were the artists? Naming the Naqqash.*

The Golden Temple is the central shrine for Sikhs. As a result, almost all Sardars contributed financially to its repair and the additions made in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which happened over a period of time. Similarly,



(Above) Remains of frescoes on the ground floor of Gurdwara Baba Atal, Amritsar. Most of the frescoes on the ground floor have been painted over and destroyed and no attempt has been made at restoring them.

there were hundreds of painters and craftsmen who worked in the various arts but barring a few, their names remain unknown.

## A Family of Naqqashes



(Above) Bhai Gian Singh Naqqash, photo from the archives of [art-heritage.com](http://art-heritage.com)

One list of 20 artists who worked on the Golden Temple has been collected, and gives the following names: Baba Kishan Singh, Baba Bishan Singh, Kapur Singh, Bhai Kehar Singh, Mahant Ishar Singh, Bhai Sardul Singh, Bhai Jawahar Singh, Bhai Metab Singh, Mistri Jaimal Singh, Bhai Harnam Singh, Bhai Ishar Singh, Bhai Gian Singh, Lal Singh Tarn Taran, Bhai Mangal Singh, Mistri Narain Singh, Mistri Jit Singh, Bhai Atma Singh, Baba Darja Mal and Bhai Vir Singh.

Of the names of artists and artists families that are known to us are the Rajol family of artists – Nikka, Gokul, Harkhu, Chhajju, and Damodar – who were connected with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Maharaja Sher Singh and the Sandhanwalia Sardars.

The lineage that many of the current artists trace is to Kehar Singh, who trained a number of *naqqashes* including his nephews Kishan Singh and Bishan Singh. Bishan Singh's sons, Nihal Singh

and Jawahar Singh, continued the family tradition. Kapur Singh, son of Kishan Singh, would become one of the most prominent artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century though he is not known to have worked with murals. His son, Sardul Singh, however, reconnected with the family tradition and painted murals in many Hindu shrines as well as in the Golden Temple. Kehar Singh trained Isher Singh, whose work was considered to be of the highest calibre.

It was in the late 16th century that the city of Ramdaspur, now known as Amritsar, was founded. The fourth guru of the Sikhs, Guru Ram Das, encouraged craftspeople and artisans from all over Hindustan to come and settle down in the *Guru Ki Nagri*. Bazaars were designated for potters, sculptors, weavers, artists, and popular lore counts more than 30 varied professions. The *nagri* grew in status with Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth guru of the Sikhs, giving it its renown with the construction of the Harmandir Sahib, the most revered Sikh temple in the world. Destroyed several times by Afghan invaders, the Darbar Sahib, as it is known in Panjab, was rebuilt many times by the Sikhs. It was during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that marble, copper and gold foil were used on

and Jawahar Singh, continued the family tradition. Kapur Singh, son of Kishan Singh, would become one of the most prominent artists of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century though he is not known to have worked with murals. His son, Sardul Singh, however, reconnected with the family tradition and painted murals in many Hindu shrines as well as in the Golden Temple. Kehar Singh trained Isher Singh, whose work was considered to be of the highest calibre.

Gali Naqqashan in Amritsar was the residence of many of the painters of the Golden Temple including Gian Singh. Bhai Gian Singh is widely considered as the last great painter of murals. Most of our knowledge of the process and technique followed by the wall artists in Panjab comes from him. He served in the Golden Temple for 32 years and with his death in 1953, the line of great traditional painters in Amritsar came to an end.

the building, giving it the name by which it is known the world over today - the Golden Temple. It was also under the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh that the Sikh School of Art, a distinctive blend of Kangra and Mughal art, emerged, the prime display of which is the inner sanctum of the Harmandir Sahib, with its inlay work, frescoes and calligraphy, showcasing the finesse and dedication of the artists who worked on them over the decades.

"Gone are the bazaars and the roads that lead to Harmandir Sahib. The old buildings, built in the Sikh architectural style, with frescoes, have been broken down. In their place, are plazas and modern buildings that are made to superficially resemble them. But very few people understand

the gravity of loss. These buildings will never compare to the ones that were demolished. The frescoes on them will never be as spellbinding and awe-inspiring as the ones that were painted by the masters of years gone. The style is the same, but the techniques used have changed”, laments Satpal Danish, the grandson of Amritsar’s famous *naqqash* (fresco artist), Gian Singh Naqqash.

The artistic legacy of Amritsar is alive, though barely. There are people who remember, who try their best, but the lack of awareness and support makes their efforts futile.

Bhai Gian Singh Naqqash (1883-1953) was one of the most famous fresco artists of the Sikh School of Art and the official *naqqash* of the Harmandir Sahib for more than thirty years. Gian Singh’s father was a comb-maker, and Gian Singh was the first in his family to take on art as a profession. At the age of five, Gian Singh was sent to school run by Giani Thakur Singh, who later rose into prominence as a Sikh missionary and scholar. Giani Thakur Singh’s influence on him was everlasting.

After he had passed his primary school, Gian Singh was apprenticed to Nihal Singh Naqqash, a third generation descendant of Bhai Kehar Singh Naqqash, who enjoyed court patronage under Maharaja



(Above) G.S. Sohan Singh, photo by Satpal Danish

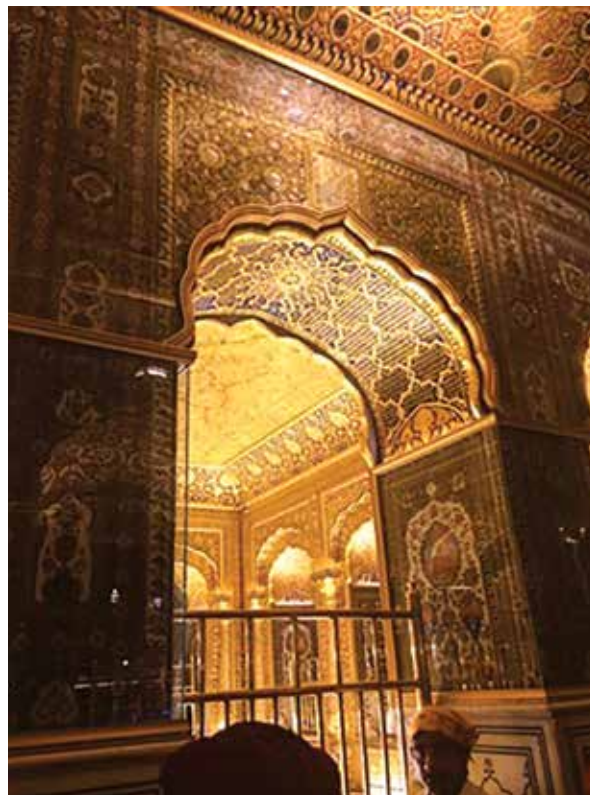
Ranjit Singh. Gian Singh served his apprenticeship for 14 long years until the death of his mentor in 1905.

Bhai Gian Singh would work for 33 years on creating and restoring the frescoes in the Golden Temple, some of which dated back to the 1830s.

His inspiration was to infuse his love for nature into *mohra-kashi* (fresco art), using his signature style of adding highlights and details, giving a 3D effect to the frescoes. His work, along with that of other artists, stands out for its intricacy and finesse, as do the verses from *Gurbani* on *gach* (plaster). Painstakingly painted, using self-made natural pigments and handcrafted brushes, the works of Bhai Gian Singh and the other artists from his time, stand out against the newer attempts to restore them.

“These are difficult times, with very little value given to art in Sikhism today, especially in Panjab and India, where the Sikh art forms were conceived”, says Satpal Danish. “Our patrons today are the people living beyond the shores of India, those who are still connected to their roots.” A renowned photojournalist, Satpal Danish is also a painter and a writer, at the moment working on a coffee table book featuring the artworks of his illustrious family.

“For my grandfather, *mohra-kashi* was a meditative practice. It was his way of connecting with *Waheguru*. He recited *Gurbani* as he painted,



(Above) Mural Art in the Inner Sanctum of the Golden Temple, photo by Artika Aurora Bakshi

and the influence of the *raags* and the changing seasons can be seen in his work. He made his own brushes and extracted pigments from natural elements like precious stones, ash and plants, grinding them, blending them, to get the colours that he used”, continues Satpal Danish. “My father followed in his footsteps. My brothers and I grew up with art all around us, bonding over creativity, adapting to changes in the artistic field, yet holding on to our roots.”

Bhai Gian Singh Naqqash’s son, G. S. Sohan Singh (1914-1999), took his passion for art into the modern world, showcasing his expertise in portraits, still life, film posters, labels and book covers. Remembered as one of India’s finest modern artists, his paintings and prints grace the walls of many galleries and private homes. He painted portraits of famous personalities, and is remembered for the portraits

### **Books by Bhai Gian Singh Naqqash:**

- Naqqashi Darpan
- Naqqashi Art Shiksha
- Taj-i-Zargari, dealing with the designing and execution of beautiful gold and silver ornaments of all types
- Kasheeda - dealing with designing and execution of beautiful naqqshas on shawls and other fabrics

### **Books by G.S.Sohan Singh:**

- Gian Chitravali - Master pieces of Bhai Gian Singh 'Naqqash'
- Amritsar – The Sacred City of the Sikhs
- Holy Places of Pilgrimage
- Revealing the Art of G.S.Sohan Singh.

G. S. Sohan Singh Artist Memorial Trust, founded by Surinder Singh, Satpal Danish and Hardeep Singh, works towards preserving and presenting the cultural heritage of their family and promoting the Sikh School of Art, which was founded during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. For further information contact: [info@art-heritage.com](mailto:info@art-heritage.com)

of Guru Ram Das, Guru Nanak Dev, Jassa Singh Ramgarhia and Bhai Kanhaiya. His legacy has further been embellished by his sons Surinder Singh and Satpal Danish, and grandson Hardeep Singh.

“As a family, we have bonded over our reverence for art, standing by each other through thick and thin. And as artists, our family has kept the legacy alive, through stretched periods of financial difficulties. But what saddens us is that there are very few in India, especially Panjab, who understand the importance of preserving the artistic heritage”, says Hardeep Singh, who although an academic, and by profession, specialising in graphics and information technology, has kept



*(Above) Hardeep Singh at work, photo by Satpal Danish*

alive the legacy of Bhai Gian Singh Naqqash, through his paintings, graphic art, and calligraphy. “The paper I use is from Jaipur, from the same family firm that provided paper during the time of Guru Arjan Dev. The quality of the pigments and brushes that we get today is good, though there are some pigments that I make myself. It’s time consuming, but I don’t want to compromise on the quality of my work.”

Satpal Danish and Hardeep Singh, while working towards creating a

digital repository of Sikh art, also vocalise the dismal state of art heritage, due to the lack of mass awareness and governmental funding and support. What is lost cannot be recovered, but their unrelenting effort gives us hope; hope that we can ‘restore’ and preserve the artistic legacy of our region, hope that our children will value the uniqueness of our culture and get inspired, and hope that the forgotten heritage of Amritsar and its masters will once again be remembered with pride.

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# THE SUN RISES IN THE EAST

Bobby Singh Bansal



Allard with his family in Lahore by Imam Baksh, c1830. Private Collection



One may wonder, what were foreign mercenaries, especially the French for that matter, doing in the dominions of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) known as the 'Lion of the Punjab', and that too holding important positions in the Sikh army. One charismatic officer stood out from the rest, the Frenchman, General Jean Francois Allard. Although there were many European mercenaries who had forsaken their homelands to seek their fortunes in the political milieu of Punjab, it was General Jean Francois Allard who was first to arrive in Lahore with his Italian comrade, Jean Baptiste Ventura in March 1822. What compelled these Europeans or *firanghis* as they were popularly known by the local inhabitants - to drift towards Punjab and seek employment at the opulent Court of Lahore, when they knew well they were looked upon suspiciously as subordinates and spies by the powerful ministers and the Maharaja himself?

Jean Francois Allard was born in St Tropez, in the south of France to parents Jean Francois Philippe and Marie Vicard in 1785. His mother died during birth, and his father unable to cope with the upbringing of his son, remarried Madame Marie Cavalier. By the time he was 18, Jean Francois enlisted with the 23<sup>rd</sup> Regiment of the Dragoons of the French army, serving in Italy until 1806. Later, he served in the Neapolitan Regiment of the Dragoons and was active in Spain until 1814. As recognition for his services, he was duly elevated to the rank of Lieutenant in the Imperial Dragoons of the old Guard. When the French Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte landed in Golfe-Juan with 600 men from exile in March 1815, Jean Francois was fortunate enough

to escort Napoleon to Paris. He was later appointed Captain in the 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars, and was attached as aide-de-camp to Marshall Brune at the battle of Waterloo, where he was seriously injured. After the debacle of the Napoleonic wars, Jean Francois felt demoralised, and anticipated that his military experience would prove more beneficial to him by serving in a foreign army. By 1818, he had arrived in Persia (Iran) and under the rank of Colonel, served the Persian crown prince Abbas Ali Mirza at Tabriz. Here, he met his comrade, Jean Baptiste Ventura, with whom he had a lasting friendship that would cement their alliance at Lahore. After four years, feeling discontent and with British intervention in Persia creating obstacles for the Europeans, especially the French, Jean Francois and Jean Baptiste Ventura hastily curtailed their presence in Tabriz. They escaped incognito through the hostile Afghan terrain and arrived in Kabul. After a short stay, the plan was to head to Egypt, but destiny had other plans. Following a chance meeting with Alexander Csoma de Korosi, a Hungarian traveller, who persuaded them to abandon imminent plans for Cairo and instead convinced them to head in the direction of Lahore, where better military opportunities awaited foreign mercenaries. Having traversed through Afghanistan, Jean Francois Allard and Jean Baptiste Ventura arrived in Lahore in March 1822. When news reached of their undetected arrival at Lahore, his minister informed the Maharaja :

"Your Majesty, I don't know how to tell you, but..."

"Tell me what?" asked the Maharaja.

"Two firanghis have just arrived on the banks of the Ravi River at Shahdara."

The incensed Maharaja pondered in silence as he stroked his long beard and then asked his emissary in a suspicious manner.

“Who can they be?”

“Your Majesty, they both were dressed in a weird fashion, and spoke not in the English tone, more foreign, but was it Portuguese or Dutch I wonder...no, possibly French,” replied the minister.

The Maharaja’s eyes lit up hearing the word ‘French’ as he continued stroking his beard staring up at the glass ceiling.

“The French...what do they want?”

Ranjit Singh having disposed of his suspicions that Allard was not a British spy, offered him the task of reorganising the rustic Sikh cavalry offering the regiment under Sheikh Basawan to be deputed to the control of Jean Francois Allard. Despite the initial hostile reception he had received at the Lahore court, he was offered the rank of colonel. When the Maharaja met Allard and Ventura for the first time, Allard was first to click his heels as he approached ‘the lion of the Punjab’.

“Your Majesty, permit me to introduce myself, I am Colonel Jean Francois Allard of the 7<sup>th</sup> Hussars, and this is my comrade, Colonel Jean Baptiste Ventura.”

The Maharaja was delighted and then raised a question which was on everyone’s lips.

“Tell me, are you not English spies, sent by the East India Company, no doubt?”

“Your Majesty, it is because of the English we are here, not as spies, but as officers of my Emperor;” replied Allard.

“Your Emperor?” asked the Maharaja.

“Oui...Your Majesty, my Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, who I had served with honour until our unfortunate defeat at Waterloo,” replied Allard.

Allard raised two regiments: one of dragoons and the other of lancers for the Maharaja. These were later used at the battle of Nowshera in 1823, in which the brave Nihang leader, Akali Phula Singh was killed. For the first time, the Maharaja’s undisciplined troops were now trained and drilled by two European officers, much to the dismay of the English authorities in Calcutta (present day Kolkata). By 1825, Allard was in control of three regiments consisting of nearly 2000 cavalry and almost 4000 artillerymen, much to the pleasure of the Maharaja. Such was Allard’s relationship with Maharaja Ranjit Singh that he arranged for Allard’s marriage the following year, according to the customs of Punjab, to a young princess aged fourteen. She was the extremely beautiful Bannu Pan Dei from Chamba, in the state of Himachal Pradesh.

Their first child, Marie Charlotte was born in 1826, but sadly died in her infancy aged five months and was interred in the garden of Allard’s residence at Lahore where her grave still exists.

In 1829, under the patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Allard raised the Fauj-I-Khas or the Royal Brigade, which comprised of infantry, cavalry and artillery units. The newly created Fauj-I-Khas was considered the elite unit of the Maharaja’s army and its uniform was inspired by that of the grand army of Allard’s former



General Jean Francois Allard

**Allard raised two regiments, one of dragoons and the other of lancers for the Maharaja, which were later used at the battle of Nowshera in 1823, in which the brave Nihang leader, Akali Phula Singh was killed**



master, Napoleon Bonaparte. The standard of the Fauj-I-Khas was chosen as the tricolours of the French flag, inscribed with the motto 'Waheguru ji ki Fateh' with each regiment bearing the imperial eagle.

Over the years, Allard now serving under the rank of general, won much praise from the Maharaja that he was now held in high esteem by the powerful Lahore ministers. Allard had participated in many campaigns for the Maharaja, including the battles of Nowshera, Mankera, Attock and Peshawar. In addition to his substantial salary of 30,000 rupees per annum, Allard was granted a huge *jagir* in Lahore and lived in comfort at his imposing residence in Anarkali. He was also responsible for sealing the southern section of the Anglo-Sikh frontier along the Sutlej river. A detachment of Fauj-I-Khas troops



The medal awarded by Maharajah Ranjit Singh to General Jean Francois Allard, designed in the style of Napoleon's *Légion d'honneur*.

comprising 400 cavalry and lancers, were permanently stationed along the Sutlej river and Allard was in direct command of this strategic position until his demise. When the Maharaja met Lord Bentinck at Ropar in 1831, the historic meeting was nearly called off due to the Maharaja's continuing suspicion of the English. Furthermore, the Maharaja was so ill-advised by his senior courtiers that it caused the situation to deteriorate further. So much so that he even contemplated abandoning the entire meeting. Allard, who formed part of the Lahore Durbar contingent, was summoned by the Maharaja to share his opinion of the matter. After a short deliberation, he was able to allay the Maharaja's fears and suspicions and the historic meeting was not aborted. The Ropar meeting was termed a 'fiasco' by many senior courtiers as the English had signed a secret treaty with the Nawabs of Sindh, a province which the Maharaja was keen to annex to the Sikh empire. Allard and his Italian comrade, General Ventura were both eager to seize Sindh for the Maharaja and they felt exacerbated with Lord Bentinck's duplicity at the Ropar meeting.

By 1834, General Allard yearned to return to France with his expanding family, which now consisted of two daughters and three sons including Achilles, a young boy from Multan, whom General Allard had adopted in 1829. He had been absent from home for nearly fifteen years and having received a letter from his brother Benjamin, that his father was ill, he pleaded his case to the Maharaja for formal leave to return to France. The Maharaja listened carefully trying to find a moment to respond to his loyal general.

"Have I not served you with such loyalty for over ten years, Your Majesty?"

"Indeed you have my friend, indeed you have," concurred the Maharaja.

"As you are aware, my brother Benjamin visited me, and informed that my father is seriously ill and there are many legalities requiring my attention back in France, Your Majesty?"

"Legalities?"

"Yes, then there is my family."

"Your family? What about them? Are they not happy here and do you intend to return permanently to France?" asked the Maharaja

"No, on a temporary basis, Your Majesty."

It was true that when General Allard wanted to return to France, this was not an easy task. The Maharaja was discontented and even put up a long resistance to prevent his favourite general from leaving Lahore. The Maharaja had a profound understanding with General Allard, which over the years had cemented into an alliance of trust and true friendship. It was a tearful departure for both Allard and the Maharaja.

"In that case, at least leave your children with me, then I will be sure you will come back for them," said the Maharaja.

"But it is for my children I go to France, because there, they will be brought up by our customs, beliefs and religion, Your Majesty,"

It is true that the affection the Maharaja held for General Allard was mutual, and this understanding was indeed rare. In fact, some senior ministers tried to dissuade the Maharaja from allowing General Allard to leave but after hearing Allard's plea, the Maharaja took a



few deep breaths before replying with a heavy heart.

“Since you talk about religion, I cannot oppose your desire of returning. It is a matter of one’s conscience to pursue the religion that suits him,” replied a poignant Maharaja.

“Does that mean...?”

“Yes, you are free to leave my friend, and I even had you marry a charming princess from the Punjab hills,” replied the Maharaja.

Accompanied by his family, General Allard departed for France via Calcutta, where his daughter Felicie Marie was born, and arrived in the port of Bordeaux in July 1834, after seventeen years of absence. On his

return, General Allard dealt with his personal affairs, and purchased a new home for his family, near the sea in St Tropez. In addition to resolving his nationality, which had been revoked during his absence owing to the fact that he had served in a foreign army, he had to legalise his marriage as per the customs and laws of France. While in Paris, General Allard met the French emperor Louis Philippe.

“Ah General Allard, it is an honour to have your presence at Tuileries palace. General, let me first congratulate you for honouring the name of France in such distant lands,” said Louis Philippe.

“Your Majesty, I have only fulfilled what is expected of me, my duty, for

I serve a great Maharaja,” replied Allard.

“Maharaja?”

“*Oui*, Maharaja, my king!”

“Ah Qui, but is it true I hear, that you have command of 30,000 trained soldiers for this Maharaja?” asked Louis Philippe.

“*Oui*, that is true, Your Majesty.”

General Allard was presented with a letter for the Maharaja by Louis Philippe requesting to deploy a French representative in Lahore. This rare document still exists in the National Archives in New Delhi. This post was to be held by General Allard much to the resentment of the English authorities in Calcutta,

An artist's impression of  
Generals' Allard & Ventura  
with Maharaja Ranjit Singh



who vigorously protested against the establishment of a French consul in Lahore. Back in Punjab, the Maharaja had suffered a minor stroke and had been bedridden for some time. On hearing the news of the Maharaja's deteriorating health, General Allard with a somber look turned to his wife, Bannu Pan Dei and stared into her weary eyes.

"I hear my Maharaja is very ill, Bannu. I promised him I would return once you were safely settled with the family. I will not dishonour the Maharaja's name, besides he has been so kind to us."

"But I need you here with me, my lord," replied a poignant Bannu.

"And my Maharaja needs me there!

I will not bear his humiliation by his ministers," replied Allard.

On General Allard's arrival in Lahore in the spring of 1837, the Maharaja was seriously unwell and had been bedridden for several days as a sense of gloom prevailed over Lahore. Many of the ministers including Raja Dhyan Singh and Fakir Azizuddin were deeply concerned at the Maharaja's deteriorating health, who was constantly under the watch of another Frenchman, Doctor Benet. It was true to say that many had suspected the end was near, and senior members of the royal family had all gathered at the palace.

"Fakir sahib, I agree. Let His Majesty recover, I am in no rush to ascend the throne, for the Maharaja is in need of a miracle," the heir-apparent, Prince Kharak Singh remarked.

"Have faith in Allah, Your Highness," replied Fakir Azizuddin.

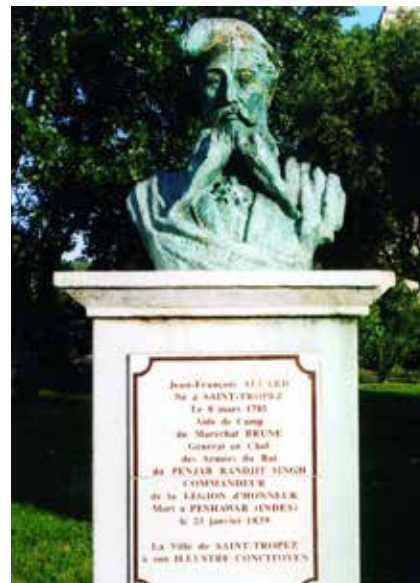
It is said that as the ministers all gathered around the ailing Maharaja's bedside, there was some commotion outside the chamber as everyone stared at each other. Suddenly, one of the royal attendants rushed inside and announced to everyone with immense excitement of General Allard's arrival out in the courtyard.

"Raja sahib, he has arrived, he has arrived!"

"Who?" asked Raja Dhyan Singh.

"Allard, General Allard sahib," replied the ecstatic attendant.

Everyone's eyes had lit up on hearing Allard's name, most surprisingly, the Maharaja who slowly drew his eyes open much to everyone's astonishment. Then the Maharaja threw his quilt to one side and with the aid of a few attendants walked towards the



General Allard's statue in St Tropez

open courtyard, much against Doctor Benet's advice. Followed by his ministers, the Maharaja continued walking until his weary eyes caught the sight of General Allard's presence in the distance. The Maharaja found the strength to walk towards the general, who was holding several items under his arm. Both approached each other, the ailing Maharaja filled with tears and emotion, put his hand on Allard's shoulder.

"I knew you would return my friend," said the Maharaja.

"It was my duty to return, Your Majesty. How could I renege my vow?" replied Allard.

"There was never any doubt in my mind of you dishonouring your word, my friend."

"I heard you were unwell, Your Majesty!"

"Your presence has already cured me. Look, I stand to welcome you!"

Despite the Maharaja's health, he was ecstatic as were the ministers at Allard's return to Lahore. Allard displayed several items to the Maharaja, which he had brought as gifts from France, with much

fanfare. These included pistols, breastplates and the prized letter from King Louis Philippe. Allard was eager to share the contents of the letter which he held in his hand.

“Your Majesty, I have the honour to convey greetings sent by the French Emperor, Louis Philippe. He has also sent a number of gifts to seal the bond of friendship between your kingdom and the nation of France.”

“Such fine largesse from your sovereign, my friend,” replied the Maharaja with a broad smile.

“Your Majesty, I have here a letter for you from the French sovereign, who has designated me as ‘Agent of Lahore to France’. This will establish diplomatic ties between your kingdom and France.”

“My friend, you have certainly excelled in your duties. Not only have you brought gifts from the French sovereign, but you have managed to secure an alliance between France and the Punjab!”

“Only doing my duty, Your Majesty,” said Allard shrugging his shoulders.

After the official ceremonies were over, General Allard was requested by the Maharaja to join General Hari Singh Nalwa in Peshawar, once his grandson, Nau Nihal Singh’s wedding was over. The Maharaja had specially requested Allard to parade the Fauj-I-Khas before the foreign dignitaries, especially the English, during the wedding festivities in Amritsar. Allard’s presence in the Peshawar valley was primarily to display a force of strength to the Afghans along the porous Afghan-Punjab frontier, as they were making a nuisance in the region. However, after Hari Singh Nalwa’s martyrdom at the battle of Jamrud, Maharaja Ranjit Singh appointed the ferocious Italian General Paolo Martino Avitabile as

the civilian governor of Peshawar and General Allard as the military governor. He was joined by another Frenchman in Peshawar, General Claude Auguste Court, an artillery expert from Marseille and both took up residence at Ali Mardan Bagh.

General Allard served the Maharaja throughout his lifetime and passed away on 23 January 1839, merely six months prior to the Maharaja’s death. When Allard’s body arrived at Lahore’s outskirts, his coffin was accompanied by an escort of the Fauj-I-Khas, comprising cavalry and artillery units. Each time the coffin passed, shots were fired at each principal station as a mark of respect. Then the coffin slowly made its way to Allard’s sprawling residence at Anarkali where it lay in state. He was interred, as per his last wishes, in the mausoleum of his infant daughter Marie Charlotte, in the rear garden of his residence, where it still exists today amongst numerous encroachments.

General Allard was no ordinary officer at the Sikh court. He completely overhauled and modernised the Sikh army and remained Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s most trusted advisor and confidante throughout his distinguished career. Such was the life of General Allard who had been decorated with the French order of the ‘Chevalier de Legion d’Honneur’ for his various military campaigns, that his name struck the imagination and hearts of the people not just in Punjab, but in India and France.

*Quotes abstracted from the novel ‘The Sun Rises in the East’ by Bobby Singh Bansal, courtesy of Michael Terence Publishing, London, 2021.*



*Bobby Singh with Henri Allard (Descendant of Gen. Allard).*



*Bobby Singh Bansal is an award-winning author, historian & documentary filmmaker based in London. A passionate advocate of promoting Sikh heritage and culture on a global scale and has been recognised with the conservation and restoration of numerous historical monuments especially in Pakistan.*

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# A PORTRAIT OF COURAGE: THE SIKH REGIMENT IN FRANCE AND

Pushpindar Singh



# FLANDERS: 1914-15

*Forest fighting: British troops clearing the woods east of Ypres*



The first troops to land in France were, in fact, the XV (Ludhiana) Sikhs, part of the 8<sup>th</sup> (Jullundur) Brigade, themselves part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> (Lahore) Division, whose other battalions were the 47<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, 59<sup>th</sup> Scinde Rifles (Frontier Force) and 1<sup>st</sup> Manchesters.

They were on the convoy which had reached Marseilles on 26 September 1914, the Indian Corps disembarking the same day and proceeding to camp. This was the first time that Indian troops had stepped ashore on the European continent, and they were greeted by the local population with great cheers and enthusiasm.

As reported in *The Times*, "the arrival of the Indian Corps at Marseilles was a landmark in history. No episode in this extraordinary war was more remarkable or, for Britons, more inspiring than the presence of Indian troops on the Continent of Europe. For India, the event was, if possible, of even greater significance. The march of her sons through the streets of Marseilles was kind of initiation. A phantom had been laid that shadowed her prestige. Invisible barriers had been broken down. New vistas of honour were opened out before her. Throughout the forenoon while the

troops were landing, excitement had been steadily rising in the city, and the dispatching of the British and Indian soldiers through the streets in the afternoon *en route* to their camps was a signal for the whole of Marseilles to turn out *en fete* – gaily-dressed streets were packed with a seething mass of humanity.

First came a detachment of Sikhs, for the greater part head and shoulders above the spectators. They received the plaudits of the crowd with the imperturbable smiling composure so typical of their race. The police guarding the road were swept aside, the ranks were rushed, men and women shook the Sikhs by the hand, and young girls showered flowers upon them, pinning roses in their tunics and in their turbans. Tricolours were distributed with prodigal favour, old ladies with bitter memories of 1870 pressed forward the better to admire these handsome, bearded men, and it would be difficult to conjure up anything more touching than the sight of those frail women patting the bronzed giants on the back and calling down blessings on their heads.

At Marseilles, the Indian troops were re-equipped with new high-velocity rifles and given some practical firing practice, albeit briefly. Entraining on 30 September, the Jullundur Brigade arrived at Orleans two days later, proceeding to camp where they were organised in accordance with the new platoon establishment and the 1914 drill was adopted.

The Lahore Division camped at the Champs de Cercettes, about 6 miles from Orleans till 18 October, the period being utilised in completing transport detail, getting reserve ammunition, warm clothing etc., but many difficulties were encountered as supplies were short.



*Iconic painting of 47th Sikhs capturing German trenches at Neuve Chapelle.*

On that very wet day, the Division entrained for Argues and Blendercqnes, where they arrived on 20<sup>th</sup> October, the Indian troops getting their first experience of billets. The Jullundur Brigade arrived at Witzernnes, going into billets near the GHQ at St. Omer and on the following day proceeded on a long march to Meteren, now truly experiencing field conditions, establishing outposts in heavy rain with no rations issued till the late evening. Several aircraft were

observed in the sky, the Brigade's heavy baggage wagons had yet to arrive and heavy firing was heard from the direction of Lille.

The Lahore Division marched to the area around Wallon Cappel and Lynde on 21 October, the very day the German Army commenced a very strong offensive along the whole line from La Bassee in the south to Menin in the north, the BEF being pinned to the defensive. The position was critical, for the Allies were outnumbered and

outgunned by the German Army, making desperate attempts to break through but these were frustrated by the dogged fighting ability, indomitable courage and tenacity of the allied officers and men.

At 0450 hours on the 23rd, orders were received for the Lahore Division to march at once to Estaires.

La Bassee was held by the Germans under the Crown Prince of Bavaria as also the La Bassee - Lille canal and country immediately to the south





and east. The British II Corps had been facing the onslaught for 10 days and after continuous fighting, were wilting under the strain. Fortunately, the Lahore Division under Lt General Watkis had arrived, albeit with just the Jullundur Brigade. The Jullundur Brigade were at once utilised on the left of the II Corps, taking over the ground held by Cavalry who were then moved north.

The Commander-in-Chief General Sir John French was in the market square at Estaires when the 15<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, 34<sup>th</sup> Sikh Pioneers and 59<sup>th</sup> Scinde Rifles (FF) of the Jullundur Brigade marched past him in column of route, which continued down the La Bassee Road to Rouge Croix where they went into billets. The Sikh Company of the 59<sup>th</sup> took up an outpost line beyond Rouge Croix and enemy shelling was now first encountered, many British wounded being

passed and the road crowded with French refugees streaming back from the front. The 1st Manchesters and 47<sup>th</sup> Sikhs were relieved by the 59<sup>th</sup> Frontier Force and 15<sup>th</sup> Sikhs at dawn on 24<sup>th</sup> October and dug themselves in at once, under enemy shelling. At dusk that day the 59<sup>th</sup> moved forward to take over the line occupied by French Cavalry piquets. A new line of trenches was dug and it is interesting to record that this line established by the 59<sup>th</sup>, was to remain virtually unchanged in



Situation map La Bassée Armentières between 19 October to 2 November 1914

British and Allied possession till it was lost in 1918, when held by a Portuguese Division.

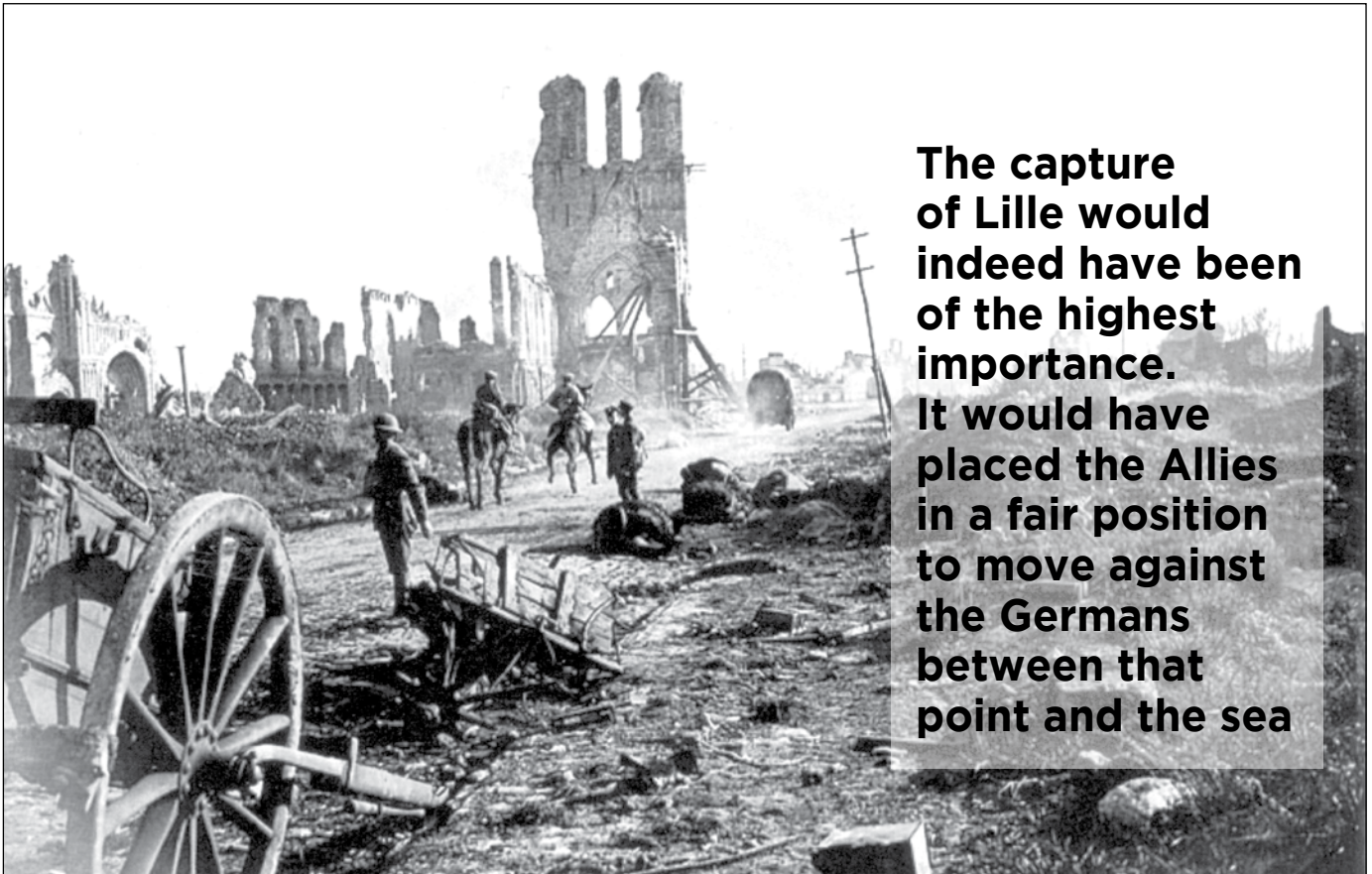
The rushing in of Indian troops into battle without proper plans or equipment was an indication of the desperation of the situation but could hardly be considered an auspicious beginning, with troops split up and pushed in piecemeal by battalions, by half battalions and even companies, in totally strange environment, completely isolated from their own Commanders and Brigades, in appalling weather conditions and facing terrible fire and attack from superior odds.

For over a week, till the 1st November, the three battalions were fated to undergo a harassing experience, outnumbered and outgunned, without the bombs, grenades and other munitions freely used by the enemy. The 15<sup>th</sup> Sikhs were on the right and in touch with the Gordon Highlanders (8th Brigade). The 59<sup>th</sup> Scinde Rifles (FF) carried on the line to the left where one company of the 34<sup>th</sup> Sikh Pioneers took over an advanced post from the French and linked up

with the 59<sup>th</sup>. This detachment was attacked within an hour of their relieving the French and engaged in severe fighting but the defence was ably carried out till the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> October by Subedars Sher Singh and Natha Singh after the British officers Captain Bailey and Lt. Browne had been wounded.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, the Germans took up strong entrenched positions opposite the Jullundur Brigade and a heavy attack developed against the 59<sup>th</sup> centre, which was reinforced by the 15<sup>th</sup> Sikhs. A vigorous fire fight ensued but after an hour, the Germans were beaten back to their trenches all along the line. On the 28<sup>th</sup>, two more attacks were launched but were beaten off and a night attack repulsed on the following night.

In spite of heavy artillery bombardment against the 59<sup>th</sup>, 34<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, the line had been held and, in fact, reinforced by two Companies of the 47<sup>th</sup> Sikhs, which were a very welcome addition as the situation was rapidly becoming critical.



**The capture of Lille would indeed have been of the highest importance. It would have placed the Allies in a fair position to move against the Germans between that point and the sea**

*Remnants of the Cloth Hall in Ypres after a prolonged artillery bombardment.*

The weather was extremely trying, very wet and cold and the Jullundur Brigade had been fighting without sufficient food and with little or no sleep for two days, men soaked to the skin. Snipers were worrying the Brigade and so patrols from the 15th Sikhs carried out house-to-house search. Further attacks were repulsed with the aid of machine guns and artillery. On the 27th evening, the 15th Lancers were sent up as reinforcement, representing absolutely the last available reserves. Fortunately, the Germans had taken a severe mauling too and there were

no further attacks. On 1<sup>st</sup> November, the Battalion were relieved by the other units, one of which, the 47th Sikhs, had meanwhile been heavily engaged in the attack on Neuve Chapelle and covered themselves with glory. Messages poured into

the Jullundur Brigade from Lord Kitchener, Sir John French, GOC II Corps and the GOC Lahore Division congratulating the troops "for the splendid courage and endurance in battle... and the fighting prowess they have shown...giving the enemy a severe blow, successfully frustrating all their efforts".

On the 26th October, the Germans had managed to gain a footing after a violent struggle on the north-east side of Neuve Chapelle, having advanced under cover of the Bois du Biez woods which were slightly to the east.

During the 27th, desperate hand-to-hand fighting took place for possession of the village and in spite of vigorous counter attacks by the 7th and 9th Brigades of the 3rd British Infantry Division, the Germans still clung to their hold. Heavy German reinforcements

were brought up and British troops, fighting with greatest valour, were forced back and the entire village taken by the Germans.

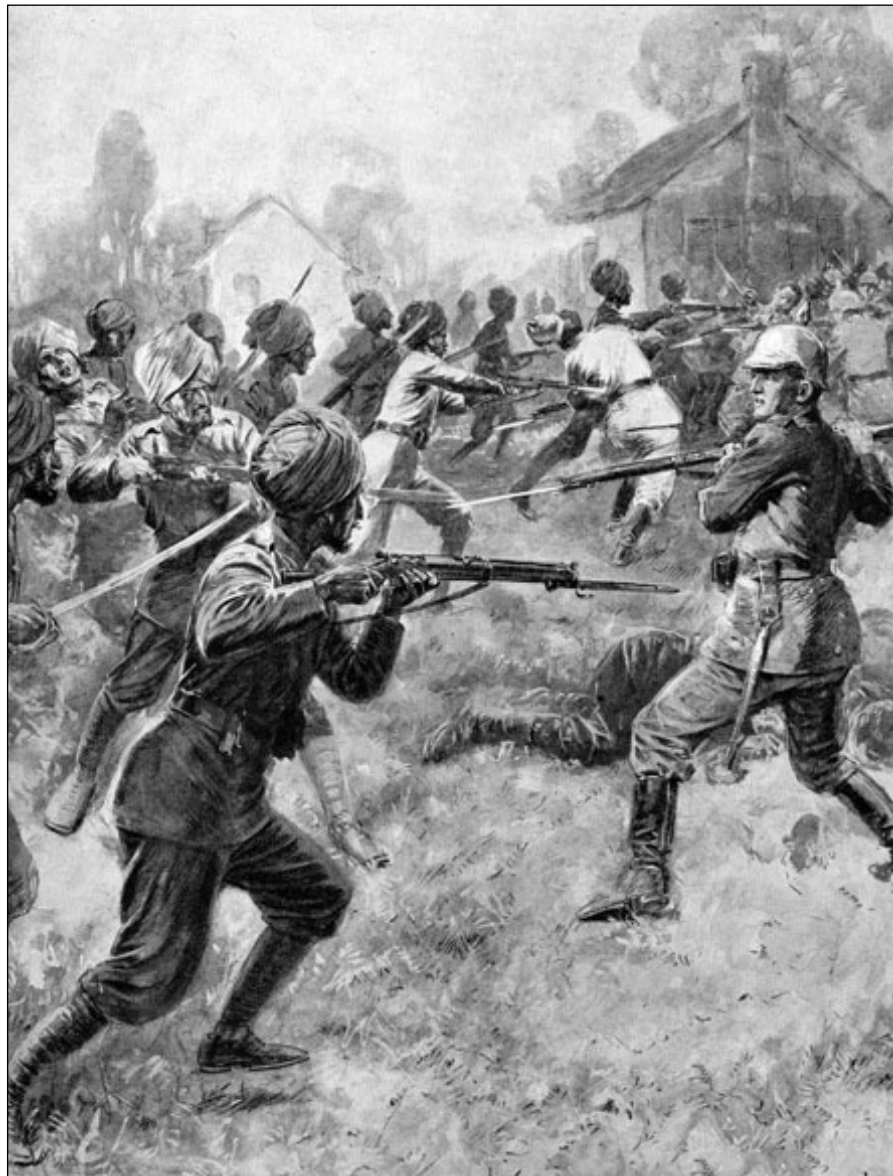
### **Neuve Chappelle**

The German salients created a dangerous situation and it was imperative to rectify this without delay. At 1700 hours on the 27th, the Germans broke through the south of Neuve Chapelle forcing the West Kents, Wiltshires and South Lancshires to retire. The danger of a gap being created between the 3rd and 5th Divisions could seriously affect the entire position of II Corps. The 9th Bhopals were ordered at once to counter attack in the direction of Pont Logy in order to outflank the Germans, now advancing west of Neuve Chapelle. Confused fighting took place in the hamlet south of Neuve Chapelle and during the chaotic fighting, many

casualties were suffered. By now, the two Companies of 47th Sikhs and Nos. 20 and 21 Companies Sappers and Miners, under Major SR Davidson, had moved into line on the left of the Bhopals but considerable gaps remained. Frequent attacks were made throughout the night by the Germans but were repulsed even while heavy machine gun fire, with searchlights from Neuve Chapelle, were sweeping the front and trenches all night.

A brief description of the village of Neuve Chapelle and the area immediately around it would be pertinent. It lies in a flat, marshy, dyke chequered country, but close behind it to the east the ground begins to rise gently towards a ridge, which comes westward in two spurs. At the end of one spur is the village of Aubers, at the end of the other is the village of Illies both places were within the German lines. Beyond the junction of the spurs the ridge runs away north-east, from Fournes to a point two miles south-west of Lille and along this ridge is the road to Lille, to Roubaix and to Tourcoing, three of France's chief manufacturing towns. Possession of the ridge was so important a step towards the possession of Lille that its occupation was regarded as almost implying the capture of that town. Neuve Chapelle formed the gateway which gave access to this ridge. The capture of Lille would indeed have been of the highest importance. It would have placed the Allies in a fair position to move against the Germans between that point and the sea. For this, the capture of Neuve Chapelle was a necessary preliminary.

The village, although it occupied a considerable area, was of a straggling character; the population being quite small. A little river - the River Des Laves - ran behind it, to the south-east: and behind



*Indian troops (probably 47th Sikhs) depicted in the assault against Germans in Neuve Chapelle on 28 October 1914. (Artist : Ernest Prater c.1914, The Graphic, 12 December, 1914)*

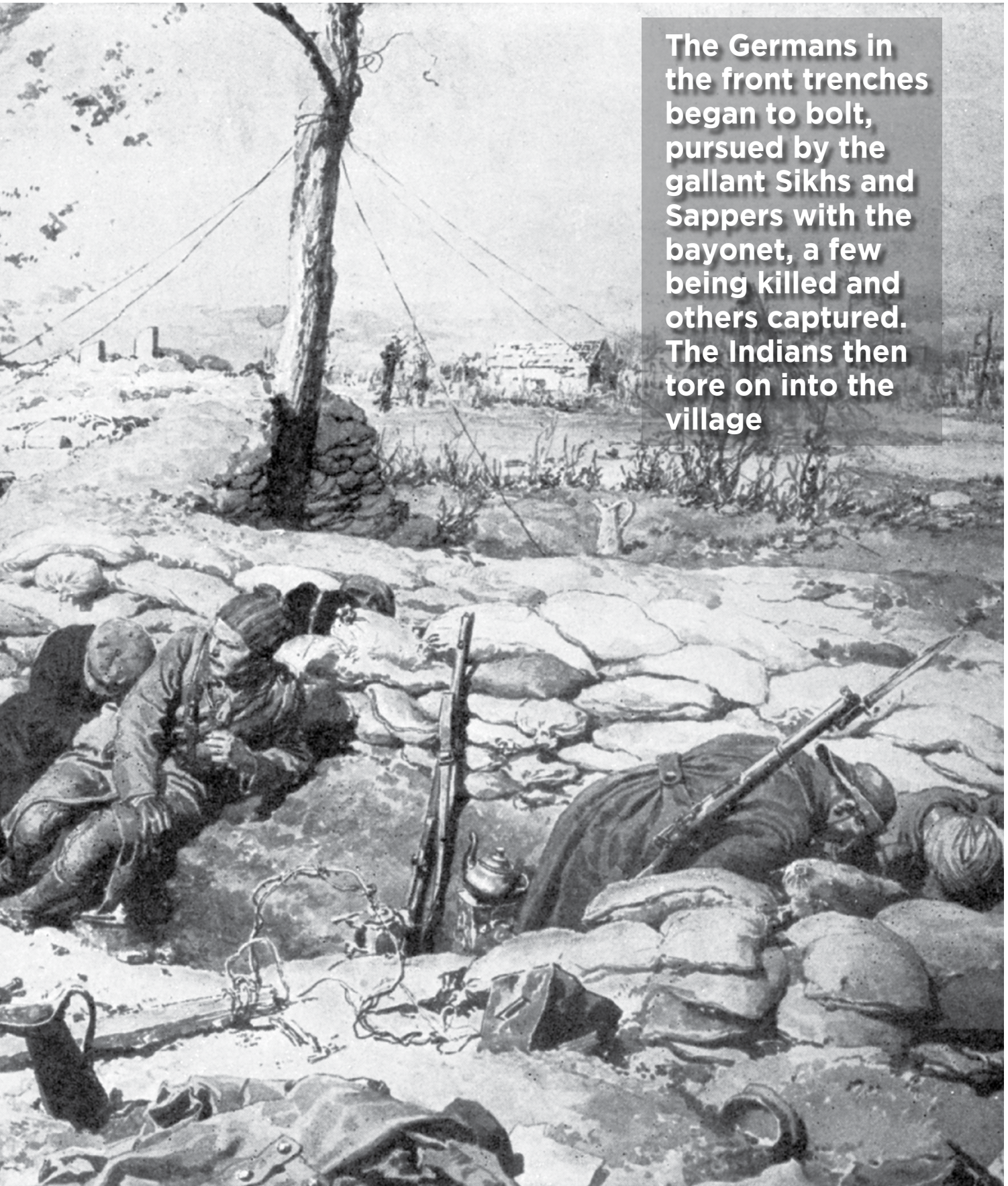
the river, a good half mile from the village, was a wood, the Bois du Biez. On the west, almost at right angles to the river, the village was skirted by the main road from Estaires to La Bassee. At the north of the village was a triangle of roads, where were a few big houses, with walls, gardens, orchards. Here the Germans had established a strong post, which flanked the approaches to the village from that side. Their trenches at this point were only about 100 yards from those of the Allies. In other parts of the line,

however, the distance was much greater, and therefore a much larger space of open ground had to be covered by the attacking forces before they could reach the enemy's lines.

Behind this area the Germans had established a post with machine guns at a bridge over the river, and one a little further up at the Pietre mill. Lower down the river, at the junction of a road into the village with the main La Bassee road, they were fortified in a group of ruined buildings known as 'Port Arthur',



*In the British trenches at Neuve Chapelle*



**The Germans in the front trenches began to bolt, pursued by the gallant Sikhs and Sappers with the bayonet, a few being killed and others captured. The Indians then tore on into the village**

whence a great network of trenches extended north-westward to the Pietre mill.

The Germans were also established in Bois du Biez, and in shattered houses on its fringe. They were well and strongly placed, though their forces just here were not large. For the German method at that time was to man their front trenches thinly, and keep large reserves in readiness to go where wanted, by means of their excellent lines of communication.

The British line now ran in a curve around the village, with the German's closest at about one hundred yards distant. It was held from right to left by the 1st Royal West Kents, 21st Company S&M, two Companies of the 47th Sikhs, 20th Company S&M, the 4th Royal Fusiliers and 1st Lincolnshire.

Sir John French, the C-in-C had visited II Corps headquarters and directed it to maintain and strengthen its position but to seize every opportunity for vigorous local offensive. The condition of II Corps, owing to the heavy losses and the fatigue of every battalion of both 3rd and 5th Divisions was such that the C-in-C met Generals Smith—Dorrien and Willcocks at Merville and worked out arrangements for the relief of II Corps by the Indian Companies.

The operation orders for 28th October, issued by General Smith—Dorrien at 2300 hours on 27th October directed that, whilst other troops remained on the defensive, the 3rd Division should counter attack the Germans at Neuve Chapelle. The Indian troops west of Neuve Chapelle were placed under command of the Division whose 7th Brigade, the 14th Brigade of the 5th Division and the 2nd Cavalry Brigade were tasked to support some units of the 6th Division; the

French chasseurs and cyclists of General Conneau's Corps and the Royal Scots were also detailed to support the attack. However, in the event most of the troops were too exhausted by the previous day's fighting to co-operate, except by fire.

### **Gallantry of the 47th**

Fog and mist prevented an early advance and it was not until 11.00 am, that a short general bombardment of the positions was begun by four British and nine French batteries. At 11.15 a.m. the artillery lengthened five hundred yards and the Infantry should have moved forward. However, no properly combined movement resulted between the units of the three different nationalities involved and the attack on Neuve Chapelle was carried out only by four companies – two of the 47th Sikhs, with the 20th and 21st Companies of the Sappers and Miners on either side of them – and with the greatest of gallantry. Their right was to have been protected by the 9th Bhopals but as the unit advanced, it came under very heavy fire and halted, and only continued to fire from a trench they had reached. The Sikhs and Sappers went on. Covering the seven hundred yards of open ground between them and Neuve Chapelle by rushes alternating with fire, as if on a training ground, the four companies reached the ruins of the village. Casualties were numerous but the excellence of their fire control saved much heavier loss. The Indians drove out the Germans (battalions of the 16th Bavarian Regiment) by close hand-to-hand fighting.

"When our men were about 100 yards from the outskirts of the village, the Germans in the front trenches began to bolt, pursued by the gallant Sikhs and Sappers with the bayonet, a few being killed

and others captured. The Indians then tore on into the village. Sikhs and Sappers mixed together, and worked in parties up the streets, under a furious fire from the roofs of buildings.

By degrees, the houses were cleared after desperate hand-to-hand fighting in which a man of the 47th is reported to have captured 3 Germans out of 8, having previously killed the other 5. From another house, the 47th recovered a wounded British soldier and 2 wounded Germans. The latter were searched, and one of them lifted his voice and wept bitterly, evidently thinking that our men were feeling for a soft place in which to insert a bayonet, until comforted by a stalwart Sikh who patted him kindly with the words 'Be not afraid'".

On reaching the cross roads in the centre of the village, the troops came under frightful machine gun fire. Captain McCleverty, always in advance, cheering on his men just as he had cheered on the regimental hockey team, dashed across the roads, the rest following close on his heels. but he was shot dead at a corner by a German concealed only a few yards away. A PM of the Sappers soon stalked the German and killed him on the spot. Losses were rapidly becoming serious from enemy rifle fire in the houses and several machine guns posted out-side Neuve Chapelle which swept the main street. The Indian troops had even penetrated to the eastern and northern borders where they were met by heavy shell and machine gun fire and counter-attack after counter-attack was launched against them.

"The blood of our men was up and nothing could stop them. After a prolonged and ferocious struggle, the whole of the main street was captured".

The Germans held on like a vice and each house formed a small fortress which had to be stormed before further advance could be made. The Sappers & Miners were also taking terrible losses, especially their officers, charging with impetuous valour ahead of the men.

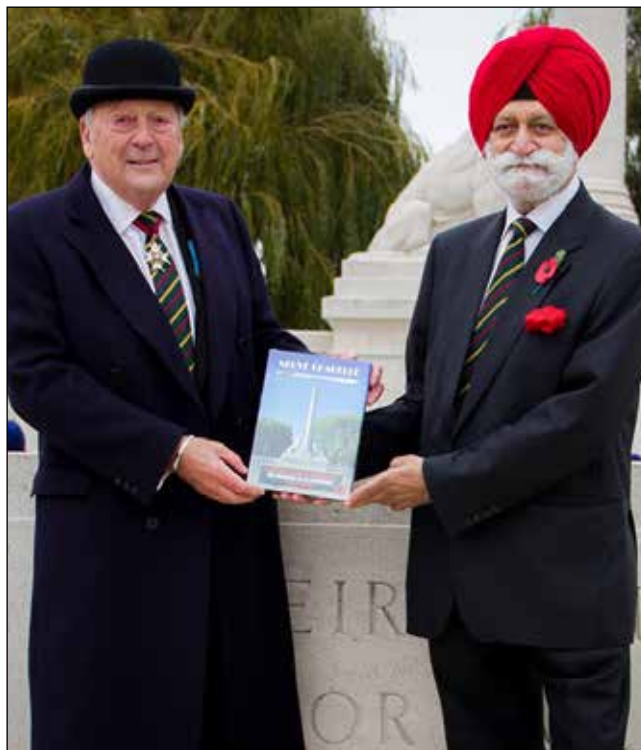
The fighting went on, counter-attack following counter-attack, the German's using the bodies of their own dead as cover. Major SR Davidson of the 47th Sikhs was collecting his men for a final charge when the Germans came on in overpowering numbers from the north and east and at the same moment, the machine gun fire re-doubled its fury down the main street. Without immediate reinforcements, the position of the 47th was now quite untenable as their losses had been very heavy. Thus Major Davidson was compelled to give up all he had won at such fearful cost, and retire, the line lying over some 500 yards of open ground, exposed to a tornado of shell and machine gun fire and the bodies of the gallant Indians soon lay thick on the ground. Eventually, the remains of the two Companies of the 47th got back to comparative safety, but only 68 out of the gallant 289 actually collected on the La Bassee road. The troops were suffering terribly from want of water and were already dead beat but the Germans were counter-attacking all along the front and every man was required. Major Davidson was ordered to collect at Rouge Croix as many of the 47th Sikhs as were left with a view to holding the cross roads, which were almost certain to be attacked.

"He asked his men whether they could do it, exhausted as they were, and to his delight, found that they dearly resented such a question. Off they marched again towards Rouge Croix, but were met by orders to go into billets".

Such was the spirit of the Indian Corps and it is on record that during the retreat from the village, under a fire described as hellish, the men were laughing and joking with each other and Captain Brown, afterwards killed at Neuve Chapelle, stood up at the halts to fire, his example being followed by many of the men. Major Davidson throughout this confused and ding-dong fighting shown the highest qualities of bravery and leadership and was awarded a brevet Lt. Colonelcy in recognition of his services.

In the end, the 20th Sappers & Miners were left with just 20 men in the centre of Neuve Chapelle. Lt. Kerr, leading some reinforcements, was wounded but Sapper Dalip Singh stood over him and kept up rapid fire to deter several parties of Germans from advancing, incredibly charging at a party of 20 Germans who then turned and fled. He then carried his officer back to safety. Another officer, Lt. Nosworthy displayed an incredible example of bravery combined with an irrepressible love for fighting!

As recorded in official war history "The attack was magnificently carried out and was within an ace of success. It is probable that, had reinforcements been available, the 47th and Sappers would have held the village which they took with such superb elan and at such a heavy cost".



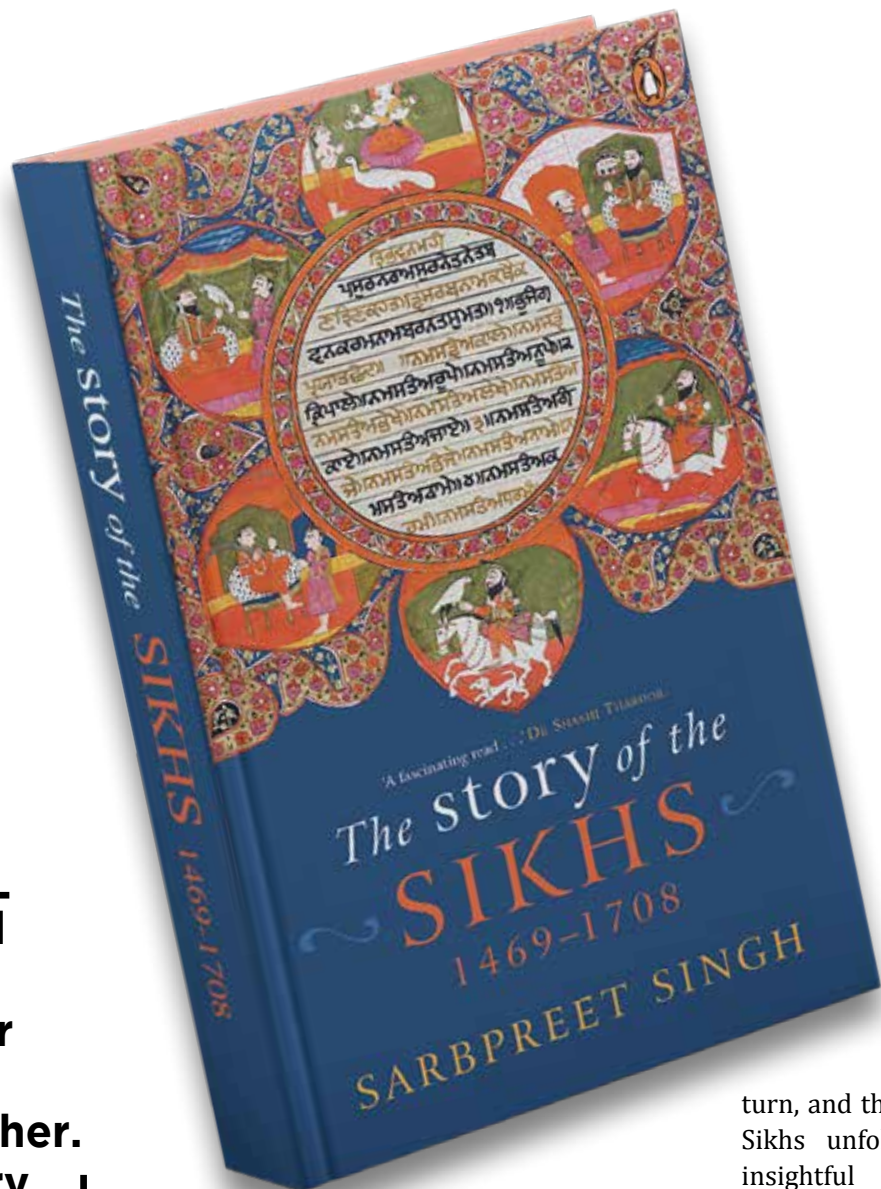
*Maj Gen Peter Davies, President of the Jullundur Brigade Association, with Pushpindar Singh at the release of the book commemorating the battle at Neuve Chapelle.*

The magnificent conduct of the Indian troops was recorded for posterity by Field Marshal Sir John French who, in his dispatch dated 20th November 1914, said "On the 28th October 1914, especially the 47th Sikhs and the 20th and 21st Companies of the Sappers & Miners, distinguished themselves by their gallant conduct in the attack on Neuve Chapelle, losing heavily in officers and men".

As Sir James Willcocks later wrote, "The 47th Sikhs were raised in 1901 and have no battle honours on their colours. Throughout its service in France, this magnificent Regiment never failed to answer all calls. Its reputation would be secure and its right to fight shoulder to shoulder with the best British troops would be established, if based only on the record of Neuve Chapelle, but this action was only one of many in which the 47th distinguished themselves".

# BOOK REVIEW: THE STORY OF THE SIKHS

Interview by: Artika Aurora Bakshi



All exiles end up trying to seek out their roots at one point or another. As did I. Every journey, however, is unique and every path is different

**Y**ou don't need to be a Sikh to dive into Sarbpreet Singh's, *The Story of the Sikhs*. The reason I have used the word 'dive' is that that's what one does as the pages

turn, and the 'story' of the Sikhs unfolds. A deeply insightful narration, layered with the author's own reflections and understanding, the book is a journey of discovery, resplendent with the love the author has for words and for Sikhism, the faith he wears with pride.



Sarbpreet Singh is not the first writer to delve into Sikh history, in his case, 'story', and neither will he be the last, which is heartening in itself, because it's through discussion, debate, and expression that an understanding of History can be achieved. With understanding comes respect, and with respect comes equanimity, leading to a peaceful world, 'ONE WORLD', as envisioned by Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism.

*The Story of the Sikhs*, extensively quotes from published works of the scribes from the times of yore, like Senapati, Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Nand Lal, and Allah Yar Khan Jogi, as well as modern scholars, such as Bhai Vir Singh, Piara Singh Padam, and Gyani Gyan Singh, who like Sarbpreet Singh, have made their own journeys to absorb and analyse the words of the gurus and understand the socio-political fabric of the region during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, leading to the birth of the world's youngest religion. Sikhs are a minority, but their contributions to the world are enormous, stemming from the beliefs and tenets that have flowed down generations.

Even though I am a Sikh, and that too, a proud one, my reasons for choosing to pick up this book were purely out of interest and curiosity, to understand how this book was different from so many others that already exist. As mentioned earlier, the more there are, the more awareness gets created, leading to a better understanding of faiths and cultures which may not be our own.

*The Story of the Sikhs*, as narrative nonfiction, is an extensive essay on the gurus, their lives, the influences that shaped them, their words, and the legacy that they have left behind, covering the period between 1469 to 1708.

Centuries of reforms, political pressures, and personal interpretations have shaped Sikhism. But Sarbpreet's book takes us back to the basics, those that, even though shaped by the influences of the period, hold true even today. 2020 has been tumultuous, and 2021 too has been erratic. As the world traverses through uncertainty, the ethos of Guru Nanak and his successors has been in the spotlight. The Sikhs, with their tenets of *Naam Japna*, *Vand Chakna*, and *Kirt Karni*, have been the first relief providers, whether it was in New Zealand, where gurdwaras provided meals and groceries during the lockdown, or oxygen tanks in Delhi during the worst COVID wave.

### **Who are the Sikhs? What drives them?**

Television hosts and newspaper columnists have taken out time to find answers to these two questions, and make their audiences aware. And for more, there is always a plethora of information on the net, books on Sikhism, and the latest from Sarbpreet Singh, *The Story of the Sikhs!*

From the backwaters of Sikkim, the young Sarbpreet Singh moved to the shores of America, wondering what his identity was and where he belonged. He was solidly Sikh, but only because he was born in a staunchly conservative Sikh family.

As it goes, like many others in the diaspora, he embraced his identity, however, his journey was unique.

"All exiles end up trying to seek out their roots at one point or another. As did I. Every journey, however, is unique and every path is different. Some find the race of community. Others are inspired by mentors and role models into whose orbits serendipity delivers

them. It turns out that I was inspired by the unwitting collusion of an Englishman, an Irishman, and a Scotsman, whose paths I am pretty sure never crossed," writes Sarbpreet Singh.

He met Vic Briggs, in his new avatar as Vikram Singh Khalsa, in California, a year after moving to the United States. Vic, a rock musician, who has embraced Sikhism, wearing his new faith pride, inspired Sarbpreet to understand his own faith, leading him to discover the works of Joseph Davey Cunningham and Max Arthur Macauliffe.

His personal journey into the history of his faith led him to connect with Gurbani, Gurmukhi, and Gurmat Sangeet and further reach out to young people keen on understanding Sikhi. There is a treasure trove of literature that is available, but most of it is in Punjabi, Braj Bhasha, and Persian.

"All this literature, alas, is mostly lost to the English-speaking world. *The Story of the Sikhs* presents excerpts from all of these works, and several others, in translation, in an attempt to convey at least a whiff of their magnificence to the reader," writes Singh, as he introduces the reader to his painstakingly well-researched offering of love.

The uniqueness of the translations in the book is that Sarbpreet Singh has translated most of the Gurbani sections himself, with an emphasis on the spirit rather than the letters.

*The Story of The Sikhs* was originally conceived as a podcast, hence the personal connection between the author and the reader. "I started a journey that was to enrich my life immensely. I am hoping that this work will serve as an entry point for other seekers who might be in the early stages of their own journeys," hopes Sarbpreet Singh.

## Meet Sarbpreet Singh...

### 1. How many years of research have gone into this book?

The book, in a certain sense, has been more than thirty years in the making, as it is really a distillation of what I learned and what inspired me on my journey as a Sikh. The 'formal' research, which was prompted by my eponymous podcast, which preceded the book by three and a half years, was probably spread over 4-5 years.

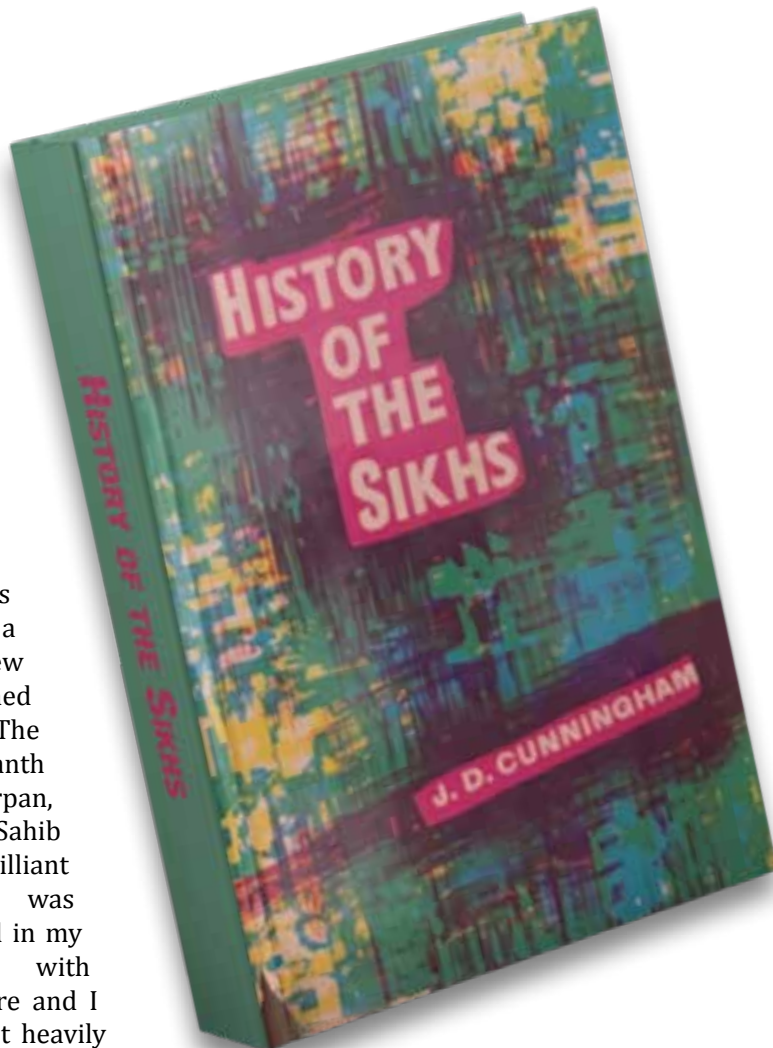
### 2. Other than the podcast, what else prompted this book, and how did your writing journey begin?

I have been teaching Sikh history to teenagers for a few decades now; it has always been challenging to engage their interest and find material that is engaging and accessible. Over the years, I have greatly enjoyed the work of William Dalrymple and Manu Pillai, both of whom have written deeply researched works of history that are a joy to read. I set out to write a series of books that approach the history of the Sikhs in an unabashedly personal manner, focusing on those aspects that spoke to me as a young man taking his first steps to embrace an identity that he neither comprehended nor appreciated. It was important for me to create a work that while deeply personal, was well researched and capable of engaging the interest of young readers in particular.

As someone who learned to read Gurmukhi only in his mid-20s, I was unable to access any writings that were not in English and was unable to engage with the Guru Granth Sahib without relying on translations. When I was finally able to read the writings of Bhai Vir Singh and engage with the work of Kavi Santokh Singh, who Bhai Vir

Singh quotes liberally, a whole new world opened up to me. The Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan, Professor Sahib Singh's brilliant exegesis, was instrumental in my engagement with Sikh scripture and I drew upon it heavily in my translations of the selections of the Guru Granth Sahib, that appear in the book. In my translations of material from the Guru Granth Sahib, The Dasam Granth, Kavi Santokh Singh's opus, The Gur Pratap Suraj Granth, the body of Gurbilas literature, and selections from the writings of Senapati and Bhai Nand Lal, I have attempted to capture a small sense of the spirit of the original, as opposed to translating to the letter. It is my fond hope that the translations will motivate at least a few readers to embrace these works in the original and experience the joy and wonder of their beauty as I did during my journey.

I have always been an avid reader and a lover of literature from my days in high school. Some of the short stories that were published



**The Story of the Sikhs presents excerpts from all of these works, and several others, in translation, in an attempt to convey at least a whiff of their magnificence to the reader**

in a collection of short fiction about the 1984 anti-Sikh violence titled *Night of the Restless Spirits*, were written decades ago, just as I was starting my career in the world of technology and business. I had occasionally written editorials that had appeared in US newspapers, but my first serious foray into writing was a column that I wrote for the web magazine SikhChic. I will always fondly remember the editor of SikhChic, Sardar T. Sher Singh as a terrific mentor who greatly encouraged me and served as both a sounding board and a cheerleader, every time I ventured into a new endeavor. Some pieces that appeared first on SikhChic formed the basis of *The Camel Merchant of Philadelphia*, a book about the very colorful characters who surrounded Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

The epiphany that truly sent me down the path of writing, like many things in life, was serendipitous. In the early nineties, I had written a poem called *Kultar's Mime*, that told the tale of four Sikh children who survived the 1984 Delhi massacre. In 2013, my daughter, Mehr Kaur, who was a freshman at Smith College at the time, studying theater, much against my sage advice, decided to turn the poem into a play. Starting with very modest expectations, hoping to present the play a few times in the US and Canada, we discovered that the work elicited a powerful response from audiences, both Sikh and non-Sikh. I dedicated the next two and a half years of my life to touring the play, taking the cast of young New York and Boston actors to six countries and performing it ninety times. We took the play twice to India and presented it in Delhi, Chandigarh, and Amritsar as well as all the other major metros. Our talk-backs after the play were emotional and cathartic, particularly because



Sarbpreet Singh

the audience at practically every performance included survivors or people who had been touched by the violence in some manner. When a young Sikh came up to me after our Birmingham, UK performance and said to me in Punjabi – ‘*Uncle Ji, I had no idea that our stories could be told in this manner*’, I knew that my path forward was clear.

### 3. What next?

I am working on *The Story of the Sikhs: 1708 – 1780*, volume two of the series, which begins with the stirring tale of Banda Singh Bahadur and charts the fortunes of the Sikhs in the eighteenth century, which to me was the crucible in which the character of the Panth was forged. The work focuses on the rise of the Sikhs as the Mughal empire was crumbling and emphasizes their struggles against the repressive Mughal governors of Lahore as well as Ahmad Shah Abdali.

I have completed a novel that is a fictionalized rendering of the life of Hazrat Shah Hussain or Madho Lal Hussain as he is popularly known. Of all the Punjabi Sufi poets, Shah Hussain is unequivocally my favorite and the novel at its heart has several of his kafis that are

intimately stitched into the fabric of the narrative.

I am working on a collection of short fiction that is set in the early Sikh diaspora in the US, charting the fortunes of Sikh pioneers who made their way to the US seeking better lives in the early 1900s and encountered racism, xenophobia and violence as they tried to survive and thrive in an unwelcoming land.

### 4. In your opinion, how far have Sikhs deviated from what the gurus had prescribed? What are the changes that you would like to see, especially with the awareness being created by your book and so many other debates and discussions in the Sikh world?

It is not for me to judge other Sikhs or anyone else for that matter. Suffice it to say, the lives of the Gurus and their actions, which form the backbone of my book, are beacons. We are fortunate to have a touchstone in their ideals and their lives and there is no reason for us Sikhs to be confused about the kind of lives we are expected to lead.

**It is not for me to judge other Sikhs or anyone else for that matter. Suffice it to say, the lives of the Gurus and their actions, which form the backbone of my book, are beacons.**



## Bhupinder Singh Anand

Pioneering the automotive industry since 1949

**Chairman**

**AMP Group**, Gurugram, Haryana (India)

**Native & Birth:** Karachi (undivided British India)

**Residence:** New Delhi (India)

*Surrounded by the most cherished drives and rides, the most luxurious ones, Sardar Bhupinder Singh Anand had had a long journey uptill here. He always had his eyes fixed; nothing deterred him. Inching towards his dream, he has helped several Indians give wheels to their dreams, even as he helps top automotive brands come out with most reliable speeds!*

### **“Not just a nation, it tore families apart”**

India-Pakistan partition had not just torn apart a country, but also families. Born in 1943 among four siblings, Bhupinder was only four when one of the most tragic events in history forced the Anand family to migrate from Karachi to Delhi. Dr. Rattan Singh Anand, an orthodontist and dental surgeon by profession, settling down wasn't easy for him, since his equipment was left behind in Karachi and procuring new equipment had become too expensive. However, his work as a social activist in Karachi came handy, which did bring him employment, though he wasn't satisfied. By 1969, he had bought a small piece of land to build a wooden kiosk and started Anand Motors, trading in automotive parts.

### **“Regardless of time, quality brings in fortune”**

The time post partition was tough, for almost everyone. Poverty and communal differences brought in social vices. When several were

growing ditching others, Dr. R. S. Anand made sure to stay a true Sikh, providing the top quality products with all his honesty. It wasn't too long when he procured a pucca shop in Gandhi motor market. He was honest; success was slow, but not completely elusive. Success eventually found him when he collaborated with the Indian Army to rebuild its vehicles and provide spare parts for army jeeps. His honest service and high-quality products made him famous across the northern India. Anand Motors soon came to be known as the best and highest-quality automotive products dealer in India.

In the meanwhile, Bhupinder and siblings were growing, watching their father toil to keep them well-fed. Bhupinder, completed his graduation from Delhi University Polytechnic and started working alongside his father in Anand Motors. Together in 1968, they established a manufacturing unit in Delhi for high-end automobile products meant for export as well as local markets. In due course, they collaborated an Indo-French Joint venture

– Anand Lescuyer Ploymers Ltd, for export and supply of polymer products. Later, they also established an Indo-Italian joint venture - Anand Saiag for manufacture and supply of synthetic polymer products, in a close-by city, Gajraula, in Uttar Pradesh.

**“His good name helped us regrow”**

Inspired by his father’s hard work and his mother, Sardarni Inder Kaur’s lessons of Sikhism, Bhupinder worked hard and honestly to establish a good reputation in overseas export as well as domestic market by the year 1980. By the time, he could think of a big leap, came 1984 with anti-Sikh riots, when his unit was put on fire and his shop and office were looted. He had huge shipments ready to go, which were devastated in the fire. This huge loss threw him back to square one.

**“He inspired me even in his absence”**

Having lost everything to the riots, he found an inspiration in his father once again. The loss was huge, but with people helping and understanding the loss, his will power strengthened. He started rebuilding himself, thinking of his father whenever he’d feel low. A step at a time, a few years passed and the market took an up-turn, when he started large orders. With demand rising, he restructured himself along with his hard working brothers Sd. Iqbal Singh, Sd. Pritpal Singh & Sd. Gurdeep Singh and sons Gurmeet Singh Anand & KD Anand and restrategised his business and bought another manufacturing unit in Delhi to produce automotive components for export.



**“It was probably my father’s dream”**

He diligently grew his small shop and workshop to Anand Motor Products, a full-scale manufacturing facility. In 1985, Anand Motors started supplying its products to Indian original equipment manufacturer (OEMs). Come 1992 and he entered North America with his products. By 2005, countries like Germany, Italy, the UK, etc., too swore by his quality products, even as several international automobile companies started venturing into the progressive Indian market. Today, behind AMP Group of Companies is a proud Bhupinder Singh Anand along with elder son, Gurmeet Singh Anand, who has created its network of dealerships in north India collaborating with Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) and is on a mission to be the finest dealer partner of JLR across the globe. He along with his younger son, Kanwardeep Singh Anand have established another Manufacturing Unit along with Design and Technical Center in Navi & Imaly cities in Michigan, USA running successfully and catering various auto components to OEM Vehicle-Manufactures in USA & Germany.

Bhupinder next guided AMP Group into real-estate as well,

holding exclusive commercial, residential, industrial, and agricultural properties starting from Delhi and NCR. As it grew, he also started moving into neighbouring states as well.

**“Who are you if you can’t help others?”**

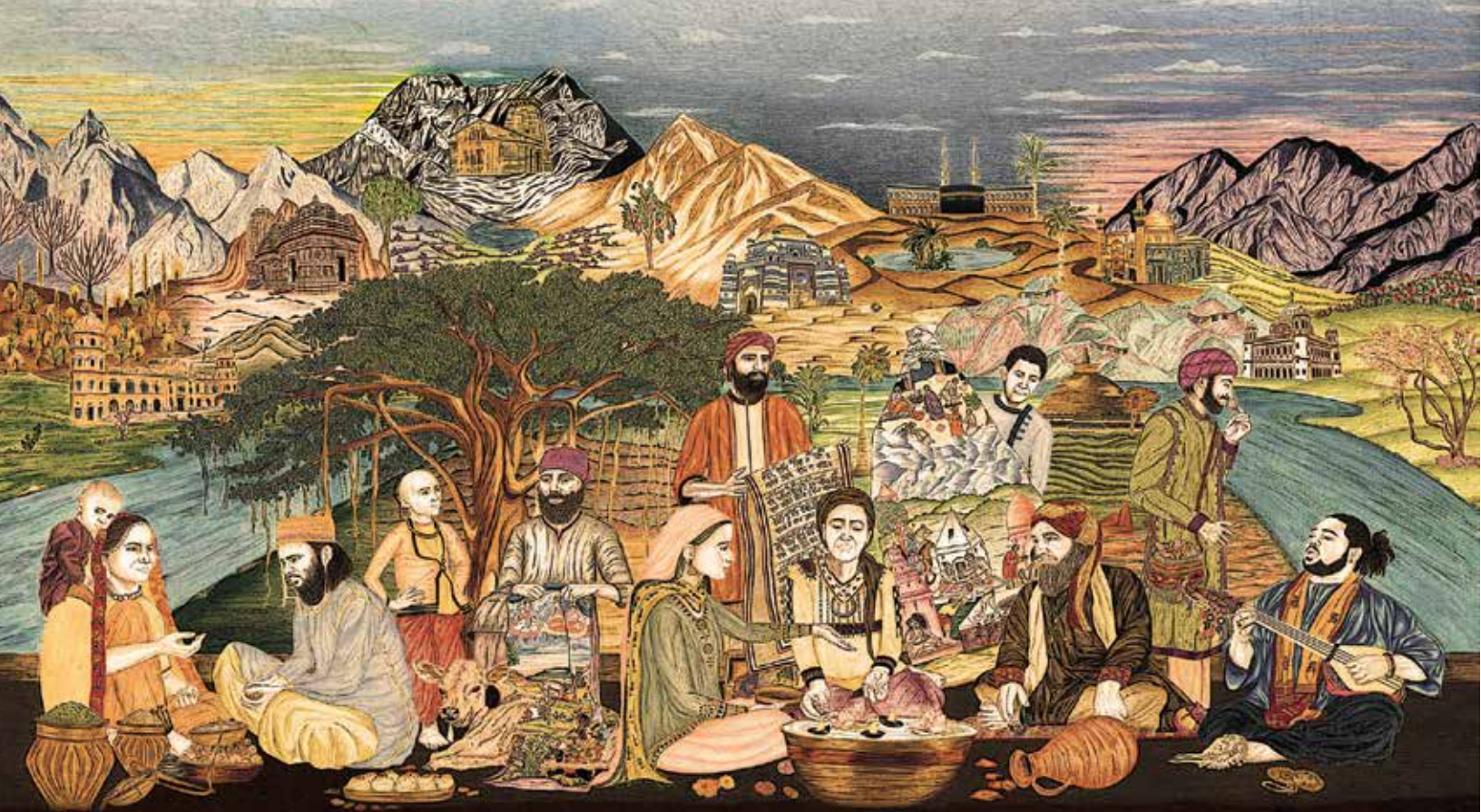
Bhupinder had grown up with Sikhism principles, which made him, contribute to the betterment of society even when he was trying to settle himself. He was one of the key founding members of World Punjabi Organisation, who has promoted its other chapters in the UK, the USA, Dubai, etc., even as he is serving as an executive member of Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Shri Amritsar. Served as a key senate member at Guru Nanak Dev University and a Trustee at Sri Gurugranth Sahib fourth centenary memorial trust, he has been a part of Chief Khalsa Diwan, Shri Amritsar and has been serving as President of Delhi Branch. He also served as Director on the Board of Punjab & Sind Bank (a Govt. of India Undertaking) for 3 years and is currently also serving as Chairman of Shri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi.

A Journey of Inspiration

DOCUMENTARY SERIES

# ALLEGORY

A Tapestry of Guru Nanak's Travels



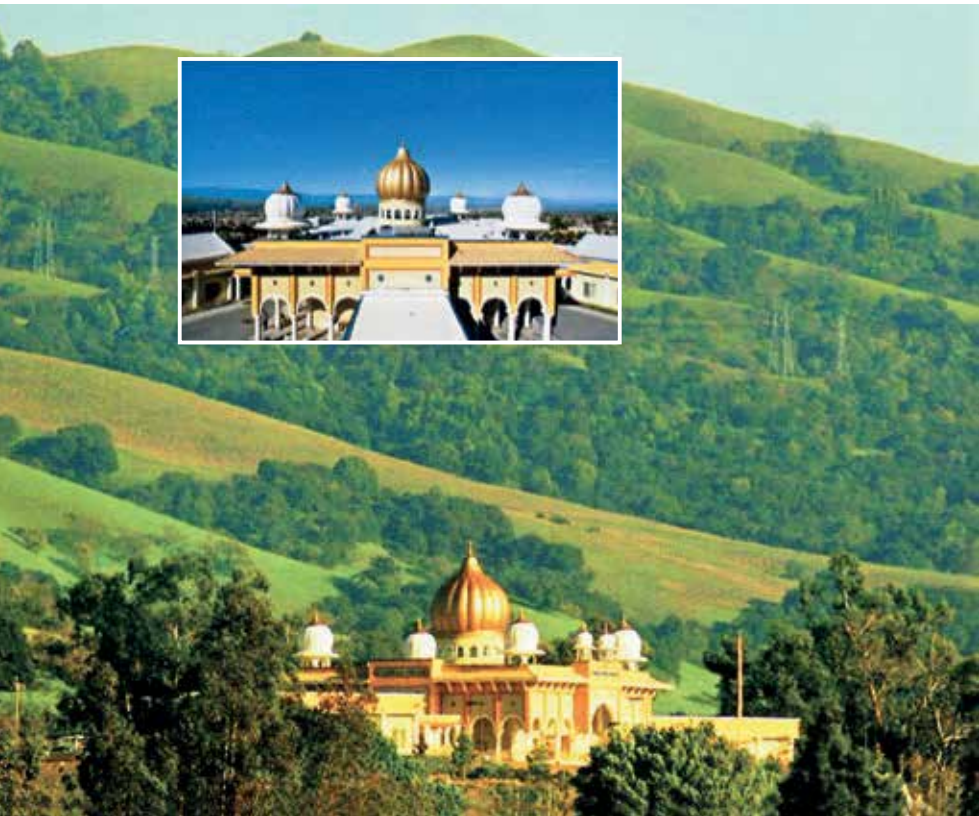
GURU NANAK glided across distant lands for over two decades on an altruistic pursuit. To relate with people of diverse cultures and belief systems, he engaged in philosophical and social dialogue. Through the medium of words and music, he gracefully imparted experiential insights, fearlessly challenged the binary constructs of society, and relentlessly opposed gender, religious, racial and class inequalities.

In the 21st century, geopolitical restrictions and cultural mandates impose immense challenges to trace Guru Nanak's extensive travels. In a 3.5 years effort, a team led by Amardeep Singh and Vininder Kaur have successfully retraced and documented all the geographies and multi-faith sites visited by Guru Nanak.

Guided by Guru Nanak's philosophy and inspired by historical texts, this 24 episode docuseries sequentially presents the life events of Guru Nanak.

The docuseries can be watched freely on the website

**TheGuruNanak.com**



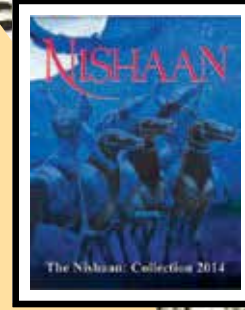
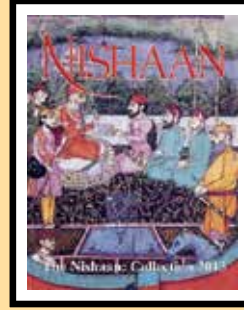
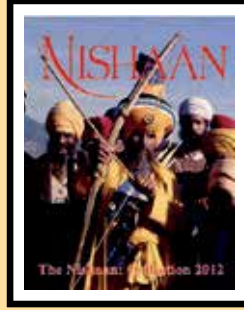
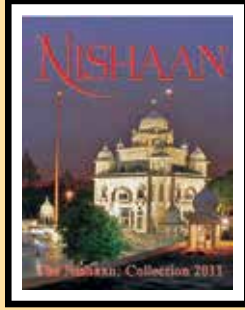
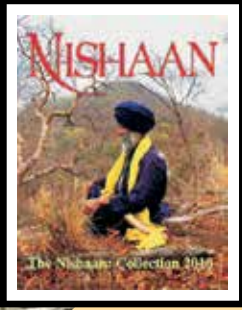
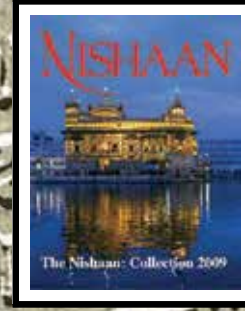
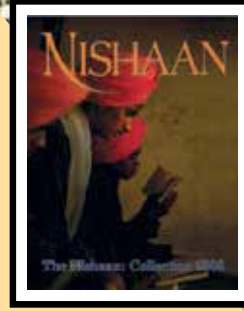
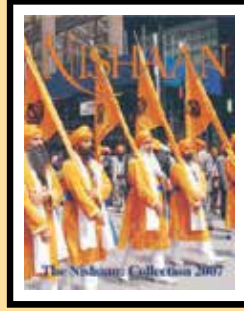
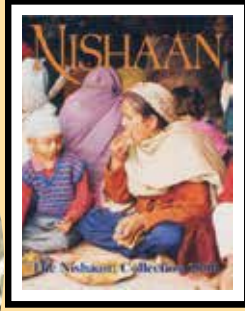
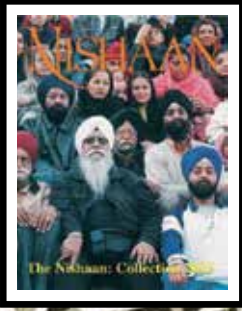
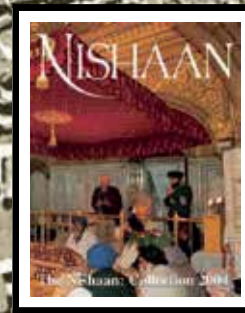
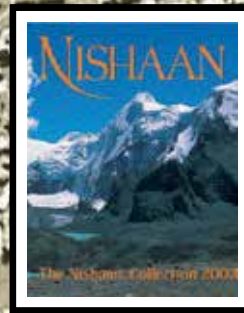
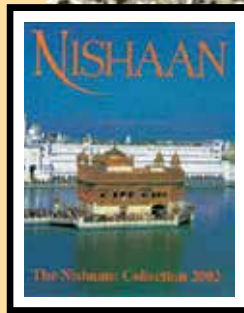
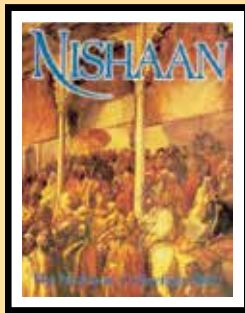
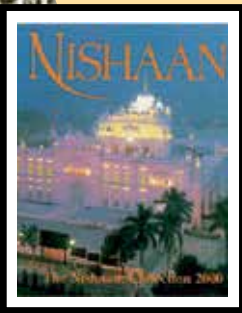
*The Eighth Annual Conference on Sri Guru Granth Sahib, organised by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation, the San Jose Gurdwara Sahib and SikhNet was held on 7 September 2019 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley.*



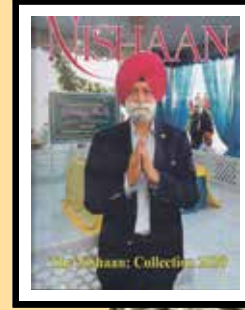
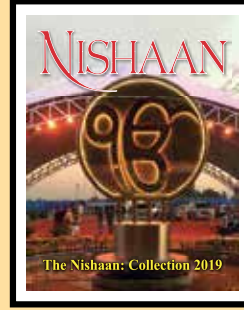
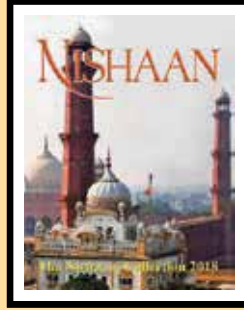
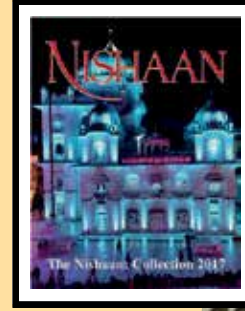
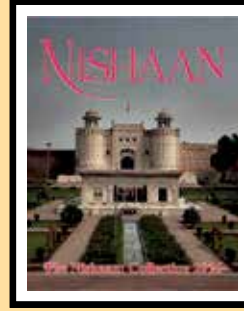
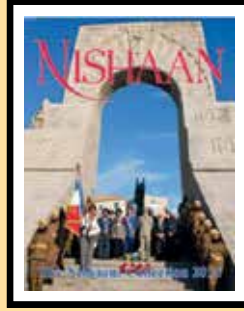
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