



**Editorial**Living with Dignity as a Minority

Muslim Devotees
of Guru Nanak
Prof. Abdul Majid Khan



At the fountainhead of Sikhism Malkiat Singh/ S. Goswami



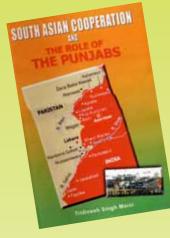
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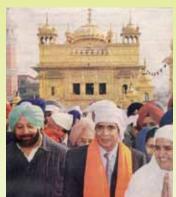


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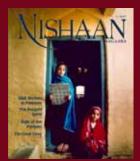
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e-mail : nishaan@lycos.com website : www.nishaan.in

Published by

The Nagaara Trust 16-A Palam Marg Vasant Vihar New Delhi 110 057, India **Printed by** 

Aegean Offset F-17, Mayapuri Phase II New Delhi 110 064

Please visit us at: www.nishaan.in

The opinions expressed in the articles published in the Nishaan Nagaara do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of The Nagaara Trust.



### LIVING WITH DIGNITY

t was President Roosevelt who said: "No democracy can long survive which does not accept as fundamental to its very existence the recognition of the rights of minorities." However, all majority communities are not equally generous towards the minorities. There might well be some that are arrogantly uncompromising and would not hesitate even to tread on the rights and even physical safety of the minorities. We may not have to look for an example away from home. The holocaust suffered by the Sikhs in 1984, the periodic attacks on the Christian missionaries, the desecration of the Babari Masjid and a major attack on the Muslim community in Gujarat all tend to indicate that all is not well with the attitude of the majority community in our country.

Every minority is not fortunate enough to possess some external support system; some certainly are – such as Christians and Muslims. If Christians in India are discriminated against or subjected to any kind of indignity, the entire Christendom rises to voice its condemnation thereof. If the Muslim community's place of worship is desecrated, or a section of that community is exposed to malevolent attacks, the entire Muslim world might threaten repercussions. But if the Sikh community becomes the target of planned mass carnage, there is hardly anyone to raise a voice for them.

The Sikhs are not a minority community in India alone. The holocaust to which they were exposed in India in 1984, led a large section of its youth to emigrate. They seem to have settled in over a hundred countries, in all of which they are an infinitesimal minority. It is therefore important for them to look for strategies which may enable them to live with dignity even as a small minority.

There are quite a few indices for which, notwithstanding the concerted efforts by others to malign them, they still continue to receive some degree of respect. They are known to be hard-working, courageous, self-reliant and sensitive about self esteem. They do not beg. While beggars throng to Hindu temples, there is hardly anyone found near a Sikh Gurdwara. The reason is that every Gurdwara arranges to provide free meals in their langar, the Guru's free kitchen. So no one can go hungry. Hence no one needs to beg. This institution initiated by Guru Nanak himself is still one that has survived in spite of (or, perhaps, because of) a series of major, and at times prolonged, vicissitudes that the community had to go through.

The far-reaching global appreciation of this institution came to notice in 2004 when a nishkam (selfless) organisation of the Sikh Community from Birmingham, UK, organised langar at Barcelona, Spain. Throughout the day and well through the night, the langar served a great variety of free food to thousands of participants of the Parliament of World Religions for the full week that the Parliament lasted. This gesture by the Sikhs of Birmingham earned worldwide appreciation for the entire Sikh community. Should we not, then, extend the spirit behind langar on to further charitable endeavours. Other possibilities of benevolent service to others following the tradition of Bhai Kanhaiya must be explored. To suggest an example, if any organisation of the Sikh community organises a 'Disaster Squad' and reach out to provide physical aid, emotional support and spiritual succour to disaster-stricken people, it would enhance the image of the community immensely. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC) as also the Delhi SGPC are in a comfortable position to organise such a service. We must know that dignity has first to be earned and then only can it be deserved. One major mechanism for establishing the dignity of our community would be to enhance the avenues of selfless seva with concern for others in distress.

Wherever the Sikhs are, they must close up their ranks and ensure internal coherence. We must hang together, or assuredly, we shall all hang separately. Every member of the community should feel responsible for upholding the image of the community and desist from engaging in any activity that might tarnish its name. The Sikhs have traditionally been known to have a strong moral ethos. They used to be so truthful that even Mogul courts relied on the evidence tendered by Sikhs more than that of any other. They have also been known to honour women - even those of the enemy. Have we been able to preserve these reputations that our forefathers had established? If we are not sure, then we need to start mending; and we must start the process on our own individual selves.

Love for tradition has never weakened a nation; it rather strengthens nations in the hours of peril. However, that does not mean that no new view must come. The world must roll forward. In every religious community, therefore, there are two sets of people: reformists and conformists. We need to understand that both of them are equally important. If there are no reformists, the religion becomes stagnant, rancid and out of tune with the spirit of the time. If there are no conformists, the faith may be torn to shreds or so intensely altered that it becomes unrecognisable. Both sections are not only pragmatic but also indispensable. What is required is that they ought to recognise each other's role with appreciation and a degree of respect for each other. Differences of opinion can be resolved and not turned into an intolerant strife. The Sikhs are courageous people. But physical courage without spiritual courage can often gravitate to arrogance that may easily stoop down to violence. This would tarnish not only the person's but also the community's image.

Continuity does not rule out fresh approaches to fresh situations. The emigration of Sikhs in appreciable numbers to a medley of cultures, essentially exposes them to forces of enculturation and acculturation. Their unshorn hair, their turbaned heads, and the sword that they carry as their religious symbol have all led to prejudices against them, sometimes exposing them to violent attacks. Some weaklings among them might have chosen to give up their identity. However, others chose to fight their battle out in the courts of law, or educate the host community about the cultural norms that they prize most and the reasons for it. But wherever they have travelled, Sikhs have been of service to the host culture, they have received immense recognition and consideration with great facility. Benevolent socialisation goes out to remedy most antipodal prejudices.

Sikh politicians often talk of the *miri-pir*i doctrine. Its real import is that religion and morality should guide politics, but not that politics should exploit religious feelings of the people. The greatest superstition that has now entered the political arena is that hypocrisy is the royal road to success. Corruption is even worse than hypocrisy. Such kind of politics as is beset with these evil trends should not be allowed to mix with religion. What is worse with politics is that when political ammunition runs low, the rusty artillery of abuse and physical assault is unleashed.

I am still haunted by the ugly scene created by some members of the SGPC during the last elections of that august body. Most of the newspapers published the event along with the photograph in which one 'honourable' member was tugging at the holy hair of another 'honourable' member. How unfortunate it was that no Sikh leader or jathedar condemned this act; nor did the offending

individual apologise. Today I ask myself, was that a lesser offence than television personality Mandira Bedi getting tattooed on her back? By expressing her regret in public Mandira has set a good example. Would the offending members of the SGPC show that courage even as late as today? If not, we must ask ourselves, do we have a judicious right to sanction anyone for a much lesser offense?

The function of the Gurdwara Committees is to manage the Gurdwaras. If its members wish also to assume the role of conscience keepers of every individual in the community, it may not be an altogether unwelcome assumption. However, we must remember that we need first to set our own conscience blameless. Otherwise one might say, "Gentlemen! Why don't you notice the molehill in your own eye?" Such ugly scenes are caused only when politics invades religious organisations.

Politics essentially causes factionalism, while religion bridges over factions. On account of politics invading into our religious institutions, especially on account of elections has increasingly split into factions. This is in spite of the fact that our Gurus have tabooed any kind of factionalism. We all belong to only one faction – that of our Lord.

Here is what Guru Ram Das affirms:

Some form alliances with friends, children and siblings.

Some form alliances with in-laws and relatives.

Some form alliances with chiefs and leaders for their own selfish ends.

My alliance is with the Lord, who pervades everywhere.

I've formed my alliance with the Lord who is my support.

Other than the Lord, I belong to no faction; I sing of the countless Praises of my Lord.

Those with whom you form alliances, shall perish.

Making false alliances, the mortals repent and regret in the end.

Those who practice falsehood shall not last.

I have formed my alliance with the Lord; there is none more powerful than Him.

SGGS p.366

If we still have loyalties to any faction other than that of our Lord or our Guru, let us repent and get back to the Gurus' fold and affirm our sole allegiance to Him. He shall enable us retrieve our reputations and enable us establish a new sense of dignity. He shall insulate us also from the general rot that has set all around us.

We may also learn some lessons from such other communities whose numerical strength the world over is about the same as ours, and who passed through the same kind of vicissitudes as we have, but who have emerged out of their misfortune by taking certain decisive steps. We have the example of the Jewish community who after the holocaust at the hands of the Nazis, held a conference in Europe where they passed resolutions of far-reaching import. Inter alia, these resolutions affirmed that they shall spare no effort in passing their religious tradition and their language to their offspring. They also resolved that they shall arrange to provide the highest type of academic education to their children so that they should be able to beat anyone in any competition. Can we not make similar resolves?

A minority community that closes up its ranks and discards factionalism strengthens its mettle. An Ethiopian proverb is: "when spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion".

When it assigns a Tyler at the gates of its religious institutions to strictly bar the entry of politics into them, it ensures their sanctity. Politicians build bridges where there is no river, where a river is in spate, they are either on a holiday or invent pretexts. Religion on the contrary builds bridges over oceans and comes even more to our rescue when the waters are really troubled.

Developing cultural empathy when amongst aliens makes for easy adjustment. Being benevolently useful to them when they need care pays dividends of gratitude. We must remember:

Nature in giving tears to man confessed that he Had a tender heart, this is our noblest quality. **Juvenal**.

To enable our youth to resolve to rise above mediocrity and strive towards excellence shall ensure easy recognition of our community globally. However, we must not forget that:

Human excellence means nothing
Unless it works with the consent of God. Euriprdes

### At the fountainhead of Sikhism

he Great Glory, Sikhism takes the reader to the fountainhead of Sikhism, as the photographer Malkiat Singh and writer Sandeep Goswami make their way through many Gurdwaras in India and Pakistan.

Journeying to various places in both Punjabs, Uttaranchal, Bihar and Himachal Pradesh, Malkiat Singh has taken some rare visuals. "I went with the Vaisakhi Jatha in 2005 to Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib and Lahore to record visuals of gurdwaras and the Sikh communities there."

The photos taken at the Kar Seva of the Darbar Sahib Sarovar in Amritsar are very close to his heart "because these are once-in-a-lifetime pictures. There is a purifying plant installed there and the process will not need to be repeated for another fifty to seventy years".

The following extracts on Nankana Sahib and Panja Sahib are penned by Sandeep Goswami:

#### Nankana Sahib

The foundations of Sikhism were laid by Guru Nanak Dev in what is now the nation of Pakistan which came into being as a consequence of the Partition of India into two nation states. The British, on acceding independence to this Asian giant in 1947, sought to divide it into two countries on religious grounds, probably to cripple its combined resources and strength once and for all. Following this division and the subsequent edginess that crept into the relationship between the two nations, the Sikh community was estranged from many of its holy places ascribed to the early and significant beginnings of the faith.

To Nankana Sahib is ascribed the exalted honour of being the place where Guru Nanak Dev, the first of ten Sikh Gurus, was born. Nankana Sahib gurdwara is situated some seventy-five kilometers southwest of the historical city of Lahore. The village was known as Rai Bhoi di Talwandi in those days and Guru Nanak was born here at the dawn of a new day on the fifteenth of April in the year 1469. He spent his childhood and the early youthful years at the village and consequently many holy sites, other than the

Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, are located within the area. The gurdwara building is neat and well maintained and the freshness reflected in its yellow lime-washed walls glowing in the afternoon sun belie the fact that the structure has witnessed many centuries of growth with the spread of Sikhism. Principal among them are Gurdwara Bal Leela Sahib, barely four hundred yards from Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, where the young Nanak would play with his friends. Later, at the age of seven, Nanak entered a phase of traditional schooling. Taught Hindi by Pandit Gopal Das, Sanskrit by Pandit Brij Lal and Persian by Maulvi Qutub-ud Din, Gurdwara Patti Sahib, close to Gurdwara Bal Leela Sahib, commemorates the young Guru's educative years.

A man of God who had risen beyond the materialistic world even in his early youth, Guru Nanak was once given a sum of money by his father with the purpose of setting up his trade. He could find no better purpose for the money than to feed some hungry mendicants on a pilgrimage. Gurdwara Succha Sauda was later built at the site by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Having remained closed since Partition in 1947, it was re-opened in April 1993. Underscoring the reverence Sikhism has for anything intimately associated with the lives of their ten Gurus, the Gurdwara Tambu Sahib is a small building adjacent to an ancient tree that has a tent - like spread. Legend has it that Guru Nanak Dev rested here on the way back from the grain market where he spent all the business capital on feeding the saints.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh built the present building of Nankana Sahib gurdwara and had attached a generous land grant with the gurdwara to ensure its upkeep. Initially well looked after by the Udasi sect under whose control the gurdwara functioned, degeneration in the financial dealings and general administration of the shrine prompted the Gurdwara Sudhar Prabandh Movement to take control in the early twentieth century. Since Partition, the building has been taken care of by the Waqf Board while Sikh *jathas* (devotee groups) are allowed to visit it in limited numbers at Baisakhi, Guru Nanak's birthday and a number of other occasions.







#### Panja Sahib

Of all the holy Sikh shrines in Pakistan, Gurdwara Panja Sahib perhaps bears the distinction of carrying such strong and striking physical evidence of Guru Nanak Dev's divine presence. Situated near Rawalpindi, a typical retro-modern Pakistani city, at the ancient town of Hasan Abdal that lies some forty-five kilometres to its west, Gurdwara Panja Sahib is another Sikh holy site where Baisakhi celebrations take place with great splendour and solemnity. Topographically, the region is hilly, with

many natural underground water sources scattered across its wide expanse. During his spiritual journeys across the country, Guru Nanak Dev, accompanied by his faithful companion Mardana, reached Hasan Abdal. It being summer, and thirsty from their long journey, Mardana went looking for water to drink and freshen up but could not find any source. Troubled by thirst, he appealed to Guru Nanak Dev for help. The Guru asked him to request Wali Kandhari, a Muslim saint who had his abode atop nearby hill that had a natural fountain, to allow him to drink some water.





Wali Kandhari refused despite Mardana's repeated pleas. Tormented by the heat and thirst, Mardana again turned to his master in anguish. Guru Nanak Dev then moved a large rock near the foot of the hill and water came gushing out from beneath it. And simultaneously, the fountain on top of the hill dried up. This made Wali Kandhari furious, and in a fit of anger, he sent a large rock rolling down the hill towards Guru Nanak and Mardana, with the intention of crushing them. The Guru stopped the rock on its path with one hand : the same rock still lies at the spot where it was stopped. A distinct impression of Guru Nanak Dev's palm and fingers is etched on its face. The rock is enshrined and a fresh water stream flows around it. Wali Kandhari was humbled and could not help but bow to the divine presence of the Supreme Master.

Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, the valorous Sikh general, warrior and administrator had a magnificent building constructed and a sarovar dug at the site. The gurdwara was initially under the hereditary control of mahants but in 1920, the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee took control. An incident attached to the Gurdwara Panja Sahib's administrators is a striking example of the highest level of commitment towards their faith and the well being of its other followers. During a religious procession in the year 1922, a confrontation with the ruling British resulted in brutal caning of the jatha and injuries to many amongst the essentially peaceful Sikh morcha. Scores were arrested and were to be moved by train to the prison at Attock. The Sikh Sangat of Gurdwara Panja Sahib wanted to provide those arrested with food at the Hasan Abdal railway station and requested the authorities to stop the train there. They were refused this concession and several of the Sikhs lay down on the tracks to force the train to stop. The train did stop but not before two of the Sikhs lost their lives under its wheels. Food was then served to the detainees and the train allowed to move on peacefully.

Work on the construction of the present building of the gurdwara was started in 1932, designed along lines similar to the memorial of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Lahore. The three-storied structure is made of grey sandstone and richly embellished with decorative cupolas and kiosks at its corners and along the parapets. The windows open into small balconies with their accompanying splendidly engraved and decorated porches. The entrance too has a big porch and the central building has a beautifully carved fluted dome on top, with smaller and similar cupolas at its corners. The rock with Guru Nanak Dev's hand imprint is enshrined and fresh water flows from beneath it into a sarovar teeming with fish. The entire gurdwara complex is quite large and includes buildings for cooking and serving 'Guru ka Langar' and for accommodating the devotees who wish to stay overnight. A huge congregation usually gathered at Gurdwara Panja Sahib on Baisakhi day and the practice continued till the year 1947. Thereafter it ceased since

### Pakistan to name new University after Guru Nanak

The Pakistan government has reportedly cleared a proposal to set up an international university named after Guru Nanak Dev at Nankana Sahib. The news was conveyed to an SGPC delegation which returned from Nankana Sahib recently.

Last year, when SGPC was celebrating the 400th anniversary of the martyrdom of the sixth guru, Arjan Dev, Pakistan's prime minister Shaukat Aziz announced there would soon be a university in Pakistan named after a Sikh guru.

The blueprint for the proposed university is being prepared which will be called **Baba Guru Nanak International University**, spread across 2,500 acres of gurdwara land. Consultative groups from both India and Pakistan are brainstorming on various aspects of the planned university. SGPC chief Avtar Singh Makkad said he has put forward his set of suggestions, including a research centre to be set up on university premises, where extensive and authentic studies will be carried out on the life of Guru Nanak Dev. "The university may also introduce studies on the life of Guru Nanak as a separate course," he said.

He has also proposed transliteration of the Gurmat literature from Gurmukhi script to the Shahmukhi script to so that Nanak studies are easily adopted by Pakistani students. Besides, Makkad has suggested that the architecture of the university building be styled on that of the Khalsa College in Amritsar, in conformity with Sikh architectural heritage.

1993, regular visits by Sikh *jathas* have been allowed specifically for Baisakhi celebrations by the Pakistan government. The mere sight of the holy *panja* is akin to being touched by divinity. Guru Nanak Dev's presence permeates the whole site and none who visits the Gurdwara Panja Sahib comes away unaffected and unmoved by its blessed presence.

#### The authors...

The Great Glory: Sikhism is a publication by two Punjabi friends based in Delhi who have collaborated for some time now, entrepreneur and writer, Sandeep Goswami and award-winning photographer, Malkiat Singh. The book was four years in the making, an ode to the culture and vitality of Sikhism, a faith that has endured vicissitudes and the test of time.

Sandeep, born in 1967 is an aeronautical engineer by education but went into business to earn his writing time, and that is what he does. He owns a factory which manufactures shoe components and he writes in his spare time. Goswami, who is of Punjabi descent, is also an intrepid traveller and spent two years researching, travelling and talking to people for the sheer pleasure of it. The text is composed in the style of a raconteur and makes for thoroughly enjoyable reading. The intrinsic quality of the faith and the ways of the Punjab come clearly to the reader and complement his partner's wonderful photographs.

The younger of the duo, Malkiat, was born in 1974 and has a diploma in Fine Arts. After four years of study he took up photography as a full-time vocation. He has been awarded the UP State Lalit Kala Akademi award for Art Photography and the Sahitya Kala Parishad Award. Journeying all over Punjab, Uttaranchal, Patna, Manikaran in Himachal Pradesh, and then Pakistan, Malkiat has taken some rare and hitherto unrealised visuals. He went with the Baisakhi jatha in 2006 to Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib and Lahore to take photographs of gurdwaras and the Sikh communities there.



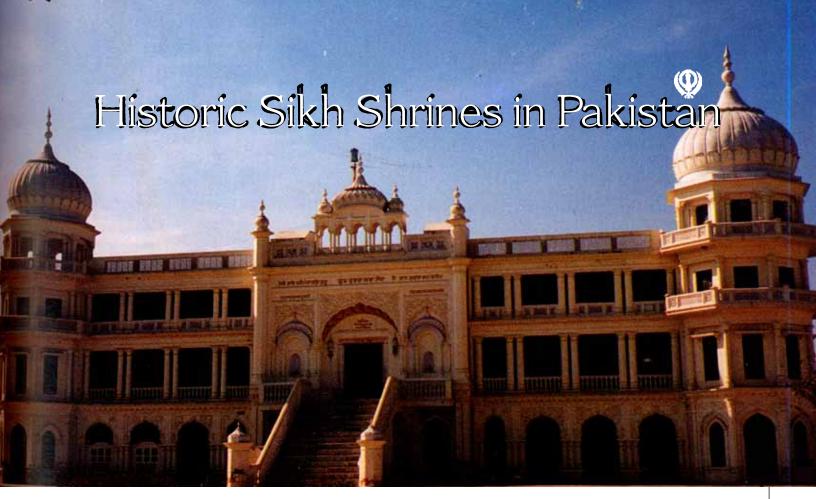
Malkiat Singh

His subject is primarily on his faith and his community where, "every person is like family. This is my way of giving back to my family for the faith and way of life that I have been infused with since I was a child." Malkiat's work is etched with a rare sensitivity for its subjects.

The Great Glory, Sikhism
Text: Sandeep Goswami;
Photographs: Malkiat Singh.

Published by Rupa & Co., 2006. Price: Rs 1950.

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The imposing Gurdwara entrance at Nankana Sahib.

n his preface to the book, Iqbal Qaisar writes that "History to me are footprints marked by time on its trail. Following these footprints we can travel both towards our future and our past. Innumerable such landmarks have been found in our motherland and we can link millions of years of our past history with our future through them. We have already discovered some major land marks in Attock, the ruins of Harappa, Moenjo Daro, Garh Maharaja, Taxila and Chakwal. The research carried on these finds highlights our richness in culture and civilisation. Our pride in it should not have any bounds. Our motherland can boast that it was here that Panani compiled Ashta Dhiyaee, the first book on grammar. It was here that Patanjili wrote Maha Bhashia. Rig Veda, the first book if the world, was also written in this land of ours. Alexander's dream to conquer the world was smashed in this land of ours and he was inflicted with such injuries which caused his end. Abu Rehan Alberouni wrote his enowned book Kitab ul *Hind* in this very land.

This land has great religious history along with its literary and cultural evolution. Balmiki wrote his Ramayan in this part of the world. It was here that the flag of Islam was hoisted for the first time on the Indian sub-continent. It was from here that the Sufis got enlightenment and carried the torch of oneness of God throughout India.

Then Guru Nanak Dev ji emerged out of this land.

Allama Iqbal wrote that:

The idol-temple was once again lit after such long time.

The house of Aazar was brightened by the Abraham's light.

Once again the voice of oneness of the Almighty came from the land of Punjab

A perfect man awoke the people of India from their deep slumber.

#### (From Iqbal's Bange Dara).

Guru Nanak Dev ji was the first Guru of the Sikh nation. He was born at Nankana Sahib (District Sheikhupura of today's Pakistan) and passed away at Tehsil Shakargarh of the Narowal district. Of the Gurus that succeeded Guru Nanak Dev ji, the holy places of Guru Ramdas ji, Guru Arjan Dev ji, Guru Hargobind ji and other great Sikh personalities are

It took me five years to locate these milestones of history. Such a long period of time was taken mainly because the names of many villages and places had been changed. New tehsils and districts have been created. For instance, Lahore was a very big district during Bhai Kahn Singh ji's lifetime and included the tehsils of Lahore, Kasur and Chunian. Now the tehsils of Chunian and Kasur have been merged together to form Kasur District. Many villages of Kasur and Lahore went over to India. It was difficult to ascertain as to which district a particular village now belonged. Many villages had been washed in floods and new villages were built at their sites. All these details took time. I, however, thank Almighty God that I have been successful in completing this monumental work. I had to cover a distance of 25 to 30 thousand kilometers for this purpose and used all available means of transportation for such traveling.

This work is being published at a time when we have completed 50 years of independence and the Sikh nation would be celebrating the Khalsa's 300th birthday in the coming year on 13 April, 1999. It was a very difficult, nay, an impossible task for an ordinary mortal like me. I am extremely grateful to the friends with whose help this task was completed.

This makes me extremely happy and I present this work as a gift on behalf of my nation to the Sikh nation on its 300th birthday. I dedicate this book to the close ideological harmony that exists between Baba Farid and Sat Guru Nanak Dev ji.

Iqbal Qaisar

#### An extract from the book:

The area between the river Ravi and the Chenab is known as Sandal Bar in which lies famous city of Nankana Sahib where founder of the Sikh religion, who fought against the forces of darkness and ignorance, was born. He was Guru Nanak. To the south of Nankana there is a mount named as Dhaular, also mentioned in the Granth Sahib.

Those mansions where the Lord is forgotten are useless. (Suhi 5)

Many of the stones recovered from the mound have carvings of religious objects of worship. Probably this was a palace (or a fort) of some Raja. There is a well known as 'Sita da Khooh' in the feet of this mound. The well perhaps was specially dug for some lady who lived in this once prosperous town but later on was deserted or devastated for reasons not yet known.

What is inhabited become deserted, and what is deserted become inhabited.

In the 15th century this modest settlement was known as Talwandi Rai Bhoey. The Rai was Bhatti Rajput while Rai Bular from the same family, was the ruler. A well-read person, Mehta Kalyan Das (Kalu) of Bedi caste was an employee of Rai Balar. Kalu's wife was Tripta to whom was born Nanak in Visakh Suddi 3rd (20th Visakh) Samvat 1526 (15th April 1469 AD) which then lit up the whole world.

When Nanak was born there was light all over the world.

Through the ages, a place emerges as a big city, only to be deserted and to be rehabilitated again and deserted again.

Nanak was taught Hindi by Gopal Pandit in Samvat 1532, Sanskrit by Brij Lal Pandit in Samvat 1535 and Arabic and Persian by Maulvi Qutbuddin in 1539. Nanak's spiritual power convinced his teachers that without knowing the real object of knowledge, the most knowledgeable person would remain an ignorant one. According to the Khatri tradition, his father Kalu led him to the religious leader Hardayal to baptise him but Nanak refused to wear the *Janau*, reasoning that he did not believe in caste and creed.

The following is the verse which Nanak recited on the occasion (included in *Aasa di Var* in the Granth Sahib).

Make compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, modesty the knot and truth the twist. This is the sacred thread of the soul; if you have it, then go ahead and put it on me.

This was the period when young Nanak was more absorbed and involved in the search for Truth or God (Kartar), was least interested in worldly affairs and so disappointed his father, who tried his best to engage his young son in business. On the suggestion of Nanak's sister Bebe Nanaki ji, he was sent to Sultanpur Lodhi in Samvat 1542 where the Governor Daulat Khan Lodhi appointed his as a store-keeper.

On 24th Jaith, Samvat 1544, he was married to Salukhni, daughter of Mool Chand. They had two sons, Baba Shri Chand and Baba Lakhmi Das. He tried to preach his views against oppression, division of humanity into classes, enmity and the social plight of the common man. In this mission he could meet but limited number of people in the areas and therefore, decided to embark upon long journeys.

His first journey was in Samvat 1554, the first udasi while the second udasi was to southern India in Samvat 1567. He completed his third in Samvat 1571. His last journey (Samvat 1575) was to the west. During these journeys he visited the whole of Hindustan, parts of China, Russia and Arab countries, where he met saints, scholars, mystics and fakirs of different religions. These udasis took about thirty years when Nanak remained a wandering fakir, renouncing the life of a householder. In Samvat 1579 he finally settled, in Kartarpur (which he founded in Samvat 1561) and started the practice of Langar.

Satgur Nanak Dev ji appointed Satgur Angad Dev ji as his successor. He left for heaven on 23rd Asuj Samvat 1596 Suddi 10th (22 September 1539) on the banks of the river Ravi. The light had merged in its source.

O Nanak, their faces are radiant in the Court of the Lord, and many are saved along with them!

Guru Nanak's message is enshrined in the Mool Mantar and Sikhi is founded upon this truth.

One universal creator, God. The name is truth. Creative being personified. No fear. No hatred. Image of the undying, beyond birth, self existent.

In Gurmukhi

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ

ਰਾਵੀ ਅਤੇ ਝਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚਕਾਰਲੇ ਇਲਾਕੇ ਨੂੰ ਸਾਂਦਲ ਬਾਰ ਆਖਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ । ਇਸ ਸਾਂਦੇਲ ਬਾਰ ਦਾ ਇੱਕ ਮਸ਼ਹੂਰ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਨਨਕਾਣਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਹੈ । ਇਸ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਨੂੰ ਇਹ ਮਾਣ ਹਾਸਿਲ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇੱਥੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਧਰਮ ਦੋ ਅਚਾਰਯ, ਅਗਿਆਨ ਅੰਧਕਾਰ ਦੇ ਵਿਨਾਸ਼ਕ ਸੂਰੀਆ ਰੂਪ ਜਗਤ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵ ਜੀ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਨੇ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਧਾਰਿਆ । ਇਸ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਦੇ ਦੱਖਣ ਵੱਲ ਇੱਕ ਥੋਹ ਹੈ । ਇਸ ਥੋਹ ਨੂੰ "ਧੌਲਰ" ਕਰਕੋ ਜਾਣਿਆ ਜਾਂਦਾ ਹੈ । ਧੌਲਰ ਦਾ ਅਰਥ ਹੈ "ਚਿੱਟੇ ਰਾਜ ਮੰਦਰ"ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਗਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਅੰਦਰ ਸ਼ਸ਼ੋਭਿਤ ਹੈ ।

ਕਿਤਹੀ ਕਾਮਿ ਨ ਧਉਲਹਰ ਜਿਤ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਸਰਾਏ ॥

ਇਸ ਬੇਹ ਤੋਂ ਮਿਲੇ ਕਈ ਪੱਥਰਾਂ ਉੱਪਰ ਉਕਰੀਆਂ ਮੂਰਤੀਆਂ ਤੋਂ ਪਤਾ ਚਲਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਕਈ ਸਦੀਆਂ ਪਹਿਲਾਂ ਇਹ ਇੱਕ ਪ੍ਰਤਾਪੀ ਰਾਜੇ ਦਾ ਮਹਿਲ ਸੀ । ਖਵਰੇ ਇਸੇ ਕਰਕੇ "ਧੌਲਰ" ਪ੍ਰਸਿੱਧ ਹੈ । ਇਸ ਦੇ ਪੈਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ "ਸੀਤਾਵਾਲਾ" ਨਾਮੀ ਖੂਹ ਹੈ । ਇਸ ਤੋਂ ਵੀ ਇਹ ਸਪੱਸ਼ਟ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਖੂਹ ਕਿਸੇ ਸੀਤਾ ਨਾਮੀ ਰਾਣੀ ਦੇ ਇਸ਼ਨਾਨ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਬਣਾਇਆ ਗਿਆ ਸੀ । ਉਹਨਾਂ ਸਮਿਆਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਦੋਂ ਪੱਥਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਉੱਕਰੀਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਮੂਰਤੀਆਂ ਨੂੰ ਬੜੀ ਮਹੱਤਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਸੀ, ਉਸ ਵੇਲੇ ਇਹ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਘੁੱਗ ਵਸਦਾ ਸੀ । ਫਿਰ ਪਤਾ ਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਵਾਪਰੀ ਕਿ ਇਹ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਮਿੱਟੀ ਦਾ ਚੇਰ ਹੋ ਗਿਆ।

"ਬਸਤੋਂ ਹੋਇ, ਹੋਇ ਸੋ ਉਜਰੂ ਉਜਰੂ ਹੋਇ ਸੂ ਬਸੈ ॥"

ਪੰਦਰਵੀਂ ਸਦੀ ਈਸਵੀ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਸ ਥਾਂ ਰਾਏ ਭੋਇ ਦੀ ਤਲਵੰਡੀ ਨਾਮ ਦਾ ਇੱਕ ਛੋਟਾ ਜਿਹਾ ਨਗਰ ਸੀ । ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਭੱਟੀ ਗੋਤ ਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਰਾਏ ਭੌਏ ਨਾਮੀਂ ਸੱਜਣ ਨੇ ਵਸਾਇਆ ਸੀ । ਇਸ ਦੇ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਰ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਰਾਏ ਬੁਲਾਰ ਉਸ ਵੇਲੇ ਉੱਥੇ ਦਾ ਹਾਕਿਮ ਸੀ । ਬੇਦੀ ਬੰਸ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ

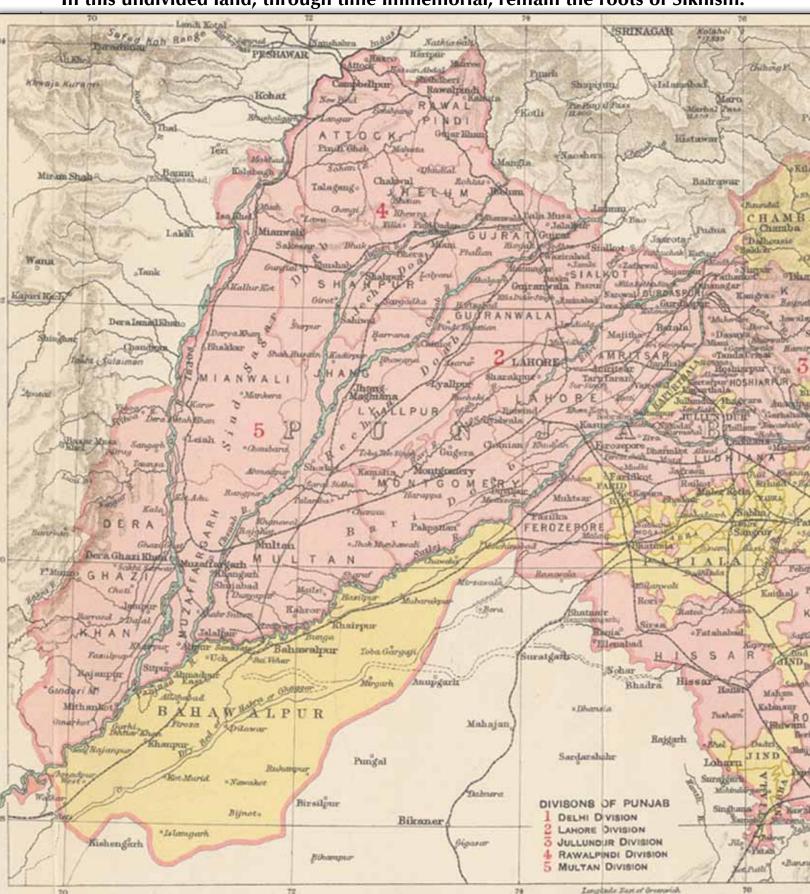
In Shahmukhi

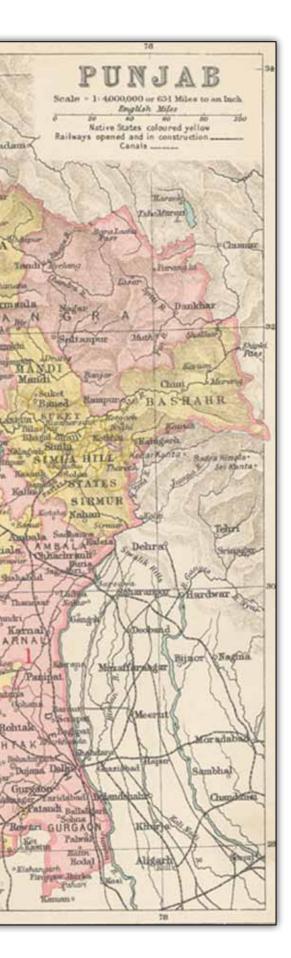
ست گر نانک دیو جی

راوی اتے چنماں دے وچکار لے علاقے نول ساندل بار آکھیا جاندا اے۔ ایس ساندل بار دا اِک مشہور شر نکانا صاحب ہے۔ ایس شرنوں ایہ مان حاصل ب كه اينت سكه دهرم دے اجارے 'اكيان اندهكار دے وناشك سوريه روپ جكت كرو ناتك ديو جي مهاراج نے او تار دهاريا ايس شروے و كهن ول إك محتیہ ہے. ایس محتیہ نول "دھولر" کر کے جاتیا جاندا ہے. دھولر دا ارتھ ہے. " پنے راج مندر" جویں کہ گرو گرنتھ صاحب جی اندر درج ہے. كتى كام دهود لرجت بروسرائ (سوى محلا: 5

ایس عقیہ توں ملے کئی پھراں اُر اگریاں مورتیاں توں پا جلدا ہے کہ کئی صدیاں پہلوں اید کے بر تابی راج وا محل می خورے ایے کر کے "وحوار" پر سدھ ہے. ایس دے بیراں وچ "سیتا والا" نامی کھوہ ہے. ایس توں وی ظاہر ہوندا ہے کہ اپ کھوہ کے سیتا نامی رائی دے اشنان واسطے بٹایا گیا ہی. اوہنال سمیاں دیج جدوں پھرال دیج اگریاں مورتیاں نوُں بڑی مہتتا پراپت می اوس ولیے ایہ شرمکوک وسدا می فیرپتا نہیں کیہ واپری کہ ایہ شرمٹی وا ڈھیر ہو گیا۔ بتوہوع موع سواجرواجروہوع سولے

In this undivided land, through time immemorial, remain the roots of Sikhism.





## The Essential Historic Sikh Shrines in Pakistan

\*Gurdwara Janam Ashthan, Nankana Saheb

\*Gurdwara Balila, Nankana Saheb

\*Gurdwara Patti Saheb, Nankana Saheb

\*Gurdwara Kiara Saheb, Nankana Saheb

\*Maal ji Saheb, Nankana Saheb

\*Gurdwara Suchha Sauda, Choorhkana

\*Gurdwara Sach Khand, Choorhkana

\*Gurdwara Tamboo Saheb

\*Gurdwara Roori Sahib, Emanabad

\*Gurdwara Chakki Saheb, Emanabad

\*Gurdwara Bhai Lalu di Khuhi, Emanabad

\*Gurdwara Nanak Garh, Badami Bagh

\*Dharamsala Pehli Patshahi

\*Gurdwara Chaubacha Saheb, Lahore

\*Janam Asthan, Bebe Nanki, Lahore

\*Gurdwara Lahora Saheb, Ghavind, Lahore

\*Gurdwara Roori Saheb, Jahman, Lahore

\*Gurdwara Chota Nankiana, Manga, Lahore \*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Manak, Lahore

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Bheelgram, Kasur

Curawara remirrationally Energrand, randar

\*Gurdwara Baba Ram Thaman ji, Kasur

\*Gurdwara Haulan Saheb Bharnavan, Kasur

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Alpa, Kasur

\*Gurdwara Chota Nankiana, Okara

\*Gurdwara Maal ji Saheb, Kanganpur, Kasur \*Gurdwara Manji Saheb, Manak Deke, Kasur

\*Gurdwara Chota Nankiana, H. Shah Muqim

\*Gurdwara Chota Nankiana, Dipalpur, Okara

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Pakpattan City

\*Gurdwara Tibba Nanaksar, Pakpattan

\*Gurdwara Nanaksar Tibba, Abhore

\*Gurdwara Nanaksar, Harappa

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Burewala

\*Gurdwara Makhdoompur, Pahoran

\*Gurdwara Thara Saheb, Multan

\*Gurdwara Thara Saheb, Uch sharif

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Shikarpur, Sindh

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Jind pir, Sukhar

\*Gurdwara Sadhu Bela, Sukhar

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Mirpur Khas

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Karachi

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Clifton, Karachi

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Kallat

\*Gurdwara Tilganji Saheb, Quetta

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Bulani, Larkana

\*Gurdwara Nanakvara, Kandh Kot

\*Gurdwara Tharaa Saheb, Sakhi Sarwar

\*Dhramsala Guru Nanak Dev ji,

\*Gurdwara Kali Devi, Dera Ismail Khan

\*Gurdwara Chota Nankiana, Sakardu

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Balakot (Hazara)

\*Gurdwara Nanaksar, Tilakpur, Sialkot

\*Gurdwara Ber Saheb, Sialkot

\*Baoli Saheb, Sialkot

\*Gurdwara Nanaksar, Sahuwal

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Seoke

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Mallha

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Deoke, Pasrur

\*Gurdwara Gurhattri, Peshawar

\*Gurdwara Punja Saheb, Hasan Abdal, Attock

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Kattas (Chakwal)

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Bal Gundai

\*Gurdwara Choa Saheb, Rohtas

\*Gurdwara Nanaksar, Dinga, District Gujrat

\*Gurdwara Kirji Saheb, Jaesukhhwala

\*Gurdwara Nanaksar, District Jhang

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Haftmadr

\*Gurdwara Pehli Patshahi, Fateh Bhindar

\*Gurdwara Darbar Saheb, Kartarpur, Narowal

\*Gurdwara Bhai Behlul, Qadivind, Kasur

\*Gurdwara Jhari Saheb, Targe, Kasur

\*Gurdwara Janam Asthan Satgur Ramdasji

\*Gurdwara Divankhana, Lahore

\*Dharamsala Bhai Harnam Singhji

\*Gurdwara Pancham Patshahi, Beharwal

\*Gurdwara Thamm Saheb, Jumbar, Kasur

\*Gurdwara Panjvin Patshahi, Hanjra \*Gurdwara Panjvin Patshahi, Jatri \*Gurdwara Panjvin Patshahi, Sheikhum \*Gurdwara Panjvin Patshahi, Chak Ramdas \*Gurdwara Baoli Saheb, Rang Mahel, Lahore \*Gurdwara Budhu Da Aava, Lahore \*Gurdwara Laal Khooh, Lahore \*Gurdwara Dera Saheb, Guru Arjun Dev ji \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Mansehra \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Chitti Gatti \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Dhamial \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Narali \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Bazurgwal \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Gujarat \*Gurukotha, Wazirabad \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Rasool Nagar \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Hafizabad \*Gurdwara Ichhaprik Vinni, Hafizabad \*Gurdwara Guru Amardas ji, Dhuni \*Gurdwara Pind Bache, Hafizabad \*Gurdwara Khara Saheb, Bhaike Mattu \*Gurdwara Panjvin Chhevin Patshahi \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Kotli Bhaga \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Galotian \*Gurdwara Kund Saheb, Rehsma \*Gurdwara Gurusar, Rehsma, Sialkot \*Gurdwara Chaumala Saheb, Lahore \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Mozang \*Gurdwara Shikar Garh Saheb, Kachha \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Rampura \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Minhala Kalan \*Gurdwara Beri Saheb Kharak, Lahore \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Jhallian \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Dhilwan \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Padhana \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Rampura \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Hadyara \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Guru Mangat \*Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi, Amarsadhu \*Gurdwara Tahli Saheb, Shakargarh

\*Janam Asthan Mata Saheb Kaur ji

\*Dargah Hazrat Baba Farid Gunj Shakar

- \*Khuh Baba Farid, 17 EB Burewala \*Gurdwara Tibba Baba Farid, Lahore \*Kabar Rai Bular, Nankana Saheb \*Chilla Gah & Hazrat Hamza Ghaus \*Mizar Sain Mian Meer ji \*Mizar Hazrat Shah Daula, Gujarat City \*Samadh Baba Shri Chand, Lahore \*Darbar Sri Chand Bhumman Shah \*Bhumman Shah District, Okara \*Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh, Peshawar \*Gurdwara Bhai Than Singh, Attock \*Gurdwara Nirankari, Rawalpindi \*Gurdwara Singh Sabha, Rawalpindi \*Gurdwara Bhai Mani Singh, Rawalpindi \*Gurdwara Sri Diyal Sar, Topi \*Gurdwara Darma Khel, Bannu \*Gurdwara Jogiwara, Bannu \*Gurdwara Bhai Mangat, Bannu \*Gurdwara Damdma Saheb, Gujranwala \*Gurdwara Ajnianwala \*Gurdwara Bhai Lalu \*Shaheed Gunj Bhai Mani Singh ji \*Shaheed Gunj Bhai Taroo Singh ji \*Gurdwara Shaheed Gunj Singhan Singhnian \*Gurdwara Bhai Pheru, District Lahore \*Gurdwara Shaheed Bhai Daleep Singh ji \*Gurdwara Bhai Khan Chan, Maghiana
- \*Dharamsala Bhai Hema ji, Maghiana \*Gurdwara Bhai Hema ji, Jhang \*Gurdwara Ameer Shah ji Dera Ismail Khan \*Gurdwara Garh Fateh Shah, Jhang \*Gurdwara Kangan pur, District Kasur \*Gurdwara Hardo Sehari, District Kasur \*Gurdwara Baba Jamiat Singh ji, Kahna Nau \*Gurdwara Baba Gurbux Singh, Nenakot \*Gurdwara Daftoo, District Kasur \*Gurdwara Nanakvara, Nirankarian \*Gurdwara Bhai Gurdas ji, Shikarpur \*Samadh Alpa, District Kasur \*Samadh Sardar Charhat Singh \*Samadh Sardar Mahan Singh \*Janam Asthan Maharaja Ranjit Singh \*Samadh Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Lahore \*Janam Asthan S Hari Singh ji Nalwa \*Samadh Sardar Hari Singh ji Nalwa \*Samadh Phola Singh, Akali, Naushehra \*Gurdwara Nehang Singh, Naushehra Cantt. \*Samadh Jamadar Khushhal Singh \*Samadh Sardar Jawahir Singh, Lahore \*Samadh Maharaja Kharak Singh & Kanwar Naunehal Singh \*Samadh Maharani Nakain \*Samadh Maharaja Sher Singh \*Gurdwara Mahmesar, Lallyani \*Gurdwara Ajeet Sar

#### **Conservation of Gurdwaras in Pakistan**

The Sikh Foundation of Switzerland plan to send a team of conservation experts to study historical gurdwaras in Pakistan and seek to restore them to their pristine glory. For the purpose, the Foundation has also announced financial support to the Pakistan Evacuee Trust Property Board (PETPB).

Founder-president Karan Singh has taken up the matter with PETPB officials as well as with the president of Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (PSGPC) Bishan Singh and said that both have shown keen interest in getting such preliminary studies done for preserving historical Sikh shrines. "We will get a study conducted of all the gurdwaras which require urgent restoration work," he said. Karan Singh said that the Foundation was most perturbed after seeing photographs taken by Sikh devotees during their visits to Pakistan, some of these historical gurdwaras "lying in shambles".

## The lone Sikh School in Pakistan

uring my last trip to Nankana Sahib, I visited the only Sikh School in Pakistan, at the Janam Ashthan. This is a private school, started, managed and funded by the small Sikh community of about 70 households. Most of them are from the lower middle class by Pakistani/Indian standards. The school named "Sri Guru Nanak Jee Khalsa Public School", has over 600 students from pre-school to high school. Among the students, 200 are Sikhs and the rest a mixture of Muslim, Christian and some Hindus.

The school charges a small fee of about Pak Rs. 250 per month, where private schools charge over Rs 2000 per month. The Sikh male students are all keshadhari, wearing the patka or turban. The school has very basic facilities, rather inadequate.

They do not even have text books for teaching Punjabi (Gurmukhi), although over 200 students learn that subject. The teachers use photo copies of some old text books at random. They do not have any text books to teach Gurmat, or Sikh Studies, or Sikh history, use some self compiled notes to teach. The other text books are as prescribed by the Pakistan government and published locally.

They have one small computer teaching room with a few old computers, donated by a Sikh pilgrim, the science laboratory has only one sink with one tap, no apparatus, just a few small items on display, but still they teach science subjects. The library had been just started, with about 20 books. The results in high school are indeed very good. The problem is lack of funds with utter lack of support from the Sikh community and organisations in India and overseas.

I arranged to send a sizeable number of text books for Punjabi and Sikh studies for all classes, from level 1 to level 9, such as were available at Amritsar. I also approached the Dharam Parchar Committee of the SGPC to send books on Sikh History and Dharam Pothi for all levels, which they publish for "free distribution." Despite their promise, nothing has been done thus far, during five months since I sought their help. I also requested them to make a regular cash grant from education fund (of over Rs.5 Crores) which SGPC annually disburse to Khalsa Schools in India. But nothing has happened. Though the former president of SGPC during her visit to Nankana Sahib, boasted of making the school so big as to turn into a Sikh university soon, but nothing has been done.

I appeal to all those who can help to please donate money by direct remittance to the school in the name written earlier, or send books to teach Punjabi, Sikh studies and other related material. They will also be grateful to receive books on all subjects and topics so as to build library for reference by the students. Also, relevant aids and equipment to teach all branches of science to students from class 1 to class 12. However, please contact the school prior to sending any equipment to ensure that they are able to get those goods cleared through customs. The books can however best be sent by sea mail post parcels, as those would be delivered to them. Those Sikhs who go to Nankana Sahib, please do visit the Khalsa School which is in the same street, about a block away.

I located a copy of the monthly accounting report sent by school to all Sikh families at Sri Nankana Sahib, who support this school financially, as members and contribute to make up any shortfall. The original building has been provided by Pakistan Gurdwara Management Committee, but all major improvements and expansion are done by funds raised by the school committee.

It is educative to note that the school, in teaching over 600 students from pre-school (KG) to high school (year 12), has a total fee income from students of Rs 88,165 (\$1600 approx.) per month and their regular running expenses are Rs 94,231 (\$1800 approx.) per month. Imagine running a school with 13 classes for over 600 students, with a running budget of a paltry \$1800 per month! Those of us living in OECD countries and other well-off societies will realise how hard it is for them. If only 500 Sikhs worldwide donate on an average \$5 per month, the school budget can increase to more than twice the current level, allowing them to increase the number of students and raise the standard of teaching with better paid teachers and better school equipment.

Prominent Sikhs from India usually just go past the gate of this Khalsa school when they visit Janam Asthan, which is at the end of the same street. They spend millions for a Golden Palki, (now kept for display in an open pavilion) donate millions to make new Sarovars, where Sikhs take a dip only on three or four Gurpurabs a year; they are spending millions to make guests houses with 600 rooms, but have no funds to spare for this school!

The school has requested permission to use the 600-room guest house vacant for most of the year to accommodate boarders for this school, as Sikh students from other cities in Pakistan too can study here, the sole Khalsa School in Pakistan.

Is anyone listening?

### Muslim Devotees of Guru Nanak

uru Nanak was a messenger of goodwill and peace, an embodiment of communal harmony. His noble teachings have influenced the religious, social and political thoughts of millions of people of India and abroad. Born in a small town about 65 kilometres to the west of Lahore, more than 500 years ago, he spent much of his life in travels to various parts of the sub-continent and many neighbouring countries. Among prophets of the world, Guru Nanak occupies an exalted place.

Guru Nanak was not at all keen on starting a new religion with particular forms or signs. He never believed in any dogma, he deprecated

caste rites, and denounced silly superstitions and ritualistic customs. Wherever he went he debunked sanctimonious and self-seeking priests of both Hinduism and Islam.

Guru Nanak preached that there was one God-the Creator and Sustaniner of the Universe and that all human beings were His children; there was no high and no low by birth. Religious titles had no attraction nor meaning for him. In his eyes "there was no Hindu and no Muslim". All were members of one wonderous humanity. Thus, service of mankind was the true religion according to Guru Nanak who throughout his life stressed the significance of humility, love and affection for fellow-beings, cooperation and mutual help. He preached equality among human beings and raised the status of women to that of men.

He demonstrated the dignity of labour by working as a cowherd keeper, as a tiller of land and as a shopkeeper. Guru Baba Nanak lit the candle over five centuries ago and that candle can never be put out. The spirit of Nanak marches on and on forever.

In his extensive travels, Guru Nanak met many Muslims, who exchanged views with him and were fascinated by his teachings. He had numerous Muslim devotees, who looked upon him as a world-teacher and as a prophet of mankind.



As a child, Guru Nanak received education at the hands of Muhammad Hussain who had no children of his own and dearly loved Nanak who was an exceedingly precocious boy. Once Nanak asked his teacher the real meaning of the Arabic alphabet. The teacher kept quiet, but his pupil–Nanak–explained it to him thus:

Alifà Allah nun-yad kar, Ghoflat manon visar, Saas je palte nam bin, Dhrig jiwan sansar,

(By the first letter of the Arabic alphabet, that is Alif, we mean that we should ever remember the Almighty God, without Whom life is useless.)

Nanak would not stay long at school and began to wander into the woods nearby where holy men of profound learning used to dwell and contemplate.

#### Rai Bular

Rai Bular, the Muslim ruler of Talwandi, became extremely devoted to Guru Nanak. He regarded Guru Nanak as redeemer of humanity. Minding the cow herd one day, Nanak took the cattle out, sat under a banyan tree, mediating on higher things of mind and spirit, while the cattle grazed at another farm. The aggrieved farmer reported the matter to his father who was enraged, but Rai Bular mollifed him by paying

- NISHAAN -

off the entire loss. Extensive tracts of land were then donated by Rai Bular to three different gurdwaras, which are in Nanakana Sahib (now Pakistan) as token of his great regard for Guru Nanak.



#### **Nawab Daulat Khan**

At Sultanpur, Nanak was appointed as store-keeper for Nawab Daulat Khan. While he was in service of the Nawab a conspiracy was hatched accusing him of embezzling government money. Nanak was wrongly imprisoned and the cell where he was confined is since called Kotha Sahib. The court of law, however, acquitted him, but communal bigots would not forgive him for raising the slogan, "There is no Hindu and no Mussalman."

Nanak declared himself above communal or religious distinction and so was invited to participate in prayers at the mosque. The Guru went there, but remained sitting alone, so exposed the hypocrisy and hollowness of both the Kazi and the Nawab; Nanak gave them the definition of a true Muslim:

"Make mercy the mosque.

Let faith and sincerity be thy prayer-carpet, and what is just and lawful be thy holy book.

Let sweetness of behaviour be thy fasting.

(Let virtuous deeds be thy Kaaba; truth thy spiritual guide

Charity thy creed and prayer and

Unruffled temperament thy rosary.

Do all this my friend and God will bestow honour upon thee."

On hearing these immortal words from Guru Nanak, Nawab Daulat Khan was stirred and said. "O' Nanak what a blessing it would be to me to have a dervish like thee as my Vizier. Do stay with me.

People said nasty things about thee out of jealousy. I would not let thee go now that I know whom thou art."But Nanak replied, "Master, I value thy words, but no longer will I serve thee. There another urgent call for me to answer." The Nawab then bowed to him, saying, "I will not stand between thee and thy Master. Go and do as thy God biddeth thee. I have seen in thee, what I have read in my holy books: the vision of God."

#### Sikander Lodi

Judged even by standards of the sixteenth century, Sikander Lodi was a shortsighted bigot. He received information that a Faqir whose religious tenets were different both from the fundamentals of the Quran as well as the Vedic teachings, was openly preaching to people and with the importance and

popularity that he was gaining might in the end prove a serious threat to rule of the Lodi dynasty in northern India. He ordered that Guru Nanak and Mardana be imprisoned. Both of them were sent to work at handmills to grind corn. The Guru did hard labour for some time. Then he ordered Mardana to play the rebeck. Mardana sang one of the soul stirring holy songs of the Master Guru Nanak. All the prisoners forgot their mills and the wardens their duty of enforcing labour. There gathered in the precincts of the jail a large crowd who appeared to pose some danger to the administration. On hearing this Sikander Lodi himself came and begged forgiveness of the Guru, who said that forgiveness could be obtained by sincere repentance and honest effort to undo the wrong done to innocent creatures of God. The King set free all prisoners and became an ardent admirer of Guru Nanak.

The Guru was arrested for the second time by the invading hordes of Babar at Eminabad, then called Sayyidpur or Syedpur. Guru Nanak was given a load to carry and Mardana was required to act as a groom for the horse by a commander of the marching Mughal army, named Mir Khan. Here also the same story was repeated. The Guru is said to have had a long talk with Babar who, like Sikander Lodi earlier, was highly impressed and the Guru along with other prisoners were set free.

#### **Karoia of Kartarpur**

Sometimes, cities and towns are founded as repentance shown by a sinner. This story is of Karoia, a Muslim landlord of a village situated on the banks of the river Ravi. Guru Nanak stayed there for some time and became tremendously popular with the villagers there. Karoia resented all this, and decided to ask the Guru to move away from his land. Karoria mounted the horse which stumbled on the way and the rider fell down. Next time when he set out with the same purpose, he lost his eyesight. He sincerely repented and sought forgiveness of the Guru and offered a portion of his estate, where the Guru could found a village, Guru Nanak smiled and said, "The land is of Kartar. The land belongs to God and you are blessed for dedicating it to divine service. We shall call the village Kartarpur, Seat of the Almighty."

#### **Nawab Faiz Talb Khan**

Nawab Faiz Talb Khan was the ruler of Junagarh in Gujarat, where Guru Nanak stayed for some time. He listened to the religious discourses of Guru Nanak, who was always clear in vision and convincing. The Nawab became a lifelong devotee of Guru Nanak and his rationale. In the memory of his visit his wooden slippers have been preserved in a *dharamsala*, near the fort. During the days that Guru Nanak spent there, the Nawab also started a free kitchen where the poor and the needy, irrespective of caste of creed, could get food all. This was in honour of Guru Nanak, whose message of love and harmony was always listened to with rapt attention throughout the length and breadth of India as well as in surrounding lands.

#### Sheikh Brahm

Sheikh Brahm's real name was Behram or Ibrahim. He lived in Pak Pattan, Montgomery District, was a disciple of Baba Farid and regarded as a god fearing and pious *faqir*. One day Guru Nanak and Mardana went to see him but were told that Sheikh Brahm was passing his life in extreme austerity and doing penance in the nearby jungle.

The Sheikh partook nothing more than a cup of goat's milk which he had once in twenty-fours hours brought by a man named Ghaus who used to bring this milk every morning. The Sheikh had cut himself off from the world, while doing *tapasya* Guru Nanak felt all the more determined to approach the Sheikh in his retreat. Ghaus agreed to take the Guru

to the Sheikh on the condition that both Nanak and Mardana remained hidden behind trees and that if the Sheikh gave his permission only then would they see him otherwise not. The Guru and Mardana readily agreed.

The following day, Nanak, Mardana and Ghaus reached abode of the Sheikh who was sitting outside. Ghaus gave him milk and then talked of the two visitors, who wanted to see the Sheikh. By a gesture Ghaus made Baba Nanak and his companion walk towards the Sheikh, who was surprised to see the resplendent glow upon the face of Nanak. After a while, when he noticed the well-built Guru Nanak, he remarked. "Evidently, you take too much care of your body which must be mortified, otherwise it leads to quickening of passions and carnal desire, which overpower man and ultimately ruins him."

Guru Nanak replied, "No, we must try to subdue and sublimate these passions and keep them under control. It is no good to mortify our body or physical frame. On the other hand, we must keep our body fit and then use it for doing service to our fellow beings."

The Sheikh reflected, "You are said to be a bard of God. Please sing me, His ode, as the bards of kings sing theirs." There upon the Guru recited *Asa di Var*, which depicts the process through which man attains the status of a *devta* or godly person.

This had a wounderful effect upon the Shiekh, who became a changed man and thereafter began to hold Nanak in very high esteem and respected him as his own 'Guru'.

#### **Shah Shaaf**

In his peregrination, Guru Nanak reached Panipat, where a renowned Muslim Sufi, Shah Sharaf, had made his abode. Shah Sharaf wanted to know why Nanak was wearing the dress of a householder and why he had not shaved his head. Nanak answered. "It is the mind that one must shave, not one's head. To be humble like the dust is the true way to shave one's mind." As regards his dress, Baba Nanak added. "One must abandon pleasures and egoism and, thus, surrender one's head to God. Then whatever dress one wears is sacred." Continuing his discourse, Guru Nanak held, "One must submit to the instruction of the Wise, to cherish God in the heart should be the

gown and cap of the Holy. He who controls his mind and relishes both pleasure and pain alike and lives a life of poise and composure, for him it matters not what dress he wears."

When asked as to what sect and caste he belonged and how he lived Nanak replied, "I belong to the sect of the right path. My caste is that of fire and wind. I live in the manner of the tree and the earth. Like them I endure being cut or dug into. Like a river, I care not whether one throws flowers into me or dust. Like the sandal wood I consider that alone to be living which is fragrant."

Shah Sharaf asked, "What are the characteristics of a dervish?" The Guru replied, "The dervish is who while living is dead to the world; who is awake while the world sleeps; who covets nothing and has no pride and who having lost all meets the Beloved that is God."

Shah Sharaf was so moved at these statements that he bowed at Nanak's feet and kissed his hands, saying, "Indeed, thou are a man of God and to behold thee, is to behold the vision of God."

#### Pir Bahauddin

Pir Bahauddin was a Muslim saint of Multan. When Guru Nanak arrived there, the former sent him a cup full to the brim with milk, signifying thereby that in the town of Multan there was no place for another faqir. The saying goes that Mutan had four things to offer-dust, heat, beggars and graveyards.

Guru Nanak returned the cup putting a jasmine flower on top of it as symbolic answer and nothing could be more apt. Pir Bahaudddin was astonished. The Guru had suggested that just as that flower with its weightlessness floated on the surface and displaced not the milk, so would he live in their midst, with the burden only of fragrance. From that time onwards, the Pir would bow in his prayers in the direction of Kartarpur the abode of Guru Nanak, as he saw the light of God in that direction.

#### Sajjan

Sajjan was a notorious Muslim thug of Tulambah, situated near the present railway station of Makhdumpur in Multan District. Anybody who entered his habitation was poisoned and killed and deprived of his belongings. Guru Nanak and Mardana visited him and confronted him with the lurid picture of sins committed by him and told him the definition of a sajjan, that is a friend:

Bronze is bright and shinning; Rub it and it turns black, And a hundred waxings cannot remove it; They are sajjan, they are true comdrades, Where friendship bears the mark of sincerity, Who are present in a friend's hour of need."

Sajjan was overwhelmed to realise the horror and enormity of his dark deeds and so repented. The Guru taught him the first stanzas of Japuji and showed him the way to feel the presence of God, while awake or asleep. The Muslim thug when thus converted became a saint, under the benign guidance of Guru Nanak.

#### Mardana

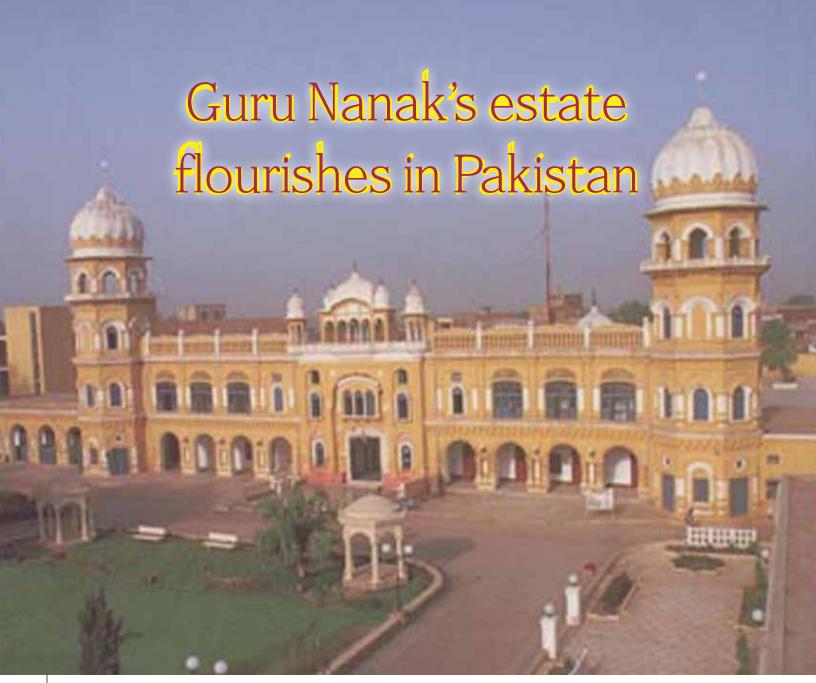
How worthless material could be turned into precious metal is evident from the example of Mardana. He was a poor minstrel of Talwandi and was dependent on villagers, whom he served in various capacities. Guru Nanak, who came to exalt those of low degree, raised him so that his name has become immortal. His deep devotion earned the love of his Master Guru Nanak, who gave him a rebeck as a wedding gift when the Guru was to be married.

The instrument was devised and designed by the Guru himself and manufactured by Bhai Phiranda. It remained with Mardana till the end. Mardana turned out to be a fearless and impressive musician, would play on the rebeck as the Guru sang his spontaneous, celestial songs or he would sweetly sing those songs himself as the Master sat in mute adoration.

History is eloquent of the fact that Mardana served Baba Nanak with single-minded devotion and unusual faithfulness. Guru had an implicit confidence in him.

No account of Guru Nanak's relations with the Muslims is complete without mentioning Mian Mitha Pir Jalal, Baba Buddhan Shah, Vali Kandhari, Pir Abdul Rahman and Fakir Murad of Baghdad.

Baba Nanak had many thousands of Muslims as his admirers, followers and devotees, for he did not belong to any sect or community: service of humanity was the essence of his faith. Guru Nanak's gospel is for all time and all climes. Let us read again and again what he taught mankind and imbibe the true spirit of his message.



At Nankana Sahib.

lessed by Baba Nanak, the Bhatti family of Talwandi (now Nankana Sahib) has been a shining example of Muslim-Sikh brotherhood for over half a millennium. Rai Bular Bhatti, a contemporary of Guru Nanak Dev and a devout Muslim, became Guru Nanak's second disciple. After Bibi Nanki, Guru Nanak's sister, he was the second person to recognise that Guru Nanak was no ordinary mortal and that he was a divine soul.

Sakhis, pertaining to the life of Guru Nanak, feature Rai Bular repeatedly. In the sakhi where villagers are furious about Nanak's cattle eating their crop it is Rai Bular who got the crop surveyed and found it to be

undamaged. In yet another *sakhi*, Rai Bular is said to have spotted a hooded cobra providing shade to the sleeping Guru Nanak. This strengthened his belief that Guru Nanak was no ordinary mortal.

The blessings that the Bhatti family received have seen them prosper through 19 generations, over five centuries.

Today when the world is getting divided on a religious basis, the children of Rai Bular Bhatti continue to carry on the tradition of the Bhatti clan. An important functionary of the now defunct Nankana Sahib Foundation, the late Rai Bashir worked hard to build an institution on the 10 acres donated by his nephews Rai Sarwar Khan and Rai Ahmed Khan. He laid the foundation stone of the complex in June 1994.

Even though Rai Bular's family today are scattered all over the world, his descendants are actively involved with the promotion of Muslim-Sikh brotherhood. The family has kept alive their ancestral links with the Gurus. Despite being devout Muslims, the family has emotional and spiritual attachment with Sikhism for the past many generations.

The Adi Granth, translated into English from Gurmukhi by Dr Ernest Trumpp, finds repeated references to Rai Bular. Members of the Bhatti family make special efforts to participate in all Sikh celebrations. They especially came to take part in the tercentenary celebrations of the birth of Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib some time ago. They are bestowed with the honour of leading the religious processions held at Nankana Sahib each year to celebrate the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak.

According to historians, the Rais were originally Bhatti Rajputs and Rai Bular, a contemporary of Guru Nanak, was the ruler of Rai Bhoe di Talwandi where Nanakana Sahib is now located. Mehta Kalyan Das (Kalu), a well-read man of the Bedi caste, was an employee of Rai Bular. Nanak was born to Mehta Kalu and his wife Mata Tripta in 1469, at a place now known as Janam Asthan in Nankana Sahib town, which is now also raised to the status of a district.

According to the ancient revenue records in possession of the family, Rai Bular gave 247 murabas of land to Gurdwara Janam Asthan along with an annual jagir of Rs 9996. He also gave another 220 murabas to Gurdwara Bal Lila and extended an annual jagir of Rs 31 and another 290 muraba and annual grant of Rs 50 to Gurdwara Mal Sahib. This entire land of Nankana Sahib given to Guru Nanak by Rai Bular amounts to 757 murabas (approx. 18,750 acres) and is now controlled by the Evacuee Trust Property Board of Pakistan and leased out to the people of Nankana Sahib.

Rai Bular chose to give his most fertile agricultural lands to Guru Nanak after he discovered Guruji's divine powers. It is on this land, and on the exact spot where Guru Nanak was born, that Gurdwara Janam Asthan was later built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, incidentally, also had the same lineage as the Bhattis, who were direct descendants of Raja Rai Bhuni Khan-whose one son Rai Sanspal was the ancestor of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, while the other son Raja Manpal was the ancestor of the Bhatti clan. This fact finds mention in Tarik-e-Bhattian, a book on the history of the Bhatti family.

Today the Nankana Sahib Estate consists of about 16,962 acres, mainly leased to farmers and residents of Nankana Sahib. Almost all houses in Nankana Sahib are built on the property donated by the Bhatti family. "Babaji" (as Guru Nanak is reverently called by the Bhatti family), says Rai Mohammad Saleem Akram Bhatti, the 19th generation descendant of Rai Bular, "is revered by all of us as our holy father."



Rai Saleem Bhatti with his father Rai Akram Bhatti at their home in Nankana Sahib.

The family had directly managed and looked after this property on behalf of Guru Nanak many years after him by the successive heads of the Bhatti family. Father-son duo Rai Rehmat Khan and Rai Anayat collected revenue after the Partition and deposited it with the Gurdwara Management, which was in turn used for the welfare and development of local Sikhs and the seven gurdwaras in Nankana Sahib.

The Rai Bular family has maintained the highest traditions of Muslim-Rajput culture. It is said that during the Partition, Rai Hussain, father of Rai Bashir, personally escorted over 1,000 Sikhs to safety. Heartbroken by the Partition and the massacre of thousands of lives, he soon passed away in 1948.

The earliest historical reference to the city of Talwandi (now Nankana Sahib) is found in various ballads. There is mention of the first siege of Jaisalmer that occurred during the reign of Alla-ud-din Khilji (1295-1315). Khilji's Army had attacked Jaisalmer, a princely state in Rajputana, to avenge raids by Rajputs. It is said that after a bloody battle, one of the Bhatti

Rajput princes who survived was taken hostage. He was sent to exile somewhere north of Punjab, near Kotli (about 40 miles from the present-day Lahore).

Folklore has it that Alla-ud-din Khilji was so astounded by this boy's bravery that he paid a tribute to the young prince giving him about 1,50,000 acres of Punjab's most fertile land as compensation for his loss and also as an enticement to keep him from rallying troops and building a new Rajput Bhatti Army. This exiled prince is said to have named the place Raipur and later Rai Bhoe di Talwandi (after his son). Nankana literally means Nanak da ana or the coming of Nanak.

In early 1994, a move was initiated to set up the Nankana Sahib Foundation. The purpose of the trust, which was to come up at Kot Hussain Khan, about 5 km from Nankana Sahib, was to generate revenue for the maintenance of Nankana Sahib. The Bhatti family donated 10 acres for the same, but the Pakistan Government of Benazir Bhutto did not give permission for the trust and till today the place has only a gate at the site.

Since almost all houses of Nankana Sahib are built on the property given to Guru Nanak by the Bhattis, the Nankana Sahib Estate is the property of the Nankana Sahib Gurdwara (Gurdwara Janam Asthan) and cannot be sold to anyone. Today, about one lakh people reside on this property.

Though all members of the family have always been close to the Sikh community, Rai Hadayat Khan Bhatti, the 17th descendant of Rai Bular, deserves special mention as he devoted a lot of time to strengthening Sikh-Muslim relations. He organised the Sikh procession on occasion of the 500th anniversary of Guru Nanak. He inculcated the spirit of service in his two sons, Rai Aslam Bhatti and Rai Akram Bhatti, who have conducted Sikh pilgrims to the gurdwara and invited them to their house.

Rai Akram Bhatti, a practising lawyer at Nankana Sahib welcomes Sikh pilgrims with open arms. His faith in Sikhism is so strong that he says that he owes the birth of his elder son Rai Mohammad Saleem Akram Bhatti to the blessings of Baba Nanak. Saleem, a young criminal lawyer at the Lahore High Court, says: "It is because of Baba Nanak that I am in this world. For us Babaji has a special place in our lives and our family is blessed because of the grace bestowed upon us by Baba Nanak."

Talking about the Muslim-Sikh ties that the family has upheld over the centuries, Rai Akram Bhatti says that Rai Hussain Bhatti was awarded the highest honour for his generosity, leadership, public service and vision by Queen Victoria at the golden jubilee celebrations of her coronation in 1887.



Rai Hussain Bhatti



Rai Hadayat Bhatti

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, too, had acknowledged the role of this extraordinary family and its immense closeness to Sikhism. Ranjit Singh bestowed upon Rai Issa Khan (15th generation) the title of Rai Bhadur and he was put in charge of a sub-jail in Thatta Issa village. He was also appointed honorary magistrate and given the responsibility to collect revenue.

"Militancy in Punjab in the 1980s had a direct impact on the pilgrim flow to Nankana Sahib. We are happy that with the return of peace, the number of pilgrims has risen, giving the Bhattis an opportunity to serve them agian" says Rai Akram Bhatti.

# - NISHAAN -

## Look back in (not so long ago) time.

#### **Extracts from Report of the Chairman of the Punjab Boundary Commission**

he task of delimiting a boundary in the Punjab is a difficult one. The claims of the respective parties ranged over a wide field of territory, but in my judgment the truly debatable ground in the end proved to lie in and around the area between the Beas and Sutlej rivers on the one hand, and the river Ravi on the other. The fixing of a Boundary in this area was further complicated by the existence of canal systems, so vital to the life of the Punjab but developed only under the conception of a single administration, and of systems of road and rail communication, which have been planned in the same way. There was also the subborn geographical fact of the respective situations of Lahore and Amritsar, and the claims to each or both of those cities which each side vigorously maintained. After weighing to the best of my ability such other factors as appeared to me relevant as affecting the fundamental basis of contiguous majority areas, I have come to the decision set out in the Schedule which thus becomes the award of the Commission. I am conscious that there are legitimate criticisms to be made of it, as there are, I think, of any other line that might be chosen.

I have hesitated long over those not inconsiderable areas east of the Sutlej River and in the angle of the Beas and Sutlej Rivers in which Muslim majorities are found. But on the whole I have come to the conclusion that it would be in the true interest of neither State to extend the territories of the West Punjab to a strip on the far side of the Sutlej and that there are factors such as the disruption of railway communications and water systems that ought in this instance to displace the primary fact that the Dipalpur Canal, which serves areas in the West Punjab, takes off from the Ferozepore headworks and I find it difficult to envisage a satisfactory demarcation of boundary at this point that is not accompanied by some arrangement for joint control of the intake of the different canals of dependent on these headworks.

I have not found it possible to preserve undivided the irrigation system of the Upper Bari Doab Canal, which extends from Madhopur in the Pathankot Tehsil to the western border of the district of Lahore, although I have made small adjustments of the Lahore-Amritsar district boundary to mitigate some of the consequences of this severance: nor can I see any means of preserving under one territorial jurisdiction the Mandi hydroelectric Scheme which supplies power in the districts of Kangra, Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Lahore, Jullundur,

#### The Punjab and its peoples

There had never been much formal religion in our homes and villages anyway. . . . our home was not irreligious; we feared God and invoked his name, but there was no daily worship, ritual or much visible influence of religion on our daily life. We were only conscious of our religion at festivals and fasts, weddings, namings and death; and then only in a mechanical sort of way. There was ample bonhomie and camraderie among people irrespective of difference of caste, creed or religion. Baisakhi was a secular festival, the only one of its kind in which Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs participated. Though celebrated both in town and country, this was essentially a farmer's festival, a kind of thanks-giving . . . everybody danced to the tune of Bhangra and Gidda (popular dance forms in the Punjab, the former for men and the latter for women) in gay abandon, enjoying lavish hospitality and goodwill from all, so characteristic of Punjabi life.

Besides, the Punjabi community was cemented by common bonds of language, values, dress, manners of culture, and above all a common outlook on life. It was true that among Muslims, owing to collective prayers offered on Fridays, the sense of community seemed stronger and more widespread but nothing came in the way of Punjabiat."

Prakash Tandon in "Punjabi Century"

Ludhiana, Ferozepore, Sheikhupura and Lyallpur. I think it is only right to express the hope that, where the drawing of a boundary line cannot avoid disrupting such unitary services as canal irrigation, railways, and electric power transmission, a solution may be found by agreement between the two states for some joint control of what has hitherto been a valuable common service.

I am conscious too that the award cannot go far towards satisfying sentiments and aspirations deeply held on either side but directly in conflict as to their bearing on the placing of the boundary. If means are to be found to gratify to the full those sentiments and aspirations, I think that they must be found in political arrangements with which I am not concerned, and not in the decision of a boundary line drawn under the terms of reference of this Commission.

# A new Punjabi Century?

he Punjab was one of the states of India that suffered horribly when the country was Partitioned in 1947 into India and Pakistan. "The Punjab could well be the key to heal the rift between the two nations and a new South Asian synergy" according to the thesis by Tridivesh Singh Maini in his book: South Asian Cooperation and the Role of the Punjabs [Siddharth Publications, New Delhi. Pages: 180. Rs 275]

The book was released at Delhi in February 2007 by both Kuldeep Nayar and Shekhar Gupta. Thereafter, in Lahore it was released by Chaudhry Aitzaz Ahsan,

### South Asian Cooperation and Role of the Punjabs

senior leader of PPP, prominent advocate and author of *The Indus Saga*. In the USA, the book was released by Dr Akbar Ahmed, Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies, and Professor of International Relations at The School of International Service, American University, Washington DC. Ahmed has been a guiding influence on Maini and encouraged him towards such coexistence initiatives. This book is Maini's way of adding to the peace process.

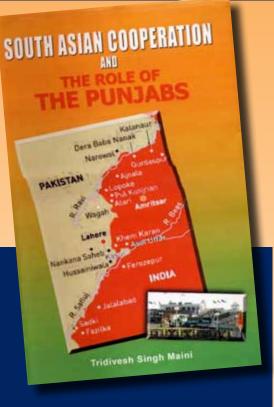
In his words: My attempt has been to lay an emphasis on the emotional trajectory of cooperation in South Asia (which) component encompasses cultural exchanges, promoting tourism by giving free access to religious shrines, having literary exchanges and initiating bus services, so that people can meet their relatives and friends on either side of the border.

The second objective has been to lay emphasis on the more realistic component of cooperation, which includes recommendations of feasible methods for cooperation in the economic and political sphere. The first point is just the beginning to conflict resolution as it helps in removing animosity and mutual distrust, the second stage helps in actually building a concrete relationship from where the word 'conflict' is just history and nothing beyond. It has been correctly said that:

Contours of what constitutes 'peace' seem to be changing. Generally, it is only supposed to be the absence of 'war'. But now it seems to include a just and equitable order in which there is absence of disparity between regions, peoples and gender.

There is no one definition of regional cooperation as different regions have varied political, cultural and socio-economic structures. It is for this reason that I have not referred to the traditionally–used EU model for cooperation. However, some salient features of cooperation can be fleshed out:

Generally, cooperation manifests only 'economic cooperation' but then fails to take into account other areas like cooperation in the realm of policy making, tourism, education and culture.



Borders remain (although they really are irrelevant) and do not act as a hindrance to the hassle-free movement of citizens, free exchange of thoughts and free movement of goods.

One of my other objectives has been to show the importance of border provinces or regions as agencies for improving relations, specifically if they have some common cultural characteristics and a common heritage. Apart from this, for mutual economic benefits they will be keen to solve disputes at the earliest. In a way, it may not be incorrect to call border regions as 'vehicles' for South Asian cooperation.

Apart from the Punjab, other important contiguous Indo-Pak borders are between Rajasthan (India) and Sindh (Pakistan), again between Gujarat (India) and Sindh (Pakistan) as also the two Kashmirs (the capital of the Indian side is Srinagar, while the capital of the Pakistani side is Muzaffarabad). The Rajasthan border with Sindh (Pakistan) is 1035 kilometres, Gujarat border with Pakistan 512 kilometres and Kashmir border 1216 kilometres, while the actual Line of Control, running through this state is 790 kilometres long. The border between Pakistani and Indian Punjab is 547 kilometres. Other important border provinces or sub regions for South Asia are West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura (North Eastern provinces of India, which share borders with Bangladesh), Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh (North Eastern provinces of India, which share borders with China) and Manipur (which shares a border with Burma).

The border regions which have taken the lead in cooperation are the Punjabs, Sindh (Pakistan) and Rajasthan (a rail link between Munabao and Karachi been established, Muzzafarabad and Srinagar (a bus service has started between the two cities) and Sikkim and China, which have begun to trade. Referring to all these border area initiatives, the Indian Prime Minister recently expressed the view that all these initiatives like the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad, the Amritsar-Lahore bus link and "many other connectivities that have been established will help in strengthening the bond of friendship between the neighbours".

The Punjab, referred to as 'Pentapotamia' by the Greeks, derives its name from two Persian words, *Panj* (five), and *Aab* (water, having reference to the five rivers, Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum and Chenab). The former three flow through Indian Punjab, while the latter two are with Pakistani Punjab.

For those not familiar with location of both the Punjabs, the map of border areas of the two would make this so. The most important border out of all those shown is at Wagah. This divides the cities of Lahore and Amritsar, which were earlier considered as "twin cities".



The book launch in New Delhi at the India Islamic Centre, Lodhi Gardens.



The pre-1947 Punjab was located in the North Western part of South Asia, with Afghanistan to its West, the Central Indian Plateau to its East, Kashmir to its North and Sindh and Rajasthan to its South. It first got divided into East (the province in Northern India) while West Punjab in 1947 went to Pakistan. In 1966, East Punjab subsequently got further divided into Himachal Pradesh and Haryana.

The largest part of the Punjab today is Pakistani (West Punjab), which also makes up about 25 per cent of Pakistan's territory and contains approximately 56 per cent of Pakistan's population, while in India, the state of Punjab represents a far less per centage of India's territory and holds just 2.3 per cent of India's massive population.

However, the Punjab has always been a significant region, strategically, culturally and economically. Some of the important cultures which evolved in this region were the Indus Valley Civilisation which thrived here from 3000 B.C. to approximately 1500 BC This was followed by the Vedic period, while inhabitants of the Punjab became hardened and tough as a

result of continious invasions by Persians, Greeks, Mongols, Turks and Afghans (the invaders would cross the Punjab to enter other parts of India) but also developed some strong philosophies.

Amidst the invasions first by invaders like Muhammad Ghauri (around 1200 AD) and later the Mughals from Central Asia, two important philosophies evolved around the same time. The first was Sikhism, founded by Guru Nanak Dev around the 15th century as a reaction to fanaticism and oppression of the weak. Sikhism imbibed philosophies from both Hinduism and Islam. The second was Sufism (it is believed that Sufism, originated in the Middle East), which actually began to thrive in the modern day subcontinent around the 15th century, though one of its pioneers Abu Abdal Chisti came to present day India around the 12th century. One of the significant characteristics of the Sufis was their acceptance of other faiths. They treated individuals of all other faiths as equals and went so far as to even treat them as brothers. It is believed that one of the cardinal principles of their beliefs was talif-i-khulub, or the stringing of hearts.

The period from 16th century to the 18th century saw important developments taking shape in the Punjab, one of the most important developments being transformation of the Sikhs into a marital race and creation of the Khalsa in 1699.

Other significant developments during this period were the decline of the Mughal empire, Nadir Shah's invasions in 1737-1738 to plunder both Lahore and Delhi, tussle between the Afghans, British, Persians and Sikhs to annexe the Punjab.

It was in the early 19th century that Maharaja Ranjit Singh emerged on the scene and took over the Punjab. His rule lasted from 1801-1839. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was the only Sikh ruler and arguably one of the few in the subcontinent who had the distinction of building an empire from the Khyber Pass in the west to Kashmir in the north upto the borders of Tibet, to the Sindh River in the south and in the east to the Sutlej. The main focus however, remained in the Punjab.

The main reason for mentioning Maharaja Ranjit Singh at this stage is that it was his rule which was responsible for building the concept of a composite Punjabi culture (referred to as Punjabiat). While his empire ran on Sikh principles, in practice it was a Punjabi empire, where all communities thrived.

After Ranjit Singh's death, the British took over the Punjab after two Wars which culminated in 1849 and occupied it till India's independence and the subsequent partition of the Punjab in 1947. The British granted British India its independence on 15 August 1947 but also set about the task of partitioning the subcontinent. Sir Cyril Radcliffe led the boundary commission that did the partitioning. One of Radcliffe's most difficult tasks in marking the borders to form the two new states of India and Pakistan was partitioning of the province of Punjab, a Herculean task as most areas of the Punjab had a scattered population of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs.

Radcliffe attempted to draw the boundary to ensure that most villages and towns with a Muslim majority would be in Pakistan and those with a majority of Sikhs and Hindus would remain in India. However, given the size of the Punjab, it was not always possible to draw the boundary to accommodate these religious concentrations, especially keeping in mind the fact that they were scattered.

The commission ultimately decided that 62 per cent of the Punjab's land and 55 per cent of its population would be part of Pakistan and the remainder continue to be part of India. Pakistan's Punjab was granted 63000 square miles of the Punjab province, while Indian Punjab was granted 37000 square miles.

Apart from the large scale transfer of population, which was more than 9 million, the Partition of 1947 resulted in the feeling that the massacres and nightmares, would have to be lived with for decades to come.

It was also the division of what has been called the 'agrarian frontier' through its massive irrigation works. It was the partition of a region and a peoples which had never thought of being partitioned along religious lines.

Interestingly one of the severest criticisms which Radcliffe received was from WH Auden, a poet and who also happened to be his compatriot:

Shut up in a lonely mansion, with police night and day
Patrolling the gardens to keep the assassins away,
He got down to work, to the task of settling the fate
Of millions.
The maps at his disposal were out of date
And the Census Returns almost certainly incorrect,
But there was no time to check them, no time to inspect.

The main reason for using the case study of Punjab as an important border region within South Asia are that apart from Bengal, it was the only other region to be partitioned in 1947. While Bengal had been partitioned before, the partition of Punjab in 1947 was its first and traumatic and unfortunately insanity got the better of Punjabis on both sides during the course of such division.

It has been rightly remarked that Kashmir was not the root cause of Partition. Not one person died in Kashmir in 1947, that only came later. It was the killing fields of Punjab that sowed the seeds of hatred and prejudice for generations to come.

Sixty years later, the emotions of vengeance are giving way to a sense of remorse on both sides and the present generation is very keen to obliterate the baggage of the past. One of the prominent South Asian experts, C. Rajamohan rightly states that:

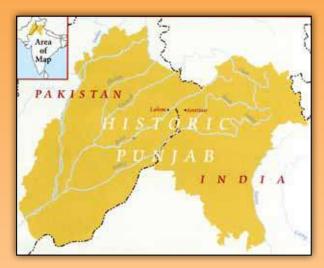
"The most energetic response to the unfolding India-Pakistan engagement has come from the Punjabis. The enthusiasm for rediscovering Punjabiyat, the shared cultural heritage of a community that suffered immensely during Partition, is growing among the elite of the divided province as well as the Punjabi diaspora.

Interestingly, even within the two Punjabs it is the border cities of Amritsar and Lahore (both cities which suffered the most during partition and wars), which are most enthusiastic about improving relations."

Both the Punjabs have very strategic location. Pakistani Punjab, via Indian Punjab can provide the rest of Pakistan an opportunity to access the massive market of Northern India, while Indian Punjab can provide the rest of India access to central Asia and Afghanistan, via Pakistani Punjab. Any economic initiative (a good example being the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India gas pipeline project, TAPI) via Central Asia, has to pass through Pakistani and Indian Punjabs.

Pakistani Punjab is very dominant in the politics of Pakistan and the Punjabi culture, economy and psyche dominate the overall fabric of Pakistan. Understanding this is the basis for Indo-Pak cooperation and ultimately South Asian Cooperation.

It is true that sceptics who point to the regional limitations of Punjabiyat fail to consider the disproportionate influence the two Punjabs have within their own countries. Punjabis make up 56 per cent of Pakistan's population and constitute a disproportionate percentage of the army. According to the Brookings Institution's Stephen P. Cohen, 75 per cent of the army comes from just three districts in Punjab and



Historic Punjab, divided in 1947.

two bordering districts in the Northwest Frontier Province. The officer corps, while more urban and diverse, remains disproportionately Punjabi as well.

In another important article on the role of the two Punjabs in South Asia's politics, C. Rajamohan is not wrong when he writes that:

"From a realistic perspective, it could be argued that the formal engagement between New Delhi and Islamabad is unlikely to succeed without a parallel rapprochement between the divided Punjab.

In the past, Amritsar, Lahore and Kabul were one joint market. For more than five centuries, the Amritsar-Lahore road was the only caravan route for traditional trade of the Indian sub-continent."

In a way, the Punjab on both sides is a 'corridor', which can play a pivotal role in both politics and economics. As they share common culture and language, Punjabis on both sides have the ability to 'connect' and being on a similar wavelength help in other spheres such as economics. Already, the Punjabs on both sides have taken the lead in Indo-Pak cooperation as a result of a common culture and economic interests.

Thus Punjab is an important case study and my attempt has been to come up with realistic solutions for improving the relationship not only between the two Punjabs, but also between India and Pakistan, so that the long awaited dream of a South Asian Union can eventually be fulfilled.

### Two Reviews, Same Views

n order to make South Asia a zone of power, moots this book, India and Pakistan must have a harmonious understanding and one of the easiest and most effective ways to achieve this end is to establish a close relationship between the West (Pakistan-side) and the East (Indian-side) Punjabs.

Maini writes that even after Partition, people still adore their common saints, poets, kings, philanthropists and different organisations have taken initiatives to promote Punjabiat.

If properly harnessed, this common cultural heritage can further lead to the formulation of economic strategies to access global markets and tackle common problems. In fact, the author notes, some of the crucial domains are quite inseparable. For instance, take the matter of irrigation. Cyril Radcliffe had himself recommended joint control over water-management as the canals went to Pakistan and rivers feeding them were with India.

Many goodwill (and useful) gestures such as the Lahore-Amritsar bus-service have been made on both sides. There are further possibilities for symbiotic relationships in the fields of agricultural research, designing of canals, production and selling of power, and industry. The need of the hour is to adopt and apply in a vigorous way the minimalist African models of regional-integration that have moved from the resolution of conflict to the building up of concrete cultural, economic, and political relationships.

Once this West Punjab-East Punjab harmony is established, it would be much easier to introduce progressive innovations in the areas like those of finance, education, and hygiene in the South Asian countries. Here the writer wisely throws a word of caution that while participating in this crucial process, the Punjabis should not work in such a way as to make non-Punjabis feel that the Punjab is hijacking the overall process of cooperation!

The author has based much of his text on personal interviews, questionnaires, papers, and news-items published during the last two years. While his main proposition is quite interesting, commonplace facts and ideas abound. It is difficult to find an in-depth analysis of the issues involved. The book, however, may serve to provide some introductory information to readers not native to India or to the Punjab.

Arun Gaur, The Tribune, Chandigarh

ridivesh Singh Maini represents a refreshingly liberal and original thinking on the contemporary situation. Educated in the UK and USA at some prestigious institutions, he has been engaged with World Bank and Security Council Foundation, Washington DC, as consultant on important assignments. Maini emerges as an eloquent observer and expert on South Asian Affairs.

South Asian cooperation has not moved at rapid pace for various reasons. Prominent among them are political disputes like the Kashmir issue and Indo-Pak rivalry at regional summits. Besides, the lack of creative thinking in the economic realm adds to the tardy pace.

This book, according to the author, purviews all these aspects and turns the lens on the role of the Punjabs (Indian and Pakistani) in 'holistic' South Asian cooperation. It is an endeavour to provide some refreshing solutions for cooperation, both in the context of the Punjabs and South Asia. The book is spread over six chapters followed by recommendations in the South Asian context and some relevant political observations regarding what has been impeding the progress so far.

It is a scholarly document, which deals with SAARC and its achievements and notably the reasons for its failure. But the most noteworthy contribution is the portion pertaining to the relatively recent initiatives taken by the two Punjabs.

It also includes thoughts on Punjabi culture and their ethos. It throws light on the economic interests on both sides of the Wagah border and some other significant factors as also a note of caution for the future in this regard. The author quite genuinely believes and makes a plea that governments on both sides should not be suspicious of Punjabi initiatives for peace and stability.

In fact he feels that the Punjabs could be a corridor for peacemaking and enhancing economic cooperation in South Asia. His recommendations include encouraging free movement of peoples, building a well knit South Asian economy, opening up transit facilities, the important role of the private sector in SAARC, setting up committees for border region cooperation and encouraging Free Trade Zones in border areas.

The book also quotes some relevant examples of such developments in many parts of the world and reflects on what is gradually emerging, particularly in case of closer cooperation between the Punjabs.

Khalid Butt, Pakistan Observer, Islamabad,

## The initiatives of 2004 The Punjabi.

ndia and Pakistan have come a long way over the past 60 years. Even if tensions remain, the fact that dialogue and diplomatic endeavours remain intact has much to do with the spirit and the will of the citizens on both sides who want peace. In recent years it has never been more apparent than during the Indo-Pak Punjab Games and the World Punjabi Conference which were held at Patiala in December 2004.

Such was an excellent opportunity to gauge the mood of the people vis-à-vis the peace processes launched by the two countries. The ideas and sentiments exchanged at Patiala reflected the common desire to overcome the hurdles to lasting peace. The message from Patiala, however, had special significance because those who talked of peace and amity there genuinely believed in the ethos of a composite culture. Among them were respected writers and journalists, besides the chief ministers of the two Punjabs. They are all Punjabis separated by the politics of 1947 which had suffered Partition.

They understand that living as enemies despite speaking the same language and steeped in a similar culture does belittle them. There is also the realisation that religion is a private affair and need not come in the way of a sustained entente. The events at Patiala showed that sports and cultural programmes create an atmosphere conducive for peace and goodwill. Both the Punjabs can play a proactive role and contribute to the efforts of the ongoing peace process between the two nations.

#### "Border of love with Pak"

On 1 December 2004, Union Human Resource Development Minister Arjun Singh, inaugurating the World Punjabi Conference at the Punjabi University grounds, had said that both India and Pakistan's future and progress "lay in drawing borders of love for each other." He welcomed the move to bring Pakistani and Indian Punjabis on a common platform and lauded the Punjabi University in promoting Punjabiat. He added: "Aaj punjabiat insaniyat ka behtar namuna hai."

Earlier, a rousing welcome had been accorded to Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Chief Minister of Pakistani



The 'Flying Sikh' Milkha Singh holds the symbolic torch of peace.

Punjab, his family and others as they were showered with rose petals after they alighted at Rajasansi Airport at Amritsar. Colourful buntings, flags, gates had been erected and roundabouts decorated for the occasion. The Chief Minister said he had stepped "on this land of five rivers, especially in the historic and holy city of Amritsar, with the hope that more sincere and dedicated efforts would be made to create congenial atmosphere between the two countries."

Capt. Amarinder Singh, then the Chief Minister of Indian Punjab echoed his sentiments and said that it was his dream to see the opening of the 'artificial' borders between both countries and the free movement of people. He called for an atmosphere where Lahorians could come to Amritsar to have lunch and Amritsaris could go to Lahore for dinner.

General SF Rodrigues, Governor of Punjab, said both East and West Punjab shared a common history, heritage and culture. There existed emotional bonds which neither time nor events of the past have been able to dilute. "People want and deserve peace so that our more pressing problems of poverty and underdevelopment could be addressed. Punjabis, in general and their Chief Ministers, in particular, deserve credit for the initiative," he added.

#### Some ideas, initiatives

The State Planning Board Vice Chairman, Professor SS Johal, while speaking at the Conference, suggested that the proposed World Punjabi Centre being established on the Punjabi University campus should be made into an Institute of Indo-Pak Studies and enable scholars from both sides of the border to conduct detailed research of their choice.

Pakistan has also taken steps in this area. Parvaiz Elahi said his government had established the Punjab Institute of Languages and an Act to this effect had already been passed by their Parliament. Under the project, he said exchange programmes of research scholars and students could be initiated between the universities of both Punjabs.

Noted Pakistani writer Fakhar Zaman, who had initiated the World Punjabi Conference movement in 1986, called for easing of visa restrictions and said a permit system should be introduced and that if this was not possible, something on the lines of the Shengen visa used by European countries could be introduced for the SAARC region.

Also at the function, the Gurmukhi-Shahmukhi software prepared by Dr Gurpreet Singh was released which allows transliteration of manuscripts from Gurmukhi to Shahmukhi instantaneously. The translation of Guru Granth Sahib in Hindi by Professor Jodh Singh was also released at the function.

Cultural exchanges between East and West Punjab has seen the organisation of a number of joint festivals in Punjab, one of which was a youth festival in which a delegation from Pakistan had also participated. In November 2004, the Punjab Agricultural University

### The Patiala legacy

The Patiala royal family has been at the forefront in patronising sports and the weeklong Indo-Pak Punjab Games in 2004 could be said to be a continuation of this tradition. Instances of official patronage of sports by Patiala's royal family over the last century abound and, in fact, have become part of the region's popular folklore. Raja Amar Singh, Sahib Singh, Karam Singh and Maharaja Narinder Singh regularly organised competitions in fencing, wrestling and chariot racing.

Maharaja Rajinder Singh had organised tournaments in wrestling, equestrian and cricket. He also built the cricket stadium at Baradari Gardens in Patiala as well as the stadium at Chail in Himachal Pradesh, the highest cricket ground in the world.

The Patiala royal family has also played a stellar role in India's sports administration. The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) which took birth in 1927 was headed by Captain Amarinder Singh's grandfather, the late Maharaja Bhupendra Singh, from 1927 to 1938. The mantle was later passed on to Maharaja Yadavindra Singh and later to Raja Bhalendra Singh, under whose patronage Delhi hosted the Asian Games in 1984.







Cricket, wrestling and athletics, apart from other disciplines have always been encouraged at Patiala. Old timers recall how the Maharaja of Patiala once offered to gift a village to gentleman cricketer Mohammed Nissar, the fastest bowler in pre-Partition India, if he bowled a bouncer!

In 1935 the Australian cricket team was invited by the Maharaja to play at Patiala and Stork Henry, the only surviving member of the team, cherishes the experience.

Maharaja Bhupendra Singh also organised wrestling bouts featuring famous wrestler Gama Pehalwan, Zybisko of Poland and European grappler Patterson. Wrestler Palwinder Singh Cheema, who represented India in the Athens Olympics in 2004 and is employed with Punjab Police, also has a strong Patiala connection. His grandfather, Kesar Singh, received official patronage from the Patiala royal family and was bestowed the title of Rustam-e-Hind after Gama migrated to Pakistan. Palwinder's father, Sukhchain Singh Cheema, also represented India at the Asian Games.

hosted artists and dignitaries from Pakistan Punjab. Later, noted horticulturist from Faislabad in Pakistan, Mohd Amzad Elahi, was a guest of the university.

Pakistan reciprocated by inviting artists and students from the university to participate in a number of prestigious evening cultural programmes. A delegation of 40 students and teachers were invited to Pakistan for the *Punjab Lok Boli Mela* organised in Deepalpur city.

On 2 December 2004, Choudhry Parvaiz Elahi, and Capt. Amarinder Singh, laid the foundation stone of Sai Mian Mir Bhavan at Guru Nanak Dev University at Amritsar. To be built at a cost of Rs 50 lakh the Bhavan will have rooms for teaching and research on Sikh Gurus and Sufi saints, while there will also be provision for a museum depicting Sikh architecture and cultural heritage.

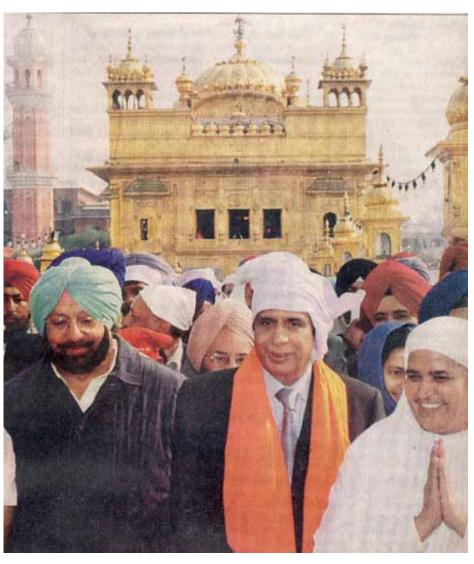
Both Elahi and Singh were honoured with a Doctor of Literature (D.Litt) Honoris

Causa degrees at a special convocation held at the university's Dasmesh auditorium, in recognition of their contribution in social and political fields, thus strengthening bonds of Indo-Pak friendship.

### Elahi promises to uplift gurdwaras in Pakistan

In the course of his visit on 2 December 2004, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi received a *siropa* from Giani Puran Singh, Head Granthi, Golden Temple, Amritsar. Elahi announced that the Amritsar–Lahore bus service for the benefit of Sikh pilgrims had been cleared by Pakistan Prime Minister, Shaukat Aziz.

The SGPC chief, Bibi Jagir Kaur welcomed the Pakistani team and presented a memorandum to Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi listing various demands of Sikhs and urged him to appoint Sikh caretakers in all



Chief Ministers of the two Punjabs at Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.

gurdwaras there. The memorandum sought revival of the Nehru–Liaquat Ali Pact which had allowed the SGPC to appoint *granthis* in Pakistan gurdwaras. Till 1998, the SGPC had been performing all these duties.

Elahi said that the Government of Pakistan would simplify the procedure of granting visas to Sikh pilgrims. He added that the Government of Pakistan would remove encroachments from all Sikh shrines and ensure preservation of the holy places. The original design of gurdwaras in Pakistan would be preserved while carrying out any renovation, he confirmed.

He said that Nankana Sahib was being developed as a model town where motels and hotels would be established very quickly. He said Muslims had strong ties with Sikhism as the Guru Granth Sahib had preserved the *Bani* of the great Sufi saint Baba Farid.

# Naam and Simran

he words - Naam and Simran - are the cornerstone of the gospel of the Bhaktas of medieval India. If the words means exactly what they mean to them, then Sikhism, in this respect, would turn out to be nothing but a kind of mystic reverie which, in its ecstasy, seeks absorption into the Infinite, as a peace that shuts itself up and shrivels up evidently in all ordinary practice to a mere dead concept of-all is one. It would mean a modification of the doctrines of yoga which are condemned by all the Gurus with great vehemence. The Naam mutterers roam by the thousand in yellow robes on the banks of the Yamuna and Ganga even now to no purpose. Such peace ceases to be creative. Creativeness being the only critical test which differentiates living peace from dead peace, the Gurus did not mean by Naam and Simran what these would signify in Brahminism. With the Guru Naam and Simran is assuredly no attempt to die in the formless known as Infinite, but is the peopling of the void with a thousand forms. It is living in a paradise of Beauties that subsists in name and form, by the Name (Naam).

"Whose Name"? "Simran" - Remembrance of what? The Japa of Pranava or the repetition of OM as in the Upanishads has been the process of Simran. To the ancients Simran has been the applied form of the Brahminical philosophy of the Absolute, and its end was a mental abstraction which ended in a so-called Brahmgyani on whom all the opposites had lost their effects and who was not embodied in action, an embodiment of uncreative peace of being. The springs of all action, thought and feelings, were allowed to get rusted and a state of bliss was reached which looked at life in a dazed way. This led the Hindu to look at his navel, expecting the whole universe to spring from there. It has not yet sprung. Thousands of names for God have been invented by the Hindus' and the process was in full activity before and after Guru Nanak. It had sunk deep into all the theological expositions of the Brahminical lore, that the mere muttering of names brings merit. The indolent people, having had no strength left in them for noble action took to reciting names and called this meaningless muttering the end of all religious effort. In a few well-directed cases it might have led to the development of some concentration, but as the whole process was alloyed with fundamental spiritual inanity, the results throughout have been wholly disastrous. Bhai Guru Das traces the kinship of ages upto the Sikh period of the true process of Naam and Simran, but he says that its full development and true significance came with Guru Nanak. In different ages only the few attained the intensive spirituality of Naam. Naam is inspiration, not a mechanical *sadhana*, or effort to be what one cannot be without inspiration. Yoga and its process may yield some strange accomplishment, but accomplishments, however, extraordinary, do not belong to the essential beauty of the soul.

It goes without saying that Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru should, most of all, understand the message of Guru Nanak. If anyone could rightly interpret the language of Guru Granth, it was Guru Gobind Singh. And undeniably so, because it was he, who asked the disciples to worship Guru Granth as his successor. He enthroned the Word, he crowned the song of the Guru as the King Eternal of the Khalsa. There is a soul in the great anthems of man, and the song of the Guru is he himself speaking to us, disciples, from myriad throats. Simran is more or less a spiritual planetary system of divine rememberance and inspiration. Jesus Christ cannot die, nor Mary, nor Mary Magdalene. They are living much more than they could live here. To feel that those spiritual words of theirs are at our back, they watch us, and to have a spontaneous memory of them as we have of absent friends and relatives is Naam and Simran in the spiritual sense, in which Guru Nanak uses these words. They have the consciousness of the Heavens at our back to live in Naam.

In these dark regions of the spirit-world live all the desire-bound beings, who do not let man go safely beyond. In these dark regions are the slums of those who have violated their purity. Here is man, self-fettered by his own violent deeds which have been suicidal to him in as much as they created a 'curvature' in his soul, and he cannot be freed even after physical death. Unless he has by luck been introduced to the higher regions of absolute freedom, man rots in his own desires for centuries, in his own violent crimes, in his own filth and mire of sin that sticks to him even beyond death. A Sikh saint of Simran (whom I have seen) told us one day that there are souls that by their own heaviness sink into the earth; others live on its

surface. Very few rise up and they are caught by their earthly relatives who died before them, mothers and fathers and uncles and grandfathers. Then there are men gurus, the mental hypnotists and charlatans who crushed men here by their mental power. Many a soul like that of 'Lilith' flutters like birds caught in the noose of someone's mental powers. Many souls are rotting in the eternal prisons of unillumined dungeons of the minds of those occults, divines, those who passed as great saviours of men, by the excitement of their intellect here on earth. Both masters and disciples are fettered to each other. And there are innumerable soul-worlds where many such live. The Yogis who on earth make tremendous efforts to be something extraordinary live eternal in their own little cocoons.

They have no peace, they have no power. After death, they come to know that their best religious efforts were their undoing. They become prisoners of the ego.

Higher, much higher; far, far away (to use this relative language of ours) are the regions of freedom where the Guru lives, where the Ten Gurus as Ten solar systems still shine. And men who love them as their personal friends, as fathers, as guides, as gods, whatever the subjective relation one might find suitable for self-culture, provided the feeling is real and sincere, are but earning themselves a passage to that great kingdom of freedom-love, joy and song after death, ave before death. This spontaneous relations with the great is Naam and Simran of the Guru; it is inspiration of attachment to those stars. With a similar madness and inspiration as came once to the dreamy, the Maid of Orleans who actually heard voices of angels, without the spiritual gift of the prophet Muhammad, without the vision Sary poetic sensibility of Dante, without the intensity of a Hanuman or a Prahalad, without the majesty and glory of a Chaitanya's emotion for Krishna, with which he threw away the idol of Krishna from the Hindu sanctuary and sat himself in the place of the stone-idol; without the devotion of a St Theresa and without the full resolution to charge and scale the higher heights with the will of Napoleon, it is idle to think of the cosmic process of Naam and Simran of Guru Nanak. It is unimaginable by uninspired beings. It cannot be a wearisome superstition to the uninitiated. Without this cosmic Guru-parshad religion, in spite of centuries of practice, is tyranny.

Here is how Guru Gobind Singh interprets Guru Nanak in living words of clashing steel, shining sabres, and in the elevated fearless accents of the Universal dissolution of all that had gone before. Guru Gobind Singh starts a new world, a new Earth, a new sky in his great epics. He wants the lightning to speak for him, the thunder to give his message, the floods of his soul to destroy all and to create again and afresh the natural manhood and equally supernatural natural Godhood of man.

Now there must be nothing in Guru Granth which should contradict this spirit of the Tenth Guru. And if the traditional meaning of words as the learned scholars, both Hindu and Sikh gave them is understood there is hardly any thing that brings out this spirit. To bring in archaic, dead, non-creative Sanskrit philosophy and Brahminical mythology and all the cock and bull stories as to how the universe was made, what is God, what is the beginning and end of this world, is assuredly to go against the undefinable spirit of music that sublimates life out of dead matter, the music which pervades the Guru's Song. The music of that Great Symphony of this Guru cannot be philosophised over in any particular manner.

Thus the Guru's Naam is the supernaturally natural function of a poetical genius who even when living in the body, is at all times of day and night under the influence of higher spirituality soulworlds of Freedom. It is a state of mind akin to the rapturous state of Swedenborg; it is a state of mind which came to the prophet Muhammad, it is that remembrance in which Christ remembered the Father in Heaven in the Son Man. It is the state, omniscient state of a Prophet's consciousness. It is the pure subjectivity of love bursting up for under the sole and invisible spiritual guidance from below the crusts of earthiness, from under the hard conditions of earthly life. The Sikh Saint of Simran feels he is continuously and inwardly raised above the gross worlds of filth and dirt and desire and self, and he feels as light as if he had no body. The physical efforts of this state of mind are marvelous. He finds in himself, in his head above his forehead, a pool of nectar, his is eyes are always pulled upward by this continuous inebriation. His inner and true religion is this continuous inebriation this is His Naam and Simran. The breezes of Heaven keep gently blowing on that inner Amritsar of his. He is perfectly healthy when this magnetic attraction is on, but if anything happens to upset this balance, he loses power. When he is in this self-centre where so to say, the souls of the Regions of spiritual Freedom fill him with Grace,

his wishes are kinetic. He can best do the best good to man from there. He can always do more from there than by running out of his centre and rendering physical help or mental sympathy. His altruism is of the spirit. Those who are of broken spirits, those who with all mental and physical self-expansion are despondent, are made whole by his wishes and they become radiant with faith. All poets who have been so gloriously pessimistic were mental giants. They were sublimed excitements, they had not yet realised the soul, the Naam, to which the realisation Guru Nanak points, without which he says life is but a process of burning.

Mere children who are happy and innocent are greater than the poets of the earth in "spirituality" of the guru's Grace. "His devotees are in unbroken bliss" (Japuji). Ask such a one who would not discourse on the why and wherefore, but would just reply, "1 live in a state of life which is indescribable and when I live there, I feel I am in perennial contact with a world I cannot describe, and in this stream like contact I feel I am alive. Once broken from there, I feel I am dead." And he would tell you that "it cannot be taught, it cannot be described." Those whom He favours, the lucky ones, get it. This is the message of Guru Granth. The discipleship is wholly of soul-consciousness. Naam and Simran thus is this spontaneous condition of self-consciousness fully concentrated in the silvery stream of inspiration that united one with those masters who become his body and mind.

He feels helpless, all is as He wills. The continuousness of his inspiration from on high takes this final form of love on earth. Spiritual character of man is the mere effect of this inflow of inspiration. It is as spontaneous and creative a surrender as of woman to man. And it has its levels of rise and fall. All living inspiration must rise and fall. Sometimes it is an undetermined melting away, melting away into the infinite. Sometimes it is as adamantine as granite rockets, sometimes as bright as the sword flashing and destroying darkness. The dull academic unity of all things does not interest him; it matters little to a loving man, whether the ultimate reality is one or many. The man of Naam and Simran does not concern Himself with metaphysical speculation. He thinks his brief life is cut still shorter by idle mental abstractions. This occasion of life is for learning the divine music of life; it means hard labour, it means some kind of artistic perfection.

Naam and Simran thus becomes in the Guru's system, an effect of inspiration, not a speculation but a realistic attitude, towards the freedom of soul that one can partly find here, but wholly only in the life after death, realms where the Ten Gurus, their apostles and disciples now live. It presupposes other worlds of nore freed life than ours which in unspatial space are right here with us. It establishes living relationships with the mighty saviours that live in that shining, an unseen space and time, the Akal: it suggests a certain process of selection and sublimation at work in the swing of souls. We find the Guru saying that Naam is the Favour of God. "Some get it while fast asleep. He Himself comes, awakens them, puts the Holy Cup of Nectar to their lips, while others who suppose themselves fully conscious of this scheme often get it not." Hence the Guru says the Gurmukh is one whose mouth is open for imbibing the nectar of the Guru.

This personality of the 'Logos' embodied in flesh form is like the material, yet immaterial, magneto-electric point. It is the nucleus around which the play of creative processes goes on, like atoms in atoms and so to solar systems. One sees clearly in the biographies of all the Ten Gurus, that as men they themselves moved and behaved as disciples. They themselves reverenced the spirit of the Guru in the individual, in groups of men, in song and in word. This is unique.

Like Buddhism, in a way Sikhism is an art of living so that everyone might one day attain to Buddhahood, Guruhood. Life is conceived as artistic action, as distinguished from the metaphysical concept of life, as something illusory that has no reality. The words Brahman (Brahm) and Para-Brahm also come in Guru Granth, but as Cunningham says, "by way of illustration only". Similarly the names of all gods and goddesses of the Brahminical Pantheon.

In Bavan Akhari, Guru Arjan Dev Says: "This Large letter (Akhar) of Creation that we see is the pure Para Brahman."

Simran when accumulated, has an alchemical effect on the personality of many and even on natural objects. Acts of devotion gathered for ages and expressed in cathedrals and temples, in art and in charity make a nation glorious. Simran, according to the Guru, is the feeling, which gathers itself grain by grain and suddenly gives birth to the highest arts of celestial nature and man.

## - NISHAAN

# Guru Gobind Singh and the Circadian Apotheosis of Divinity

uru Nanak's advent in the 15th century was an historic event of far-reaching consequence, given to the world by Providence, to fill the vacuum that breakaway modernist sensibility had created in the firmament of then existing religions. At any rate, it cannot be denied that a worthwhile life is not possible to live without ultimate convictions - for even the sceptic is convinced that everything is doubtful! Guru Nanak's Bani, the Revealed Word, posits an evolutionary development of religion, which turned monotheistic, considered to be the highest form of religious belief, after a long period of purification. The Guru's Revelation is allencompassing; while satisfying the scientific temper, it acknowledges God (Ek Onkar) as an Active Principle of Creative Mysticism – in palpable immanence in the three-pronged act of creation, operation, preservation and destruction, encompassing countless universes, persons, objects, places, events, etc. With his pragmatic spiritualism, Guru Nanak taught that man in the service of his fellow beings is the agency through which Wahe Guru (God) exercises his grace and mercy. By so doing, the Guru awakens man to the intrinsic responsibility and accountability that he must shoulder as an individual. Thus man becomes the humble servitor, conscious and grateful, who willingly gives up pursuit of personal salvation for the sake of the many-splendoured 'game of Love' which, in total surrender and life-sacrifice, rewards the seeker (the soul-bride) with the Divine Husband's endowments of sat (truth, as unchangeable steadfastness and fortitude), chit (consciousness of one's assigned place in the scheme of things), and anand (bliss, of sociallybeneficent action fulfilled in motiveless service).

The seed sown by Guru Nanak in the fertile soil of divinised ethics, with its insistence on good moral conduct as the only convincing demonstration of being a *gurmukh* God-oriented person, promptly struck root and rapidly grew into a full-grown tree of pragmatic spiritualism which fructified in establishment of the Khalsa, as a commonwealth of saint-soldiers. The

intervening events, which nurtured its need, and nature, must be mentioned. The boonful beauty of the 'game of love' was first demonstrated by Guru Arjan Dev, the Prince of martyrs, who, during the torture and atrocities perpetrated on his person at the behest of Mughal Emperor Jahangir, savoured the sweetness of God's edict-fiat (bhaana) as a rare dispensation of Divine Grace. His son, Guru Hargobind, thus, felt impelled to bring out the hitherto unmanifested dimension of Guru Nanak's new faith: the providential right to self-defence against unprovoked aggression. This farsighted initiation of the *miri-piri* (a meditative welding of the temporal or secular and the spiritual or religious powers within the self-same Faith) concept was a crucial stage in kaamil development of the Sikh ideal of total man (mard e kaamil).

The 'game of love' wrought a steely icon of pragmatic spiritualism in the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur who, unlike his illustrious grandfather, laid down his life voluntarily – for the preservation of Hindu dharma which was threatened with total extermination at the hands of the bigoted and barbarian Aurangzeb, the self-styled promoter of Islam. The Guru left a message for his nine-year old son, Gobind Rai, which read: As willed by the Akal Purakh (timeless Being) I am leaving for Delhi to sacrifice my life for religious freedom. You are to see that my body is not put to disgrace and that it is cremated properly and with all due honours. I am bequeathing the leadership of the Faith to you. You should carry it out gloriously, even if it would cost your life...

(Saints of India, Part III, p.78)

Guru Nanak's unique Faith saw its zenith in the founding of the Khalsa on Baisakhi day in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh, the last spiritual successor of the founder. The choice of the day for the hallowed act brings out the great significance of Baisakhi in terms of the pre-eminent events in Sikh history which took place on this day: \* Guru Nanak started his missionary travels (udasis), \* the digging of a baoli (stepped well) at Khadur Sahib was undertaken – and

water was also filled-and \* Guru Harkrishan passed away. But before the concept and the spiritual, secular details of the Khalsa are delineated, it is imperative to learn more about its founder, Sri Guru Gobind Singh.

According to Dr Dewan Singh, "Guru Gobind Singh is illuminated in world history as a great leader of men, a versatile genius of the highest order, a Godman and mystic par excellence, a redoubtable warrior and an adept strategist, a fearless revolutionary, a classical hero of Carlylian description, a powerful poet and patron of poets, a unique religious law-giver and champion of the downtrodden, a relentless defender of the faith and an all-sacrificing martyr for the cause of suffering and persecuted humanity. In fact, it is impossible to encompass and delineate in words all the facts of this highly charismatic and remarkable personality."

The birth: Guru Tegh Bahadur was on a tour of Bengal and Assam when a son was born to Mata Gujri at Patna on Saturday night of 17-18 Poh of 1723 Bikrami (corresponding to December 1666). In deference to the Guru's wishes, the son was named Gobind Rai. During his boyhood, his favourite pastime was to divide his playmates into two groups pitting one against the other in mock battles. He had a marked fondness for the sling as also bow and arrows. The future Guru was fearless from his very childhood. Besides receiving instruction in religious matters, he was trained in warfare and horse-riding. He subsequently acquired proficiency in Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, Hindi and his mother tongue, Punjabi. He spent other time in hunting and travelling.

Invincible valour: Guru Gobind Singh ascended Guru Nanak's spiritual throne at the age of 9 in 1675 when his illustrious father was martyred and came to be known as Guru Tegh Bahadur Hind di Chadar (India's protective sheet-cover). Guru Gobind Singh was a true Anchorite and an impassioned patriot. He was an embodiment of all-round perfection; a poet, a spiritual leader, a religious and social reformer, a far-sighted planner, a wise counseller, a redoubtable warrior and a superb general - above all, "an unflagging champion of his people, an unrivalled martyr of his country". He deeply imbibed the divine attributes delineated by Guru Nanak in his Mool Mantra (creedal statement), notably, "without fear, without enmity". These traits imparted to the Guru invincible valour and unshakable steadfastness. Daulat Rai exhorts his readers to "visualise the valiant stand taken by the Guru and his forty Sikhs against the imperial hordes at Chamkaur. History of the world cannot offer its peer". Dr Dewan Singh writes in his foreword to Rai's biography of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib-e-Kamaal (which means Perfect Man) "Daulat Rai, now a very popular and famous name in Sikh circles, was a man of deep thinking and impartial religious conviction. Though an Arya Samajist himself, he was completely free from religious bias. Though he wrote in 1901 when the Punjab was seething with inter-religious wrangling and communal friction of an invidious nature, he was a rare person who evinced in his Biography of Guru Gobind Singh a highly patriotic and national feeling by transcending all parochial limitations." Published by Gurmat Sahit Charitable Trust from Amritsar, this biography in Urdu has been competently abridged and sensitively translated by Prof. Surinderjit Singh. I can vouch that I haven't so far read anything of such kind on Guru Gobind Singh. It has moved me deeply. Unless otherwise stated the quotes in the following paragraphs are drawn from this book.

"A man blessed with such a heart had not taken birth in India (among Hindus) for thousands of years. His intense patriotic fervour contrasted with the chilling cowardice and utter despondency of the people.. it was the spark of nationalism which was lit with the fighting instinct of a kshatriya... in the heart of Guru Gobind Singh the spark of nationalism which all earlier Hindu reformers including Krishna, Ramchandra, Shankaracharya and Ramanuja had lacked. Their (the Hindus) existence was like the flickering light of a dying lamp. The flickering light was about to be extinguished by the stream of intolerant fanaticism let loose by Aurangzeb when Guru Gobind Singh shielded it with his hands and saved it from extinction (being extinguished) .. the Hindus were like a lamp without oil.. He (Guru Gobind Singh) was the first man to foster a feeling of nationalism among the Indian people..."

The 24-year-long period (1675-1699) of spiritual leadership gave Guru Gobind Singh a much-needed opportunity to study at first hand the prevalent situation and to size up the formidable might of the Mughals, as also the invidious intrigues of the hill Rajas who repeatedly planned and implemented in the pursuit of their selfish motives against the larger national interest vis-á -vis the abject helplessness, pitiable plight, and deep-rooted psycho-emotional-spiritual weakness of the Hindus. Theirs was a self-

imposed exile into the tangled forests of the national psyche beset with confusion, cowardice, casualness, and cantankerousness. Guru Gobind Singh thought up with incredible foresight a master plan for the moral rejuvenation of the masses, social upliftment, spiritual illumination, and physical health. He carefully fixed his priorities and aimed his first shot at the removal of the causes responsible for disunity, despondency, and debility among the Hindus. These will be briefly dealt with to show how they form the all-important foundation for birth of the Khalsa.

Religious Reform: Carl Jung, a co-researcher with Sigmund Freud, father of modern psychology, has held that religious sentiment among the people of the world is the most formidable, forceful and durable of all human emotions. According to him, it is saner to deploy religion to effect the desired changes in human society than to write it off as primitive passion in a fit of pseudo-scientific temper. Guru Gobind Singh instinctively took up religion as his first priority. "From the very beginning", wrote Daulat Rai, "the Hindus have held dharma as supreme, a pious binding duty nearer to the heart than everything else." But, over the centuries, customs such as polytheism, pantheism, with their plethora of rituals, rites, myths, and conflicting religious practices developed everwidening sectarian differences which eventually led to disunity, friction, and animosity among the Indian masses. The position of religious sects and sub-sects had worsened, with their numbers rising to thousands but only leading to the dark alleys of blindfaith exclusivism. It should be noted that in a state of such widespread conflict, anyone trying to prove the supremacy of his cult would invariably distort the truth and use fair means or foul to gain over his adversary, whether real or imaginary. Obviously, all sorts of malpractices and superstitions creep into the system whose very purpose of spiritual illumination gets self-defeated.

Guru Gobind Singh corrected this massive malaise by preaching Guru Nanak's gospel of Unity of God *Ek Onkar*, (One Supreme Being) and forcefully rebutted the plurality of godhead, forbade idolatory, censured the custom of observance of obsequies (*shradhs*), denounced the concept of incarnation (*avatars*), condemned tirath yatra (*pilgrimage*) and bathing at holy places, criticised the religious garbs as "dresses of deceit." The ground for national unity, integrity, and patriotism was thus prepared by the Guru with spotlight on spiritual illumination, thereby

restoring to the individual human person the organic completeness of an awakened, self-sufficient inner life. Consequently, he was able to effect sweeping changes in the religious sphere.

Social Reform: Guru Gobind Singh set out to restructure the social set-up with similar singlemindedness and dedication. In the four-tier society of Brahmins, khatris, vaishyas and shudras in which vertical movement was forbidden, thanks to the Code of Manu which had made it legal binding that the high castes could press the shudras into menial service (as an act of god's prescription) and the food cooked by them was not to be touched. Made irrevocably applicable among Indian society-on the anology of the human body with Brahmin representing the head, the khatri the arms, the vaishya the stomach, and the shudra the feetunder the Brahmins the observance and hold of Manu's injunctions had been strengthened to an inhuman degree. The shudras were thus the perennial victims of this heinous social injustice. To wit, "if a shudra talks of religious matters to a Brahmin, molten lead or boiling oil should be poured into his mouth and ears" (Manu Smriti, Chapter VIII ,272). "The atonement for the killing of a shudra is the same as that for killing of a cat or a dog or a frog or a lizard or other animals."

Daulat Rai continues, "The farsighted and sagacious Guru held it imperative to lift the low castes to the level of the high ones, so that the former could regain their sense of dignity and manhood and work for national reconstruction instead of just menial chores for the high castes. During the days of Brahmanic ascendancy the plight of the shudra was very miserable. They were treated at par with cattle and beasts of burden, though they were the original inhabitants of the sub-continent. There is no doubt that they were worse off than ancient slaves that were bought and sold like animals". Proclaiming the essential equality, fraternity and liberty of all human beings as their birthright in his succinct tenet, The caste of all mankind is only one: Humanism, Guru Gobind Singh felt it necessary that "the Hindus who had become slaves mentally and physically, should be jolted out of their miserable stupor. The sad plight of the Hindus in the political field was largely responsible for this predicament."

Daulat Rai highlights that "Guru Gobind Singh took up the challenge and created a virile, upright and monotheistic people such as the Sikhs who were ever ready to lay down their lives for their country, people and dharma; who always came to the succour of the needy, the tyrannised and the downtrodden. He transformed cowards into men of great courage, uncowed by Mughal might. He surveyed the country and selected the people and the area where he was to put into practice his grandiose schemes. The selection of the area was determined by the kind of men inhabiting therein."

Guru's Tenets: Guru Gobind Singh sought to establish (and succeeded in doing so) two basic principles: \* universal brotherhood without any distinction, and \* the spirit of self-sacrifice for others without demur. It was crystal clear to him that "the feeling of brotherhood can only dawn after the annihilation of all man-made artificial barriers between man and man. The baneful caste-system introduced by Man and followed with a vengeance by the Brahmins had to be nullified".

Foundation of the Khalsa: Guru Gobind Singh established the Khalsa; the Commonwealth of saintsoldiers, welded by the steely sense of oneness in total surrender and devotion to Akal Purakh - and imbibing His attributes of fearlessness and rancourfreeness, filled with the fiery ideal of self-sacrifice for the protection and welfare of others. Such an order of ever-ascendant spirits (charhdi kala) alone could demolish the centuries-old barriers of caste and creed, high and low, man and woman, thereby paving the way for the advent of nationalism and the unity and integrity of India. The Khalsa, as the fraternity of the fearless and the forceful, alone could bring about the downfall of the foreign rule of bigotry and tyranny.

Accordingly, on the Baisakhi of Samvat 1756 (1699 AD), Guru Gobind Singh gathered his Sikhs in great numbers from across the length and breadth of the country, at Anandpur Sahib. A huge tent and an enclosure had been set up in a field. The remaining account of the ceremony and events is too well known to need recounting. However, it is necessary to underscore the two-fold purpose of the way the Guru acted in inviting volunteers, at the point of a blood-dripping sword, from among the massive congregation. The first aim was to test if the Sikhs had the mettle to sacrifice their all for the protection of their dharma and the love of their land. The second was to show to all those assembled there that only men like the Panj Piaras (the Five Beloved Ones) could successfully undertake the stated uphill task without demur. The five willing volunteers, who readily placed themselves - body, mind and soul - at the service of the Guru were: \* Daya Ram, a khatri from Lahore \* Dharm Chand, a jat from Delhi; \* Himmat Rai, a potter from Jagannath Puri in Orissa; \* Mohkam Chand, a tailor from Kathiawar in Gujarat; and \* Sahib Chand, a barber from Mysore.

The Guru was immensely delighted at the valiant offer, and addressing the congregation, said: "During the time of Guru Nanak, only Bhai Lehna passed the gruelling test of Sikhism and he was exalted as Guru Angad Dev. But during the present terribly trying time, five courageous Sikhs have not only passed the test but also come out in flying colours." The message was that what the Panj Piare had done, the rest could do. The Guru had successfully sown the seed of self-sacrifice in the minds of the Sikhs.

Now he turned to its germination, growth, and blossoming into wholesome action. The Five were then prepared for baptism at the Guru's court that was held in the fort of Keshgarh. He dressed the Five in a special uniform and armed them with weapons. Having done so he asked for water from the river flowing below. This water was poured in a steel receptacle to which sugar flakes (patashas) were added. Guru Gobind Singh himself recited the Five Banis and stirred the contents all the while with his double-edged khanda sword. He called this the preparation of Amrit (Elixir of Life or Eternal-life-giving Nectar). The Amrit was then administered to the Five Beloved thus: five times the Guru took out five handfuls of amrit and made the Five partake of them, while six of them (including the Guru) shouted "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa. Wahiguru ji ki Fateh" (The Khalsa belongs to the Wondrous Guru God whose victory also lies with Him). The Five Beloved Ones were, then, asked to administer Amrit to the Guru. This ceremony was termed pahul, and the consecrated casteless brotherhood of saint-soldiers was conferred the unique title of the Khalsa and their dharma called the Khalsa Panth. Their birth-castes were finally dissolved into their new spiritual birth by adding the suffix Singh (lion) to their first names. Women on being inducted into the Khalsa fold are given the surname Kaur (princess).

### Gurmat Acharya, Sahit Shiromani Giani Gurdit Singh

title that the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee conferred upon him on 24 February 1991, to recognise his contribution to the Sikh religion, especially his work on ancient religious manuscripts. Sahit Shiromani is the marquee that became his when the Languages Department, Punjab, recognised his contribution on 1 November 1997. Much before he won

these laurels and many others that he gathered over the years, I had my own title for Giani Gurdit Singh — Papa.

urmat Acharya is the

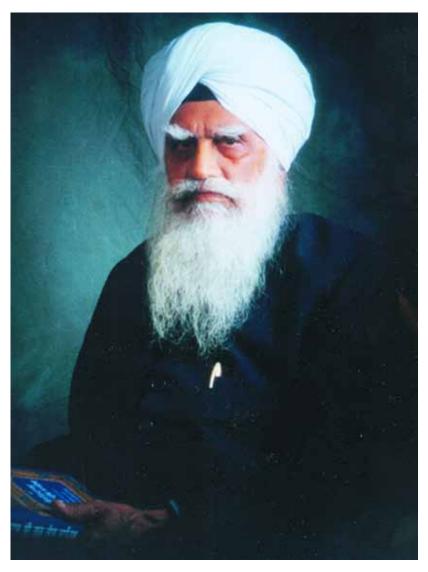
#### His pind and bachpan

Mithewal, the village he had immortalised through his writing, was where his bhog was held on 4 February 2007. It marked the end of a journey that had begun over eight decades back. Mithewal was then surrounded by sand dunes; crops were sparse, irrigation facilities practically non-existent. The land did not produce anything of substance.

But the people were hardy and one of them, Hira Singh, had gone out to seek his fortune by working on the canals that were then being built. He went to the Dulha region of what is now the Punjab in Pakistan. Hira Singh found work here and spent nearly 12 years

working as a contractor, building bridges across canals and laying rail tracks. He did well, as is still evident when we look at the 'outer' house, which was on the outskirts of the village.

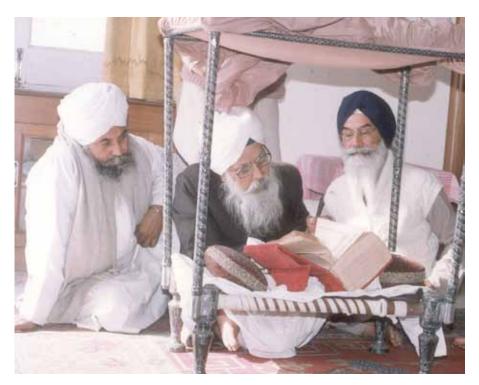
The words 'Ek Onkar Sat Guru Parsad, Sat Kartar' are emblazoned on the entrance arch of the house, as is a stylised 'surya'. The gate is big enough to accommodate a rath which the family owned and has a lot of space for livestock. The real home however, was



Giani Gurdit Singh (Photo by Kuldeep Dhiman)

the 'inner' home, where Nihal Kaur, Hira Singh's wife and my grandmother lived.

Hira Singh had five daughters and a son, Gurdit Singh, born around 1923. The father left an indebile impression of goodness and religious simplicity on the young man, although they were not destined to live together for long. He treated him, as Papa often told us, "more as a friend than a son".



Gurdit Singh's everlasting quest: examining and studying a religious manuscript.

Childhood was fun, games, play and a warm, loving atmosphere at home. There was no school in the village, so Gurdit Singh learnt the basics of Gurbani and Gurmukhi at the local gurdwara. He was a sturdy lad, proud of his prowess at wielding the sickle while harvesting, of being able to lift heavy objects—and even a bit of wrestling.

Yet at night, he would put on a lamp and study. His mother, Nihal Kaur, was indulgent about this habit of Gurdit Singh's. When Gurdit Singh was about 13, his childhood came to an abrupt halt when Hira Singh fell ill and had to be taken to 'vaids' in nearby towns for treatment, which was quite ineffective. He passed away after ailing for a few months.

#### Responsibilities and quest for learning

The young Gurdit Singh now had to shoulder the responsibility of looking after the entire family. The family fortune, evident from grandeur of the house that Hari Singh had built, began to dwindle. Gurdit Singh tried his hand at farming and other odd jobs, but there were few means of earning a decent livelihood.

He continued to study on his own. Once a week, he would go to the nearby town of Mandi Ahmedgarh in order to read back issues of newspapers that a kindly soul kept for him there. The insatiable urge to gain more knowledge kept pulling him away

from the village, cut off from the mainstream and it was only after he sorted out affairs at home that he could leave his Mithewal.

From his early years, Gurdit Singh wanted to study the Guru Granth Sahib. He would find out about religious debates and listen to the speakers, or read about them in the *Khalsa Akhbaar* and other newspapers of the time.

#### The Ragmala issue

In 1946, when he was 23, he attended a Sarbat Khalsa debate at the Teja Singh Samundri Hall, Amritsar, where the issue was whether the composition *Ragmala*, printed at the end of Guru Granth Sahib, was to be considered as Gurbani or not.

This has been a contentious issue and top scholars were pitted against each other. Giani Gurdit Singh held the opinion that Ragmala was not Gurbani and at one point, he was asked by the then Jathedar of Akal Takht to speak if he had a point to make.

"I had never spoken in a public gathering till then. My knees were trembling at the prospect. I prayed to Akalpurkh and then started speaking." Once he began, all nervousness vanished. He had gone to many places, and had seen many manuscripts of Adi Granth and was enthusiastic about sharing all this with the gathering.

So impressed was the gathering by his research that the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee offered him a job as research scholar. The letter of appointment mentioned that his pay and other emoluments would be decided by President of the SGPC.

An excited and happy Giani Gurdit Singh went to Bhai Randhir Singh, a freedom fighter and saintly being. The Bhai Sahib too was delighted, but he cautioned: *Naukri Nau Kari*. A job would be a ninelinked chain around him. "Bhai Sahib blessed me and said that I would get jobs for many people, Guru would give me everything without my holding a job," he would recall. The first book that he published was in 1945, titled *Raag Mala di Asliat* (The reality of Ragmala).

My father served many organisations, held various positions, but was never employed by anyone. With Bhai Randhir Singh's blessings, he moved to Patiala and was soon working with Sardar Gian Singh Rarewala, a prominent administrator of the Patiala State.

#### As editor and publisher

In 1947, Gurdit Singh started and edited the *Parkash*, a daily Punjabi newspaper from Patiala. He set up a printing press at the edge of the city near the Motibagh palace which soon became a gathering place for such scholars as Prof. Ganda Singh and Prof. Pritam Singh.

Parkash was the premier Punjabi daily newspaper of PEPSU. During this period, he not only wrote extensively in the newspaper, but also published two

books, *Bhavan de Desh* (Emotional Missives, a collection of poems) in 1950 and *Achchoh Sikhran* (Unattainable Paradigms, a collection of poems) in 1955.

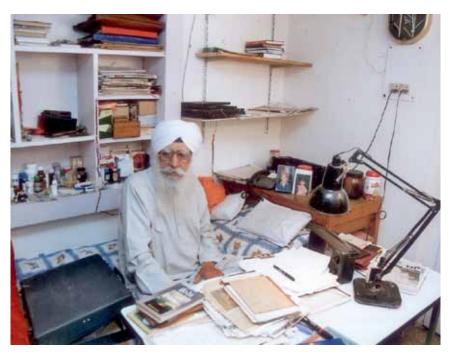
Ever active in religious affairs, Giani Gurdit Singh was appointed as secretary of the Dharam Arth Board, PEPSU, in 1948. He started and edited a monthly literary magazine, *Jiwan Sandesh* in 1953 and helped Prof. Teja Singh, who was then compiling the first Punjabi dictionary. In his autobiography, *Aarsi*, Prof. Teja Singh mentions the contribution of this young man in laudatory terms.

#### Chandigarh's call

Now that he had made a name in Patiala, it was time to move on. The brand new city of Chandigarh, beckoned him. He moved there even as it was being built and with him was moved the press and the newspaper. *Parkash* continued as a daily till 1961. Subsequently, it was published as a weekly till 1978.

Soon after Giani Gurdit Singh moved to Chandigarh, he became a Member of the Legislative Council, Punjab, a position he held from 1956 to 1962. He also founded the Sahitya Sabha at Chandigarh in 1956 and was its first president.

Chandigarh was all about new beginnings. He wrote *Mera Pind*, which was to become the most famous of all his books. Much of it he wrote in the new house that he built in Sector 4. He had fulfilled



Perenially surrounded by books: in the very room where Giani Gurdit Singh breathed his last at his home in Chandigarh.

his family responsibilities. After all his sisters, except the youngest, had been married and settled in their lives, he felt now it was time to start his own family.

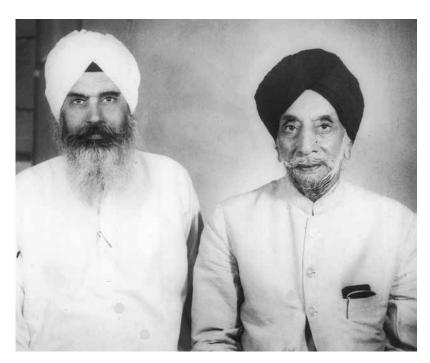
#### The lady in his life

Inderjit Kaur Sandhu, a fiery, pretty Lahore-educated lecturer from Patiala, had accepted his marriage proposal and together they made Chandigarh their home. She belonged to one of the prominent families of Patiala. Her grandfather had served as a 'crora' or comptroller of the household for the Maharaja of Patiala, while her father had retired as a Colonel in the Patiala state army.

As secretary of the Mata Sahib Kaur Dal, of which Sardarni Manmohan Kaur Rarewala was the president, she had worked tirelessly for the disadvantaged refugees and Muslim women stranded in Patiala just after Partition. This was the time when the idealistic, pretty Inderjit and the relentlessly hardworking, brilliant Giani Gurdit Singh first met.

Theirs was to be a life-long association. The two were literary partners, he wrote, she edited his works and together they supported each other in the journey of life. Inderjit had earned an MA degree in philosophy from Government College, Lahore and was in the first batch of students who were awarded an MA degree in Punjabi from Mahindra College, Patiala.





The stalwarts: Giani Gurdit Singh (left) with Sardar Hukam Singh.

In Chandigarh, she became Vice-Principal of Government Basic Training College. Rewards came in various forms. Giani Gurdit Singh's love for the pastoral life of Punjab was recognised by UNESCO, which gave him the prize for Punjabi literature for his book *Tith Tihar* in 1960. The couple's love brought about a bonny lad, whom they decided to call Roopinder Singh.

#### **Documenting Punjab's folklore**

A great friendship was also formed the same year between two unlikely persons, film actor and literature buff Balraj Sahni and the author of *Mera Pind*. Balraj Sahni and Gurdit Singh remained close to each other all their lives. Balraj Sahni once presented a Grundig spool tape recorder that operated on batteries just so as to record the sounds of Punjab's villages.

Ravinder Singh, my younger brother, was born a year or so later. We grew up in the sprawling Sector 4 house, would walk down to Carmel Convent School across the road in Sector 9 and then to St John's Public School, which was a little further away. Often we would walk back, kicking a stone that we found on the way all the way back home.

For Giani Gurdit Singh, time was divided between the Punjab Legislative Council and running his newspaper, *Prakash*. Pratap Singh Kairon was the Chief Minister of Punjab then, was fond of Giani Gurdit Singh, as were Giani Kartar Singh, Sardar Gian Singh Rarewala and others. At times, he would find himself as the conduit for those who were unable to communicate with each other because of political contingencies.

#### A university and a takht

At height of the Punjabi Suba movement came the idea of Punjabi University, in the establishment of which he played a significant role. Gianiji thought of himself as a *gian margi*, a Sikh who derived his strength from the world of Gurbani. He was very attached to his roots, worked tirelessly to preserve Punjabi culture and the identity of the Punjabi language through his activities as well as his writing.

That he was not a directly elected member gave him the strength to stand by his convictions, his mild and friendly nature allowed him to be a bridge among various groups and people and thus get

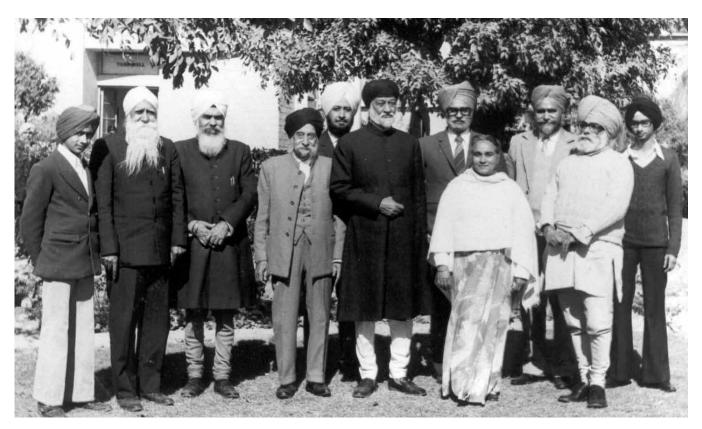
them together for a cause, when needed. All these had a bearing on what he did for the Punjabi University's establishment and for the recognition of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib.

In the House, he raised the issue of administration, budget, holdings and the historicity of gurdwaras in PEPSU. The government then published a 1,200-page report on the basis of an eight-month survey it undertook which had enormous impact on the administration of these gurdwaras.

Takht Sri Damdama Sahib had not been officially recognised as the fifth Takht of the Sikhs. It was Giani Gurdit Singh who wrote the report on the basis of which official recognition was accorded to Takht Sri Damdama Sahib, both by the SGPC and the Punjab Government. Much later, the Takht recognised his services and honoured him at a public function, presided over by head of the SGPC, in 1991.

As an MLC, he was member of various committees, where he contributed in different ways. One late evening, when I was driving him back to Chandigarh from Delhi, he told me about an incident that had happened in the 1960s. He was asked by Kairon to review a list of proposed textbooks for students. There was some disquiet among prominent academics that an "unlettered" person would be reviewing textbooks.

He asked for all the books and then carefully read them. At the meeting, Giani Gurdit Singh was



The Family with eminent Sikh intellectuals at Government College, Amritsar. From left: Ravinder Singh, Partap Singh, Giani Gurdit Singh, Sardar Hukam Singh, Ashok Singh, Bhayee Ardaman Singh of Bagrian, Dalbir Singh, Inderjit Kaur, Bharpur Singh, Sirdar Kapur Singh ICS, Roopinder Singh.

there with his notes. He critiqued each of the books politely, then pointed out omissions and overlaps in the proposal. At the end of the meeting, Kairon took him aside and said, "Your analysis was impartial and clear. You have demonstrated today why I repose such faith in you."

#### Parkash, the newspaper

Shop-cum-flat No. 1 in Sector 18, where the *Parkash* newspaper office and press were located, became the venue of many discussions as prominent people made their way there. Among them were the prominent scholar Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, poet Shiv Kumar Batalvi, humourist Suba Singh, who also worked for *Parkash* and Giani Kartar Singh, the political leader. *Parkash* had by then become a major paper in Chandigarh with considerable influence in PEPSU.

Gurdit Singh managed to convince Inderjit Kaur to part with all her savings, a considerable fortune that she had kept 'safely' in a bank, and 'sink' the money in a plot of land in Sector 18, near the printing press. In time, they built a house there, which in his words, "always provided her with more rent than whatever salary the government gave her".

#### **UNESCO** recognition

The year 1967 was a significant one for our family. Giani Gurdit Singh won the UNESCO prize for Punjabi literature for the book *Mera Pind da Jiwan* that year and we moved to Patiala, where my mother took over as Principal of the local Government College for Women. For her, it was homecoming. She belonged to Patiala and had started her teaching career in the college that she now headed.

Giani Gurdit Singh set up a printing press in a building he bought on Rajbaha Road. As the editor-cum-owner of *Parkash*, which he had converted into a weekly newspaper by then, he would spend much time at the press.

The 'Rajnitak Kundalias' (political limericks) that he wrote were subtle, current and often memorised by readers and widely recited. In fact, it would be correct to say that he practically created such genre in Punjabi. The lower part of Page one of *Parkash* was reserved for what was arguably the most-quoted column of its time.

The articles that the paper carried would be literary, and news was not its most powerful feature. *Parkash* 



Giani Gurdit Singh escorting Sardar Surjit Singh Barnala at the Guru Granth Sahib Vidya Kendra, Andheria Mor, Delhi.

still circulated well. My brother and I contributed by pasting 2-paisa stamps on the papers, taking the bundles to a nearby post office and cancelling the stamps with postmarks so that the overworked postal employees, always busy with their tea and gossip, would not have to bother with this chore of mass mailing.

The paper did not make much money. However, insolvency was never an issue, thanks to continual reprint orders of *Mera Pind* (first published in 1961) and its family: *Mera Pind da Jiwan* (Life of my Village, 1967), and the series of books that led to *Mera Pind*, which were published in 1960: *Tith Tihar* (Functions & Festivals) *Reetan te Rewa*j (Traditions and Customs), *Mere Pind di Rup Rekha* (Facets of my Village) and *Viah Dian Rasma* (Customs of Marriage).

#### Family traditions

One family tradition was to sit at the dining table and rhyme. Often the need to rhyme overtook the content, but it was always fun and educative. Reading and discussing issues came naturally, given the home environment.

We were lucky in that we studied at the Yadavindra Public School, which was just across the road from our house, a former minor palace called Bhupindra Kothi, with an attached mango orchard.

My brother and I particularly remember a shop near Quila Mubarik where we could sign to get books. At the time these were largely comics, but thanks to surprising support from our mother, they too were allowed. We were introduced to many a classic in this way, though even I cannot find any literary merit in the endless Commando comics that we bought and had bound copies of. Purists might object, but I must confess that this was by barter, the bookseller was compensated with copies of Papa's books.

#### **Awards and honours**

In 1969, the quincentenary celebrations of the birth of Guru Nanak were held in Patiala. The college became venue of Guru Nanak Mahima Kirtan Darbar, which my mother organised and to

which my father wholeheartedly contributed. It was a resounding success and left a lasting impact on participants, especially foreign scholars, who were provided with translations of Gurbani shabads in form of beautiful booklets.

A year later, Punjabi University at Patiala, decided to give the painter Sobha Singh and Giani Gurdit Singh an honorary scholarship for their lifetime. It entailed a stipend and the services of some office staff.

#### **Panthic work**

Giani Gurdit Singh became general secretary of the Singh Sabha Shatabdi Committee in Amritsar in 1973. Jathedar Gurcharan Singh Tohra was behind this initiative, which also involved the former Lok Sabha Speaker, Sardar Hukam Singh, who became president of the committee.

This meant that the family had to move again. My mother sought a transfer and she became Principal, Government College for Women at Amritsar. We studied at St Francis School and would often cycle to Darbar Sahib where, adjacent to the office of the SGPC, our father would be, mostly surrounded by people, or busy writing or editing something.

He focused on making available accurate information about the Sikh religion and scriptures, on taking forward the reform movement started by founders of the Singh Sabha movement a hundred years earlier. He initiated debates and discussions to understand and sort out various issues. Panthik Vichar sammelans were held and a new magazine, Singh Sabha Patrika, was founded to disseminate information.

The Singh Sabha Patrika was a great success, but it came at a cost. Parkash, which had been transplanted to Amritsar, was wound up and the printing press sold. All of Giani Gurdit Singh's energy now went into publication of the Patrika, which was a monthly that often also came out with special issues.

#### Singh Sabha Patrika

The special issues were on Guru Granth Sahib, Gurbani, kirtan and the importance of grammar pertaining to Guru Granth Sahib. Some were devoted to celebrating the contribution of important Sikh personalities, including those who contributed to the original Singh Sabha movement— Prof Gurkukh Singh of Oriental College, Lahore, who was responsible for making Punjabi a subject of study in 1877, Bhai Dit Singh, a prolific writer and Bhai Jawahar Singh Kapur. Special issues were also devoted to Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha and Principal Teja Singh.

Gianiji's had many friends who were academics, and they contributed liberally to the Singh Sabha Patrika, thereby giving fresh inputs in the study of various issues. This in itself was unique contribution, as were his efforts that the community should honour prominent, but unrecognised religious personalities and scholars who had made significant contribution in the study of Sikhism. The Singh Sabha Shatabdi Committee which eventually became Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha would work in consonance with the SGPC, the Jathedars of Akal Takht, Takht Sri Anandpur Sahib and Takht Sri Damdama Sahib.

Particularly striking were special ceremonies held at Anandpur Sahib on Baisakhi. Untill virtually the last moment, the names of who would then be honoured were not revealed. Any canvassing ensured prompt disqualification; all decisions were arrived at through consensus.

#### Honouring unrecognised stalwarts

Those so honoured included Sant Giani Inder Singh, Sant Gurmukh Singh of Patiala, Babu Mal



Being honoured by the sangat after examining a manuscript of the Adi Granth at Bahadurpur.

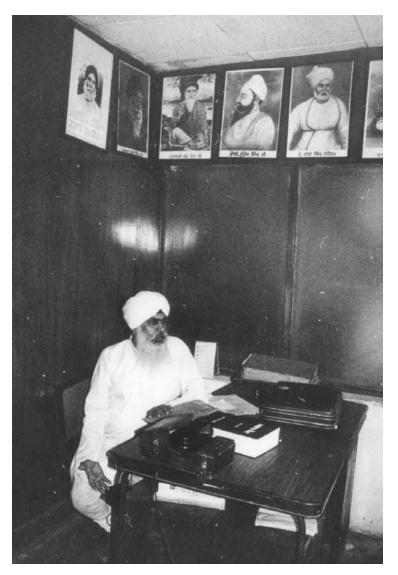
Singh of the Akhand Kirtani Jatha, Bawa Harkishan Singh, Jathedar Achar Singh, Giani Partap Singh, Giani Harbhagat Singh Narangwal and Bibi Bhagwant Kaur. Among the scholars honoured were Sardar Nahar Singh MA, Dr Ganda Singh, Capt. Bhag Singh, editor, The Sikh Review, Dr Taran Singh of Punjabi University, Patiala, researcher Shamsher Singh Ashok and Giani Kirpal Singh, who edited Panth Parkash.

Soon, it was time to move on from Amritsar. Mrs Inderjit Kaur became Vice-Chancellor of Punjabi University, Patiala, a position she held from 1975 to 1977, the first and only woman Vice-Chancellor of a university in North India. My father would, at times, wryly recollect his role in the establishment of the University that his wife since headed.

#### In a supportive role

Giani Gurdit Singh gave up the honorary scholarship that the university had awarded him. He had played a supportive role, contending that the spotlight was now on the lady who was then one of the three woman Vice-Chancellors in the world. He accompanied her to Boston in the USA, where she attended an international conference of executive heads of universities. They also went to the UK, where she delivered a lecture on "Guru Tegh Bahadur, Nanak IX" at the University of Hull. She also spoke at the School of Oriental Studies, London, during the same trip. Meanwhile, Giani Gurdit Singh spent most of his time interacting with the Sikh community there and gave lectures at many gurdwaras.





At his office in the Guru Granth Sahib Vidya Kendra, Delhi.

He continued with his work for the Singh Sabha, often leading *kirtani jathas*, comprising largely of volunteers from the *Akhand Kirtani Jatha*, who would visit various cities for *prachar*. Senior officials of the Singh Sabha Shatabdi Committee would pay for their own travel and other expenses. To be on the Committee was considered as *sewa*, and no remunerations were ever sought.

Gianiji came into contact with the academic world in Patiala. This interaction revitalised the intellectual environment in the academic circles of Patiala. *Path bodh samagams* were held, the first one at Teja Singh Samundri Hall, Amritsar and subsequently in Ludhiana; Sri Guru Singh Sabha; Takht Sri Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo; and Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, Delhi. *Path bodh Samagams* were arguably the first multi-disciplinary endeavours to understand *Gurbani* contained in Guru Granth Sahib. Scholars of various languages and traditional *granthis* together read Guru Granth Sahib and each line was discussed and debated upon

for its meaning, grammar and pronunciation. They were all striving to achieve a greater degree of clarity in their understanding of Gurbani. These samagams were usually three-day affairs.

#### **Guru Gobind Singh Marg**

In 1973, Giani Zail Singh was Chief Minister of the Punjab. To sanctify historic gurdwaras connected with the life of Guru Gobind Singh, he came up with the thought of a march through the historic gurdwaras on the road linking Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib in Anandpur Sahib to Takht Sri Damdama Sahib in Talwandi Saboo. Giani Gurdit Singh identified such gurdwaras and provided the contextually correct quotations from Guru Granth Sahib, which were used to embellish the gates erected in front of these gurdwaras. The procession started at Anandpur Sahib on 10 April and culminated at Damdama Sahib on 13 April. Gianiji also played a pivotal role in mediating between SGPC president Gurcharan Singh Tohra and Chief Minister Giani Zail Singh to ensure co-operation and keep politics out of this religious endeavour.

By this time, Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha had become national in character, with an office at Gurdwara Rakab Ganj in Delhi, ably run by Sardar Pratap Singh, an associate of Sardar Hukam Singh.

In 1978, Mrs Inderjit Kaur finally got to live in her own house in Sector 18, Chandigarh, after she demitted office as Vice-Chancellor. It was to be a two-year sabbatical for both her and Giani Gurdit Singh, a time to take stock, to read, learn and review— and to spend quality time with the family.

#### **Guru Granth Vidya Kendras**

In 1980, my parents moved to Delhi, where my mother had been appointed chairperson of the Staff Selection Commission, New Delhi, for a five-year term. I was already studying at St Stephen's College, Delhi but my brother continued to live in Chandigarh till he graduated. Sardar Hukam Singh and Giani Gurdit Singh were now together, in the same city and again devoted their energies to religious studies.



Path Bodh Samagams were organised but Giani Gurdit Singh and Sardar Hukam Singh wanted to set up a more lasting institution. Fakir Singh, a businessman, donated five acres at Andheria Mor in Mehrauli where Guru Granth Sahib Vidya Kendra was set up to teach Gurbani to young Sikhs and train them in the art of recitation and performing kirtan. It is today a flourishing institution, headed by Sardar Hukam Singh's daughter, Mrs Raminder Kaur. Another Guru Granth Vidya Kendra was set up at Sector 28 in Chandigarh.

Giani Zail Singh had now become the President of India and the two remained good friends. During this time, Giani Gurdit Singh travelled far and wide

to *maths* of various bhagats whose compositions were enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib. He continued to research, which was to eventually come out in the form of a book titled *Ithas Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, *Bhagat Bani Bhag* (History of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Bhagat Bani volume) a few years later.

#### The shocks of 1984

Giani Gurdit Singh acutely felt the shock of the 1984 Army assault on Harmandir Sahib to such an extent that he suffered a heart attack. What added to his pain was destruction of the Sikh reference library and many invaluable manuscripts that had been kept for safekeeping at the

Golden Temple. The tragedy had an impact on many interpersonal relations too.

On 31 October 1984, he was at the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was brought there after being shot. He got away from the hospital just as the violence spread, came home and made arrangements to evacuate the students and teachers of the Guru Granth Vidya Kendra at Mehrauli, of which he was the president, to a safer place. We all shared the helplessness, anger and terror that followed in the days after, but thanks to his foresight, and help from kind-hearted neighbours, no one from the kendra faced physical harm. The Kendra itself was trashed and burnt down, but such was the spirit of that community that it was up and running within weeks.

Soon after, Dr Denton Cooley examined Giani Gurdit Singh at Houston, USA and performed angioplasty on him. Giani Gurdit Singh lectured at various gurdwaras in the USA, even as he recouped.

#### **Back to Chandigarh**

On return to India, the family moved to Chandigarh, back to the house built in 1958. He devoted his days to the Guru Granth Vidya Kendra and also to his writing. It was during this period that his work on *Ithas Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, *Bhagat Bani Bhag* was finally finished to his satisfaction. The book was published in 1990.

Giani Gurdit Singh often worked on many manuscripts simultaneously. He was generous with



Punjab Deputy CM Rajinder Kaur Bhattal presenting Punjabi Sahi Shiromani award to Giani Gurdit Singh on the inaugural day of Punjabi Language week at Patiala.

his time to a fault with those who came to see him, but could be impatient with those who were unable to grasp what he had said.

During the last decade of his life, he devoted a lot of time to his family and to organising and finishing the material collected during a lifetime of research. He was given the Doordarshan *Panj Pani Sanman* 2005 for contribution to Punjabi heritage and culture. Doordarshan also made a brief documentary film on him.

He then published *Ithas Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, *Mundavani*. The book was initially well received but became controversial after the Jathedar of Takht Sri Patna Sahib criticised it. The scholar in him wanted to prove his point. However, this conflicted with a lifetime of devotion and sewa of the Panth that prevented him

Giani Gurdit Singh had gone for a meeting of the Guru Granth Vidya Kendra at Delhi on 12 September 2006, when he had a heart attack. A short while later, doctors confirmed his diagnosis and was shifted to Fortis Hospital in Vasant Kunj, where Dr Upendra Kaul performed angioplasty, and put a stent in one of the arteries.

He was in good spirits and he told his wife: "I was at the doorway, but God wants me to do more work." I brought him back to Chandigarh on the 17th and he went back to work on writing history of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.



Back home in Chandigarh in his study, Gurdit Singh with his wife Inderjit Kaur and son Roopinder Singh after the heart attack that struck him in Delhi.

#### Punjabi Sahit Shiromani

Recognition then came in the form of the Punjabi Sahit Shiromani Award 2006, which he received in Patiala on 1 November from Rajinder Kaur Bhattal, Deputy Chief Minister, Punjab. It was an occasion to celebrate when family and friends gathered at Patiala, including a contingent from Mithewal.

The citation of the award read: "A relentless champion of Punjab, Punjabi and Punjabiat, Giani Gurdit Singh has created a unique identity for himself as a scholar, author, well-known journalist, and editor and distinguished researcher in the fields of Punjabi language, Punjabi literature, Punjabi folklore and Sikh religion.

"He has painstakingly studied old manuscripts, handwritten birs and other ancient works and penned

well-researched tomes such as Itihas Sri Guru Granth Sahib and Ragmala di Asliat....

"During his tenure as a member of the Punjab Legislative Council, he was instrumental in bringing forth resolutions which eventually paved the way for setting up of the erstwhile Punjabi Mehkama (now Languages Department), Punjabi University, and Takht Sri Damdama Sahib. He has ... made vast qualitative and quantitative contribution in the Punjabi literary spectrum."

#### His house, his final resting place

A few days later, the new stent in his heart got blocked and he was shifted to Fortis Hospital at Mohali, from where he was discharged after a week. This time, Giani Gurdit Singh was told that his heart had been badly damaged. He felt weak and was told that he could not travel.

Still, he continued his writing, though the pace was slower. He was as alert as ever, but was irritated when his physical infirmities hampered his work. Yet he retained his sense of humour and during Lohri, he brought cheer back into our lives. As my mother and I sat with him on the huge double bed, he revisited his life through anecdotes. "He's back in form," we thought to ourselves, as exchanged satisfied glances. Unfortunately, our assessment was wrong. We had breakfast together on 17 January 2007. He lay down to rest, and an hour or so later, his very bed in the house he had built for himself became his final resting place. He passed away peacefully.

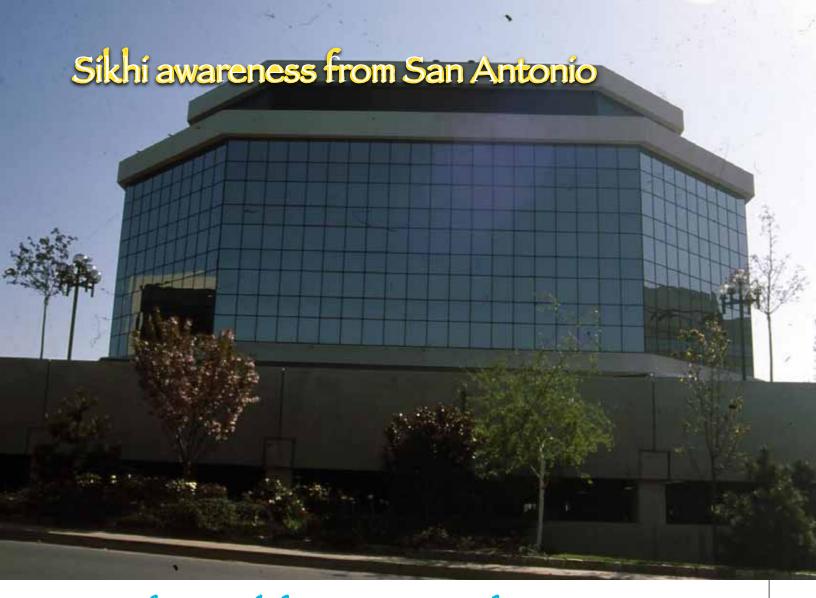
As Giani Gurdit Singh had written in *Mera Pind*, his father had said: "Now Kaka, it is for you to make sure that I get peace of mind. All my life I have striven only for an untarnished reputation. May Saheb give you the strength you need to do good". He did what his father had enjoined him to do-and the message lives on.

Roopinder Singh

Roopinder Singh is Assistant Editor with *The Tribune*, Chandigarh. He is also the author of *Arjan Singh*, *DFC Marshal of the Indian Air Force* and *Guru Nanak*, *His Life and Teachings*, both published by Rupa & Co, Delhi.

For more information, please visit www. gianigurditsingh.com and www.roopinder.com or contact singhroopinder@gmail.com





### The Sikh Research Institute

ver the past decade, several organisations have come up around the globe for the advancement of Sikh values, causes and awareness. One of these organisations, the Sikh Research Institute (SikhRI), truly continues to make a difference since its establishment four years ago.

"When we started the Sikh Research Institute at San Antonio, Texas in 2002, we wanted to establish an organisation committed to serving the Sikh community in three key ways," stated GP Singh, co-founder and board member of the Institute. "The institute's mission is to facilitate training and development while inspiring Sikh values, create a global awareness of Sikhi, and deliver strategic solutions to key challenges faced by the Sikh community."

The Sikh Research Institute has effectively undertaken several projects in the United States and internationally in order to meet these objectives that the community-at-large should be made aware of.

- Facilitating training and development
- Creating global awareness of Sikhi
- \* Delivering strategic solutions

#### **Facilitating Training and Development**

The Sikh Research Institute focuses on three programmes in the area of training and development: Mark of Excellence, *Sidak* and *Grihast*.

Mark of Excellence involves a series of lectures, presentations and workshops that seek to foster Sikh values based on *gurmat* traditions. At these events, volunteer presenters team up with fulltime staff to

conduct one-day seminars focused on a particular theme. This series has been conducted in the USA, Britain and Canada.

"The Sikh Research Institute gives you the facilities to think for yourself, the ground work in knowledge to make your own fully informed opinions on the relation of Sikhism in today's world and in your personal life experiences. It does not involve preaching or trying to convert existing Sikh youth to a particular belief." - Bhupinder Kaur, London, UK.

Rather longer than the single-day approach of *Mark of Excellence* events, *Sidak* is an intensive two-week educational experience consisting of instructional seminars on various facets of Sikh scripture, history, and discipline.

Sidak is a distinctive learning opportunity for young adults seeking to increase their commitment towards the Sikh faith and develop leadership skills. "There's nothing else like it anywhere else in the world, especially in the way it teaches theology, history, and language," admires Simran Singh, a Sidak participant and volunteer.

Sidak offers three programmes simultaneously: one for high school students, another for college students and a third as a language programme open to all who are interested. High school students study an overview of Sikh history and theology, as college students delve deeper into these same subjects. The language programme focuses on the composition, structure, and language of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.



"The things I learned at Sidak have allowed me to gain better appreciation for Gurbani. Everything I have learned, I have been able to apply time and time again since the programme ended. I will be able to continue applying the lessons I learned everyday for the rest of my life. The amount of knowledge I gained and the practicality of it is what I liked best about Sidak."

Ravi Inder Singh, Naples, Florida.

The third major project in the field of training and development is the *Grihast* Retreat, a three-day event for young married couples designed to help strengthen their values in marriage and family relationships. *Grihast* incorporates diverse themes that are at the foundation of a married life.

#### Creating global awareness of Sikhi

In its efforts to create global awareness of the Sikh tradition, SikhRI engages itself in delivering lectures, hosting discussions, and participating in interactive dialogue at a diversity of levels.







According to Harinder Singh, executive director for SikhRI, the institute is committed to open educational forums that further 'harmony in a world of difference'.

Asked about the specifics of such lectures, Harinder Singh explained that speaking engagements range from local to national to international events for a vast array of audiences. For this reason, Harinder said, the topics addressed and approaches taken by the institute often varies.

"Our goal to foster an awareness of Sikhi has led our organization to a variety of venues worldwide. We have become relevant to Sikh and Puniabi forums such as Gurdwaras and radio/TV shows. We have given guest lectures for religion and political science departments at universities. We have spoken at forums, seminars and workshops for public and private schools. We have taken part in numerous interfaith conversations, and we have even conducted trainings in governmental and corporate environment."

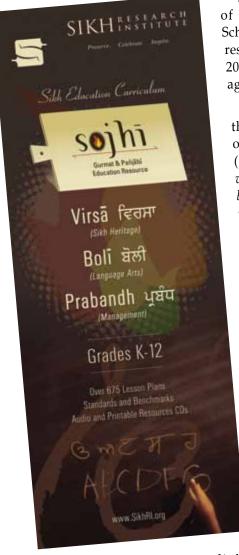
#### **Delivering solutions to** challenges faced by the Panth

After extensive research and analysis, SikhRI decided that their first major project in addressing challenges faced by the Sikh community would tackle the matter of education being imparted to Sikh youth.

According to board member Gurvendra Singh Suri, this project, called Sojhi, Gurmat & Punjabi Education Resource which aspires to improve the effectiveness of Sikh education by developing high standards of learning with comprehensive teaching materials.

The gurmat and Punjabi curriculum for students from Kindergarten to Grade 12 has been split into three phases: elementary school, middle school, and high school. Each phase seeks to develop the insight, skills and thought processes necessary to inspire children to live a Guru-oriented life; thus the name Sojhi, meaning 'insight'.

In order to adopt 'a Guru-oriented life', children must understand what such a life entails. Therefore, it is critical that the community passes down the wisdom of the Gurus, as well as the approach to understand the Guru Granth Sahib. In this manner, every Sikh will be able to read the Gurmukhi script and comprehend the vocabulary, grammar, and context in which the bani was written.



Such is the purpose of the Sojhi Elementary School package, a learning resource launched in June 2006 for children from the ages of 5-10 years.

For every age group, the curriculum focuses on the study of boli (Language Arts) and virsa (Sikh Heritage). The boli section introduces the Gurmukhi script and Gurbani-based vocabulary at the Kindergarten level, and gradually progresses in learning. It also fosters use of contemporary spoken and written Panjabi. The virsa section explores principles of Sangat, discusses the lives of the Gurus, takes children through the travels of Guru Nanak Sahib and acquaints them with understanding the Ten Nanaks as one jot (divine

light). Furthermore, it

provides children with the knowledge of appropriate Sikhrelated research tools from young age. The use of the Mahan Kosh is introduced as early as in fourth grade. All lessons are combined with modern day teaching techniques for teachers and parents that take both eastern and western social contexts into account.

Jasmine Kaur, SikhRI's Director of Education and Sojhi Project lead, explains that the curriculum is based on a standards approach rather than having textbook focus. "The standards focus on what knowledge a student in a given grade level should learn and in what way during their school year," she adds.

It is essential to note that the material so developed used the expertise of a team with a background in education, human development, Sikhi research and personal experience at Khalsa schools. Having a team with this background ensures that content is age-appropriate and developmentally sound. It also takes into account how easily teachers can use this.

#### Grade 2 Boli: a sample

#### Standard 4: Writing Sentences and Paragraphs

Students begin to write coherent sentences and paragraphs.

Students go through the writing process (pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing successive versions).

Students print legibly and space letters, words, and sentences appropriately.

Jasmine Kaur adds that each lesson plan identifies objectives of the one-hour class and provides the instructor with information for any preparation necessary prior to conducting the lesson–from understanding of content to use of particular material. A step-by-step methodology is provided for teachers to engage the students, help them explore particular concepts and then extend their learning to use in real life situations. The lessons also provide an evaluation section in which teachers are given tools on how to recognise if students have acquired the knowledge that is being given.

The multi-media package contains two CDs: one CD allows teachers to print resources and activity sheets for students, while the other is an audio CD that helps students with their pronunciation of bani.

Teachers also benefit from an eight-hour teachertraining session during the curriculum implementation



phase. Jasmine Kaur trains teachers in teaching styles such as questioning techniques, use of graphic organisers, and peer mentoring. Harinder Singh trains teachers on the understanding of content which focus on *jot* and *jugat*, rules of language, and explanation of the Sikh Pledge of Allegiance and Khalsa Anthem. According to Harinder Singh, the goal of such teachertraining is to get teachers on the same level and motivated to inspire their students.

Notably, schools also receive annual membership benefits, which keep them updated with new research in the field of education, new lesson plans, and more information on particular curriculum content.

Since the launch of the Sojhi Elementary School Curriculum, over 135 teachers have been trained at 23 schools across the United States. Packages have also been purchased for individual development and home schooling use. The long term goal for the Sojhi project is to create a network of Gurmat and Punjabi School administrators and teachers where decisions can be made based on needs of the Gurmat and Punjabi Schools. The Middle School Curriculum is scheduled to be ready shortly with the High School curriculum to follow soon after.

For more information on Sojhi-Gurmat and Punjabi Education Resource, contact Jasmine Kaur at sojhi@sikhri.org.

I thought this was an excellent programme that taught me things that I didn't know. It brought in new concepts and methods that I can't wait to use in class and to see the student's reactions. This is a great project with an excellent curriculum that is age appropriate and challenges the children to expand their horizons."- Jaspaul Singh, Uniondale, NY.

#### Spotlight Article: Approaching SikhRI

Harinder Singh, executive director for the Sikh Research Institute, maintains a personal area of expertise in various cultural, political, religious, linguistic, and developmental issues related to the Sikhs, Punjab, and South Asia. He earned a second degree (Masters of Philosophy) in the linguistics of the Guru Granth Sahib and a diploma in the Persian language.

Asked about the organisation's consistent successes, he replied by attributing all fortunes to two things: Sikh RI's commitment to *gurmat* and Grace of the Guru.

Harinder Singh clarifies that "literally meaning the wisdom of the Guru, the term gurmat is often used to describe the Guru's way. I have come to understand and talk about gurmat as the cooperation of bani (scriptural directives), tvarikh (historical precedents) and rahit (code of ethics)".

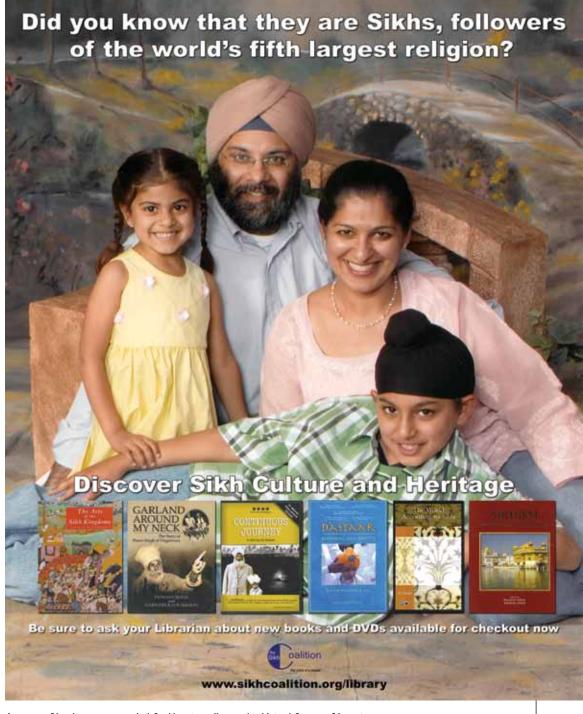
The bani celebrates Guru Granth Sahib as the epitome of Sikh heritage that embraces only those parts of the universal cultures that have the potentialities to be generous, sublime and impartial, and admits no hegemonic intrusion that may disturb the flow of its spiritual creativity.

The tvarikh comprises of those traditions that cherish the prophetgenius of the Guru, the one who takes an individual from ignorance to enlightenment. It also borrows insights from the lives of the Sikhs raised by the Guru.

The rahit encompasses the wholeness of life and then raises its myriad forms to a level of transcendental purity.

It is unimpaired freedom of person and soul where the paradoxical segments of life (e.g., war and peace) find a level of naturalness.

Further the synergy of other faiths, traditions, thoughts, and philosophies that further the drive to realize the divine potential within each individual is also used as long as they do not contradict the *gurmat* traditions.



A range of books recommended for libraries, all over the United States of America.

The Sikh Research Institute conducts seminars, workshops, training and customised programmes at different venues across the world.

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### Roots of the Sikh Warrior

t is recorded history that Alexander of Macedonia's legions faced their toughest military opponents in the Punjab. One such republican people, referred to by Greek writers, are forefathers of the modern Majhails, the backbone of the Sikh people who, just before Alexander's invasion, had inflicted defeat on the valiant Paurava and who, though hopelessly outnumbered by the Greeks, fought Alexander by the Sakata-vyuha or 'wagon formation', which the Greek phalanx could not pierce. The Greek writers called them "Kathians" and described them as a nation, residing to the east of Hydraotes, or River Ravi, the present districts of Lahore and Amritsar. "The Kathians themselves enjoyed the highest reputation for courage and skill in the art of war". It will be recalled that descendents of the "Kathians", the Majhail Sikhs, were leaders of the Sikh mass of about 30,000 unorganised men, women and children at village Kup,

near Malerkotla when surprised and attacked by the 100,000 strong Afghan army of Ahmed Shah Abdali on the morning of 5 February 1762, when over 10,000 mostly Sikh women and children, were killed in the first onrush and as many men more in the next few days of retreat towards Barnala in the Patiala district. In this carnage, called the Great Holocaust (Wada Ghauligara) in Sikh history, the Sikhs defended themselves by means of the same Sakata-vyuha with which they had met the equally overwhelming numerical odds of the Greek invader and once again, though literally decimated to a man, they refused to submit. The capital city of the "Kathians" is mentioned by the Greek writers as "Sankala" and most probably occupied the site at which the Sikh Gurus built Amritsar at end of the 16th century.

To the west of this Majhail republic, adjoining their territory, was a republican state of the Sophytes, which

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has been identified with the Sambhutis whose territory extended upto the Salt Range, frontiers of the territory of Paurava. Their cities "were governed by law in the highest degree salutary ... and their political system was one to admire". It was from this region that the ancestors of Maharaja Ranjit Singh arose to build foundations of the Sikh Raj, which the Maharaja later converted into a monarchy.

When the legions of Alexander reached the River Beas, he received intelligence that across the river there was the territory of a republic which was "exceedingly fertile and the inhabitants were good agriculturists, brave in war and living under an excellent system of internal government". The citizens of this trans-Beas republic had elephants of superior size and courage and in greater numbers, thus the Greek invaders "now began to lose heart" and "positively asserted that they would follow no further". The citizens of this republic were forefathers of the Sikhs who founded the cis-Sutlej Sikh states in the 18th century. So retreated Alexander the Great. On his retreat, upto Baluchistan, almost all the people Alexander met were republican, the most powerful republics amongst them mentioned as Oxydrakai and Malloi, the Kshudras and Mallavas. Their cities were along the river Chenab and their capital on the river Ravi was probably Lahore. These two republics in a confederacy, mustered some 100,000 soldiers to block the retreat of Alexander whereupon, "the Macedonians lost their morale on the prospect of meeting this army ..... and when the Macedonians found that they had still on hand a fresh war in which the most warlike nations in all India would be the antagonists, they were struck with an unexpected terror.

Greek writers assert that this confederacy was defeated, but Patanjali in his Mahabhasya shows the Kshudraks as emerging victorious.

These Kshudraks and Mallavas were, undoubtedly ancestors of most of the *Majha misls* of the Sikhs in the 18th century.

#### The Republican Tradition

Before Guru Gobind Singh's "light passed into the Great Light", *Jyoti jot samae* on 8 October 1708, he had despatched Banda Singh "Bahadur" from the Deccan to the Punjab to establish a Sikh Raj, with instructions on the strategy to be followed and the pattern of government to be established. Precisely two years later, in November 1710 the Sikhs proclaimed sovereignty over the strategic province of Sirhind thus making imperial rule of Delhi untenable over the whole of India. The coin which they struck, as symbol of their sovereignty, bore the following heraldic legend:

"This coin is struck as evidence of Our sovereignty, Here and Hereafter.

The Sword of Nanak is the Source of all Grace and the Victory and Felicity

Is the gift of Guru Gobind Singh, the King of Kings, the true Master".

An official Seal of Sovereignty was also adopted and introduced to the effect that,

"The ever expanding prosperity,

The strength of arms,

And continuous victory and common well being,

Are all guaranteed (to mankind) by Guru Nanak—Gobind Singh".

It was an ancient tradition of the republics of the pristine Aryan polity to have an official heraldic legend and a seal, called *Lakshanam* and *Ankam* respectively. After a brief spell of sovereignty of five years, the Sikhs faced fifty years' of persecution, pogroms and systematic genocide campaigns of the Mughal and Afghan tyrants till in 1760, they again proclaimed their formal sovereignty at Lahore under the leadership of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and adopted legend of the official seal of Banda Singh, Bahadur, as their heraldic legend as well as official citation. For five years after this, the Sikhs had to face another genocide plan and campaign of the redoubtable Ahmed Shah Abdali, after which in 1765 they reoccupied Lahore and formally proclaimed their sovereignty, again sticking to the ancient pristine Aryan tradition and the precepts of Guru Gobind Singh.

For almost twenty five years, general governance of the Sikh Raj at their capital of Lahore remained entrusted in the hands of a triumvirate of Sikh captains even while the Sikhs continued their struggle for liberating the whole of Punjab, from the Jamuna to Indus from yoke of foreigners or culturally foreign elements and every captain, Jathedar or Sirdar, who thus freed and liberated a territory for the Sikh Raj, had it entered in the records which were maintained by the Custodian at the *Akal Takht* at Amritsar,



in separate files which (in Persian is *misl*) till the time that the Sikh Raj would be duly proclaimed and established with a constitution based on the principles of Sikh polity.

This was origin of the Sikh *misls*, or confederacies, as they are somewhat erroneously called. There were twelve such *misls*, autonomous Sikh militias, in-charge of territories, each with a definite and clear objective of preliminary consolidation before itself, it being tacitly understood that the ultimate aim was establishment of Sikh Raj based upon the true principles of Sikh polity in accordance with ancient precedents and the precepts of Guru Gobind Singh.

This tacit understanding was explicit in every Sirdar personally reporting details of the area liberated by his militia, twice a year, to the Custodian General at the *Akal Takht* and in having the fact duly recorded in the Commonwealth Files.

#### Tempering the Steel

Guru Gobind Singh was a military genius of lore and a statesman with God gifted insight into the affairs of men and state, chosing for himself a path different from his father and predecessors. Spiritual salvation and social-economic reconstruction of the Hindu-Sikh society was not possible without political emancipation, and the latter was possible only through armed means.

"Without gaining ascendency over the Raj it is not possible to uphold Dharma and Raj is acquired only through the might of arms.

"No one willingly bestows kingship upon anyone else; he who acquires it does so through the might of arms."

The Mughal Empire, although bigger than ever before, was weak at its base and hence vulnerable. The Guru gave his assessment: "The Mughal Empire is doomed from its roots, but will not fall by itself until it completely withers away; the process can be hastened by blowing it away, raising a mighty storm."

It seems that there were two means which the Guru intended should be applied as a ferment and lever for upliftment of human souls so that they would become a suitable vehicle for the creation and sustenance of this Fraternity. One was his passionate conviction that the principles of Politics which govern relations between the rulers and the citizens and relations between the states themselves, should be so revolutionised as to bring them to complete accord with the principles of Ethics. His two Letters of Admonition, *Fatehnameh* and *Zafarnameh*, which he despatched to Emperor Aurangzeb after his departure from the fortress of Anandpur, contain some of the clearest expositions of his ideas on this point.

"You are accustomed to conduct your statecraft through deceit and diplomacy. I approve of naught but that it accords with the principles of ethics and the dictates of Conscience" is essence of the first Letter of Admonition, *Fatehnameh*.

"He alone is a cultured man, he alone worthy of the name of human being, whose 'yea' is 'yea' and whose 'nay' is 'nay'. He who says one thing and means and intends another is sub-human," is what is declared in the second Letter of Admonition *Zafarnameh*.

Having thus chosen his path, the Guru declared total war upon the Mughals and set about raising an army from amongst his devoted Sikhs. He had initiated measures in forming a loose alliance against the Mughals, defeating then in the battle of Nadaun in 1687. The small band of Sikhs proved their battleworthiness

and through their devotion and dedication, had made the Guru realise the revolutionary potential of the inarticulate Sikh masses promising them religious freedom and political power only if they were prepared to die for their right to freedom.

The first decade of the 18th Century witnessed great battles between the gradually increasing Sikh numbers and both the Afghans and Mughals, but the numerical odds were always in favour of the latter.

The first pitched battle between the Sikhs and the Afghans took place near the River Sutlej in 1765, marking beginning of the positional warfare stage. In this battle the Sikhs came forward like a well-arrayed army which was commanded by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Their right wing was led by Charat Singh Sukkarchakkia, Jhanda Singh Bhangi and Jai Singh Kanhaiya, while on the left were Hari Singh, Ram Das, Gulab Singh and Gujjar Singh. Ahmad Shah Abdali warned his soldiers not to leave their positions in pursuit of the Sikhs. However, the right wing of the Afghans ventured out and suffered heavy losses. Qazi Nur Mohammed, the author of Jang Namah, who fought in these battles, was distressed with the Sikhs gaving the Afghans no respite till the latter had recrossed the Chenab.

The seventh invasion (1764-1765) of Ahmad Shah was a failure. In fact, the last campaign had left the Sikhs even more confident of their strength their military reputation was even higher. That Ahmad Shah had little control over the Punjab is amply borne out by the fact that Nasir Khan declined to accept Ahmad Shah's 'reward' of the territories of the Chenab, Jhang, Multan and Deras which Shah wanted to bestow upon him as a parting gift.

The Sikhs reoccupied all their possessions and within a short time became masters of the entire Punjab. Emboldened by their successes, the Sikhs then took Lahore, capital of the province. People of the city were favourably inclined towards their Sikh masters who had been just and considerate towards all their subjects, Hindus and Muslims. When Ahmad Shah was in Lahore, the main force of the Sikhs, some twenty thousand horse under Sirdars Charhat Singh, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Hira Singh Bhangi and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, was camping at a distance of 35 Kos (70km) from him Another band of the Sikhs, some six thousand horse, was at a distance of 14 Kos from Lahore. When the Shah

advanced towards Sirhind, the Sikhs kept looking for an opportunity to strike hard.

Ahmad Shah sent Jehan Khan with a fifteen thousand strong force in pursuit of the Sikhs. In the short battle, which followed, the Sikhs killed and wounded some five to six thousand Afghans and completely routed Jehan Khan. The harrasment of Ahmad Shah and effectiveness of tactics of the Sikhs was also noted with much astonishment by Lord Clive of the East India Company in Calcutta. He commented: 'If they continue to cut off his supplies and plunder his baggage, he will be ruined without fighting; and then he will either return to Afghanistan or meet with shame and disgrace. As long as he does not defeat the Sikhs or come to terms with them, he cannot penetrate into central and eastern India. And he never did.

The fall of Lahore, and in this manner, put a seal on the end of Afghan authority in the Punjab. The Sikhs had now only to contend with the Mughal Emperor of India, Shah Alam II. The Sikhs crossed the Jamuna and carried the war into the very domains of Najib and captured territory around Muzaffarnagar. In March, 1768 the Sikhs marched upon the royal domains around Karnal and Panipat and after defeating Najib-ud-daula in various battles carried the war right up to the city gates of Delhi. Defeated, Najib-ud-daula requested the Queen Mother to absolve him of the responsibility of defending the royal family and the Imperial capital. He wrote: "The Sikhs have prevailed." And they had. By the end of 1768, the Khalsa had become the supreme power in North India and their enemies, the Mughals, the Afghans 'met an ignoble end,' one by one.

It was a promise kept, a dream come true: "the Khalsa ruled and none could defy them."

#### **Character, Composition and Organisation**

The Khalsa was truly a people's army composed entirely of volunteers drawn from the poorer sections of society whose cause it espoused. In terms of religious belief it consisted entirely of baptised Sikhs, for conversion to Sikhism was pre-condition for enrolment in the ranks of the Khalsa whose unique feature was its republican character and democratic constitution. Once a soldier had been enrolled, his antecedents were considered a matter of no consequence and he was treated as an equal and a brother-in-arms. Among the Khalsa no pre-eminence was allowed except which merit and ability naturally bestowed. Anyone who possessed the strength of arms, determination and organising

ability could ride with followers behind him and call himself a Sirdar. The followers were, however, not considered in service of the leader who was, in fact, barely allowed the dignity of being senior among equals. Further, humility and spirit of service for his fellowmen were considered great personal merits in a leader. As the Commanders were elected leaders, they strove to carry their followers with them in democratic manner. The basis of discipline was each soldier's inner conviction and his sense of dedication to the cause. He obeyed all orders as he considered it his sacred duty to perform all such actions as furthered the cause of *Dharma*. The sense of collective destiny further strengthened the sense of discipline. Further, the democratic functioning of the army gave the individual soldier a feeling that he was his own leader and the duties he was carrying out were self-imposed. The individual soldier's sense of honour and the notion of mission fulfillment played an important part in his psyche.

The Khalsa was always in buoyant hope (Chardi Kalha) and, hence, their leaders were never worried much about the problem of keeping up morale. Belief in the ultimate victory of the Khalsa was an article of faith with them. In their daily prayers they recounted with reverence the sufferings and sacrifice of their Gurus and their martyrs and pledged themselves to follow their lives. Consequently, they developed a strange, romantic attitude towards their life and sufferings. Above all, they believed themselves to be the instruments of God's will on earth. Futher, the atmosphere of freedom which prevailed in the ranks of the Khalsa prevented soldiers from harbouring secret opinions and private reservations which, in turn, fostered unity and greatly raised morale. In pure military terms, the Sikhs, from the very beginning, had succeeded in building up 'that most valuable of all assets, a tradition of success'. The high morale of the Khalsa army was attributed to the sense of common danger which gave but one impulse to their spirit and roused them to action in which they manifested courage of the most obstinate kind against the heaviest of odds.

Professionally as well as morally, the Sikh was a far superior soldier than his adversaries, the Mughals and the Pathans. The sword was part of his dress and soldiering part of his creed. As he learnt war in battle, he learnt it the expensive way, but speedily. The individual soldier strove in every way to gain high proficiency in the use of arms as this was to be his

mainstay in life. The contemporary author of Jang Namah goes into paeans of praise while describing the Sikh's professional qualities. He says: "When they take the sword in their hands, they overrun the country from Hind to Sind. Nobody then stands in opposition to them, however strong he may be. When they manipulate the spear they shatter the ranks of the enemy and when they raise the heads of their spears into the sky, they would pierce even through the Caucasus. When they adjust the strings of their Chachi bows and place in them the enemy-killing arrows and pull the strings to their ears, the body of the enemy begins to shiver with fear. When their battle-axe falls upon the armour of their opponents, that armour becomes their coffin. The body of every one of them is like a piece of a rock and, in physical grandeur, every one of them is more than fifty persons... it is said that the musket is a weapon of the ancient days. It, however, appears to be the creation of these rather than of the great Socrates. Although there are so many musketeers, but nobody can excel them in its use." It may be added that apart from the Marathas, the Sikhs were the only Indian soldiers who could manipulate muskets from horseback. In the Mughal and the Rajput army, the musket remained weapon of the infantry.

The real excellence of the Sikhs, however, lay in their understanding the nature of war they were fighting. They were immune from the Mughal soldiers' propensity to give up too soon and the Afghan soldiers' rapacity, brutality and vanity. On one hand, the Sikhs were prepared to carry on the struggle to the point of mutual extermination and on the other, never offered battle till they were confident of their success. Individually each of the Khalsa was a purified soul, a dedicated social worker and an intensely motivated soldier who understood the issues at stake. He knew why he was fighting and for what and that made all the difference in those days of mercenary armies. There were few belly-soldiers among the Khalsa; it was an army that marched on its head.

The Sikh soldiers acted upon a high moral code of conduct which won them acclaim from one and all. This and the exercise of every species of temperance gave them a powerful advantage over their enemies, "the debauched and debilitated Mughals." The Sikhs "fought and plundered like men, and not like demons. There are few stories

in Sikh history of outrage to women and torture to men." On the other hand, there are numerous stories of the Sikh Warriors having risked battles for saving the honour of women. They were generous even towards their enemies whom they would not slay in cold blood. "In no case would they slay a coward, nor would they put obstacle in the way of a fugitive."

The Khalsa army was primarily a cavalry force and therefore very mobile, did not possess any artillery as it was of no use for their mode of warfare. The Sikhs greatly prized a good horse and never lost an opportunity of securing one and mounted the best horses they could afford or procure. Their horses were strong and well trained, patient under hardship and capable of undergoing incredible fatigue. The Sikh cavalry was accustomed to charge at full gallop, discharging their muskets and repeating such performance. Their shock action was impressive and put the enemy off his balance, specially if he was on the move or in the open. The Sikh horsemen were known for covering long distances and marched from fifty to one hundred and twenty miles a day.

However, the sword was their sacred weapon which they kept with them always and at all times. They revered it as their deliverer and used it with great skill. The other weapons used were bows and arrows, lances, spears, daggers and sabres. The



The Khalsa's Kirpan (sword) is his most sacred weapon.

Nihangs or Akali Sikhs made good use of *chukkars* (quoits) which they threw upon the enemy with great precision and deadly effect. The Sikhs were greatly fond of muskets which they used with great dexterity and skill.

The Sikhs lived off the land and were satisfied with what was available in the locality and even towards the close of their struggle, when they had organised themselves into regular units, they were very abstemious on the march or in the midst of battle, their usual food consisting of parched gram washed down with water; in camp it consisted of Dal Roti eaten on hands. Their dress consisted of loose breeches (kacha), and small turban. The top was kind of chequered plaid worn partly round the middle and partly over the shoulder or with a long shirt (kurta) which came up to the knees. Each Sikh carried one or two blankets which he also used as saddle and from which he made a small tent if needed. Money and other articles were distributed equally with an extra share for the Chief. Territorial acquisitions were reported to Central Office at Amritsar (or where it was for the time being) where these were entered in Misl (register of record and evidence of the reporting band. The reporting Chief held and managed these territories in trust and on behalf of the Sikh Commonwealth.

The basic organisational structure of the Khalsa army and the socio-religious-political organisation of the Khalsa was one and the same. The primary unit of this fourfold organization was the individual, whose dignity and equality were the postulates of the Sikh religion, the Sikh society, the Sikh polity and the military organization of the Khalsa. The individual had as much a right to command an army as to lead the congregation in prayer provided, however, he had the requisite qualifications. Being a Knight of the Khalsa he was subordinate to none and was his own leader. An individual Khalsa soldier was virtually a unit capable of operating automatically, independent of his companions, for he was not one; he was an army unto himself. This way the Khalsa army was composed of as many operative units as the number of men in it. The next higher unit of the three-tier organization of the Khalsa was an assemblage of any five baptised Sikhs. Together they could initiate a new entrant into the order of the Khalsa. In social and administrative affairs they constituted the allpowerful Panchayat. In their military parlanace they were a Fauj, an army. In all matters concerning them they could take any decision in conformity with the doctrine of the Gurus and the general policy of the Khalsa Panth.

Sarbat Khalsa or General Assembly of the Khalsa was the next higher unit and this was supreme. Its meetings were called only when very important policy decisions were required to be taken. It was a sort of direct democracy. Any baptised Sikh who chose to be present and liked to speak could do so. The soldiers participated in these meetings in their own individual capacity and as members of any band. They spoke on what pleased them and what they thought was best in interests of the nation. The Nihangs or Akalis, who usually presided over these meeting, zealously guarded the right of the humblest of Sikhs to speak his mind and to give his opinion. The meetings of the Sarbat Khalsa invariably started with solemn prayers through which presence of God and the Guru was invoked amongst them. Thereafter the participants were called upon to forget their mutual differences and to join in the deliberations impartially. The decisions were generally arrived at through consensus. In the event of a sharp division, the matter was generally left to judgement of the Holy Granth, solemnly opened at random and through the implied meanings of its opening verse. Whichever way the decision was arrived at, it was called Gurmatta, "council of the Guru" and was solemnly obeyed by one and all, including those who could not be present in the meeting.

Whenever 'party' and army were combined into one, the army had to evolve a working organisation of its own within the board framework of the general organisation. This was a military necessity, as military operations require a regular chain of command, howsoever democratic it may be. 'Without authority vesting in some, which others are under obligation to obey, it is not possible to carry on military operations, even when there are volunteers.' The Sikhs, not oblivious of this military necessity, evolved a military organization in which there were leaders and their followers, though none was the master and none was the servant.

The military organisation was required to function in conformity with the injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh and his advice to Banda Bahadur. Guru Gobind Singh, when he had appointed Banda Bahadur to be the Supreme Commander, of the Khalsa, had vested mere military authority in him and even in that sphere, had asked Banda Bahadur to act according to the wishes of the Khalsa.

# Varin Sat Guru Suhaj na hovai

Deep in the night I'm awakened By a mysterious Hmm.

The hmm is hypnotic I'm drawn towards it I wrap myself And slip into the night.

The moon is in its glory Stars light my way The air is gentle I race towards the humm.

The hmm Becomes clearer I can decipher The words.

Taken aback I Proceed With care.

I see a woman Sitting alone Singing hypnotically

har pahilarhee laav parvirtee karam drirh-aa-i-aa bal raam jee-o.

banee barahmaa vayd Dharam darirhHu paap tajaa-i-aa bal raam jee-o. Dharam darirhHu har naam

Dhi-aavahu simrit naam drirh-aa-i-aa.

satgur gur pooraa aaraaDhahu sabh kilvikh paap gavaa-i-aa.

sahj anand ho-aa vadbhaagee man har har meethaa laa-iaa......

I stay at a distance Not wanting to intrude. I'm witnessing Something beautiful.

She gets up Recites the *Ardaas* Out of sheer habit I stand too. Our eyes meet She smiles 'I didn't meant to intrude,' I say.

'It's *Hukam'* She replies.

I'm not sure What she means. I find myself Drawn to her side.

My mind is racing With a million questions. Who is she? What did I witness?

Her serenity Her calmness Her aura Mesmerise me.

'How can I Be of service?' She says.

Like a bumbling Fool I whisper 'Who are you?'

Saadha Suhagan She replies.

I'm confused I don't understand. She seems to sense My confusion.

Her words Are like honey I'm glued To every word.

I was a tormented soul With no place to call my own Every thought, every word Brought intense pain.

Day by day I became weaker. I lost all hope And the will to live. Broken Shattered In utter despair I fell to my knees.

At that moment Something transpired. No words Can honour that moment.

A hand lifted me. Fragrance enveloped me. I heard from within "Naam Simran – kar."

My days and nights Filled with *simran* Eased my pain Filled me with peace.

Simran became my anchor Simran gave me strength Simran was the sweetness That flowed through my veins.

I began to live I began to serve I began to glow From every pore.

This was the beginning Of the soul-bride Seeking union With her Husband-Lord.

Worldly fears disappeared My heart became tender *Haumai* took its leave I saw my Lord everywhere.

Singing His praises I heard The Divine Melody Within.

This was the second stage Of the soul-bride Seeking union With her Husband-Lord. My yearning Intensified In the company of the Holy I sang His praises.

My forehead Glowed. My viraag Sweet.

This was the third stage Of the soul-bride Seeking union With her Husband-Lord.

Sehag, Naam
Came to reside
I, the soul-bride
Glowed from within.

This is the fourth stage Of the soul-bride Merging With her Husband-Lord.

She grows silent I feel her energy. The silence is beautiful The silence is sacred.

She rises Lays her hand On my head Sings:

"Thal vich tinne vastoo paee-o satu sant okh veechchaaro Amrit Naam Thaakur kaa paeo jis kaa sbhasu adhaaro Jae ko khaavae jae ko bhunchae tis kaa ho-e udhaaro Eh vastu utajee nah jaaee nit nit rakh ur dhaaro Tamm sansaar charan lagg taree-aee sabhu Nanak Brahm pasaaro."

And disappears Into the night.

Guru Ang Sang!!

Inni Kaur