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Celebrating the Tri-Centennial
A Study of Jāp Sāhib
Baba Deep Singh Shaheed
The Sikh Identity
The Sikhpoint Calenders

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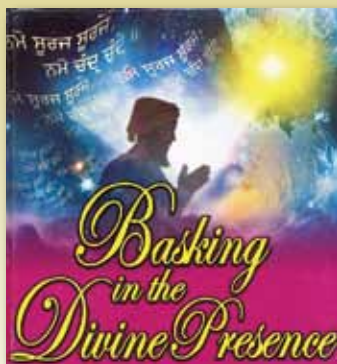
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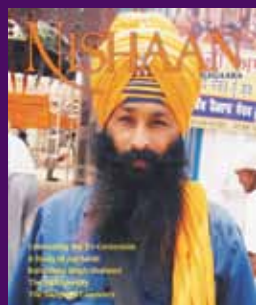
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Editorial

In the year 2008, the Panth celebrates three hundred years of the spiritual and socio-political pinnacle of *Sikhi*, attained at the hands of its founders, the Sikh Gurus and thereafter endowed as eternal blessings for mankind.

There are two significant happenings that took place in the year 1708: the passing of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Maharaj and the handing over of 'Guruship' to Gur Shabad, evershrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Thus we celebrate the 42 years in this known world of the child born at Patna in 1666 whose birth heralded the new world of divine spirit. A devout muslim faqir in Ghuram (near Ambala in the Punjab), Sayyad Bhikhan Shah, did *sajda* (bowed) towards the east (in direction of Patna) rather than the west (towards Kabba). He thereafter walked to Patna to have the vision of 'Ilahi Noor' (Divine Light) in the child of only three months, Gobind Rai.

This child came into the world entrusted with the heritage of two hundred years, creating a miraculous socio-religious economic transmutation of Indian society. During this period the fossilised beliefs, biases and prejudices were challenged and a new way of life for upliftment and ennoblement of 'man' was delineated, demonstrated and established. Religious and political oppression was challenged and the tyrannical state squarely confronted. Over the two centuries, Gobind Rai's predecessor Gurus, first Guru Nanak, through Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind were incarcerated. The apex of persecution by the state, pinnacle of challenge to it and doughty demonstration of commitment to one's faith and acceptance of the "Will divine" (ਗੁਰਮ), was to be martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev.

A little over ten years after the birth of Gobind Rai, the greatest of all 'happenings' in time (ਕੀਲੋ ਬਡੋ ਕਲੂ ਮਹਿ ਸਾਕਾ) would be his own father's execution in Chandni Chowk ('a dark day in the moonlit square')

Saturated with multifaceted tradition, enriched by tremendous study and spiritual perception of various Indian languages, history, spiritual traditions, myths and esoteric dialectics, Gobind Rai was entrusted with stewardship of that great, divine mission which Guru Nanak had cast.

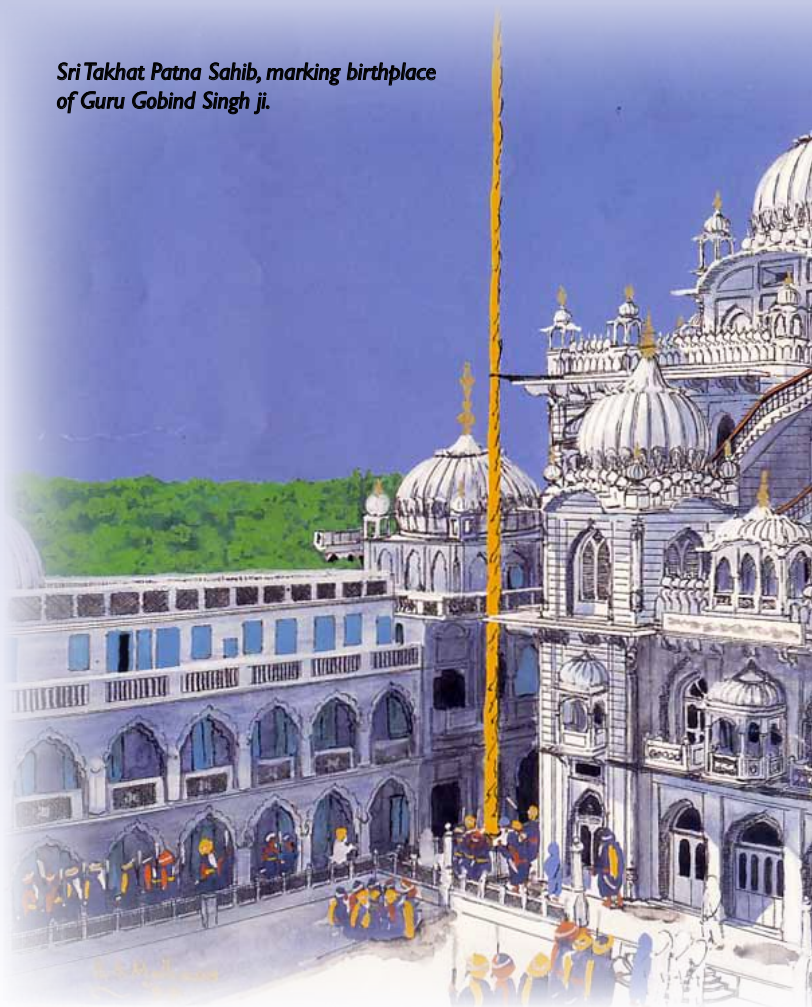
At the age of ten, when normal boys are termed as adolescent, he could see no sacrifice greater than that of his own father's, to protect the 'right to belief' and that too of others faiths.

This 'Mard Agamrha' (unique personality) created a unique brotherhood from the society which the earlier nine Gurus had built over the generations, completely transmuting their whole being. He named them the *Khalsa* and infused its members with the spiritual experiences and commitments which he himself embodied. So complete was this union, that he requested the Khalsa to enroll himself to this unique and blessed cadre.

Describing the Tenth Guru's wondrous personality, Bhai Nand Lal terms it as *Jumla Faiz-e-Noor Guru Guru Gobind Singh*. "His person is the bounty of eternal unity with Akalpurakh and manifestation of his faith and glow of one-ness with Him". This is what the Guru infused in his Khalsa on that Baisakhi of 1699.

Emergence of this new Faith raised great alarm to Mughal Delhi and their lackeys in the hills of Punjab. Collectively, they tried to hound the great Guru who

Sri Takhat Patna Sahib, marking birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh ji.



valiantly took full measure of them, fighting at least six major and victorious battles between 1699 and 1705. Perfidious to the core, both the Mughals and the Hindus hill chiefs shamelessly betrayed their oaths of honour on articles of their own faiths, which saw the Guru leave Anandpur. Through travails of traversity and suffering, losing his four sons and hundreds of his beloved Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh then rose, resurrected to full glory. He challenged the conscience of Aurangzeb in the name of Islam, his faith. The Khalsa was reconsolidated, the message divine 'Shabad Guru' was given final edit at Talwandi Saboo and its message reiterated to the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh continued to seek just and peaceful resolution of the issues, first with Aurangzeb (the *Zafarnama*) and then with his successor to the Mughal throne, Bahadur Shah. Only when Bahadur Shah resiled from the assurances given by him did the Guru command Banda Bahadur to eradicate the den of evil that Sarhind epitomised. The spirit of the Khalsa was at its pinnacle. Guru Nanak's ideal man and society was meant for establishing a benign state (ਹਲੀਮੀ ਰਾਜ) and had become reality. The Guru knew his mission was complete, his time had come

(ਜੇ ਉਪਜਿਓ ਮੇ ਬਿਨਸਿ ਜੈ). The assassination attempt by the Pathans was only the causator for his mortal form to merge into its elements – the spirit had moved into his Khalsa, in unison with the Akal Purakh.

Before leaving Chamkaur on that severe December night, when the Guru gave his own plume (ਕਲਗੀ) to the Sikhs (later put on his turban by Sangat Singh), it was clear indication that when the Panth fully realised in it the essence of the spirit of the Guru, it should become the Guru Panth, metamorphosing into the ethereal and formless concept which was the Panth. It was this Khalsa Panth whom the Guru later handed over stewardship to before passing away at Nanded three hundred years ago.

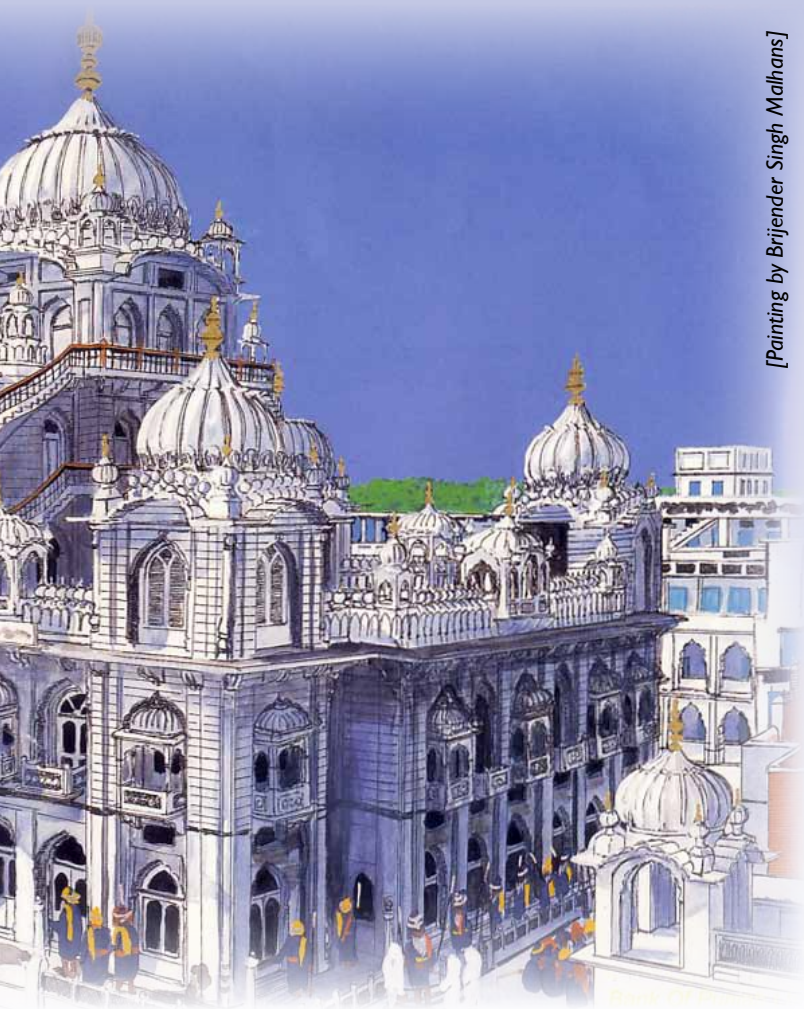
The second defining moment three hundred years ago this October, is passing on of the spirit of Guruship from the human form as in Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib (ਸ੍ਰੀਗੁਰੂ), to the spirit (ਸੂਖਮ) in the Khalsa panth: intrinsic presence of Guru Shabad is endemic within the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Nanak, to the queries of the *Sidhs*, had answered that 'Shabad' was his Guru. This revelation was enshrined in the Pothi Sahib by the Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan Dev and crystallised by the last Guru. This Shabad, in the form of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, was anointed as the Eternal Guru of the Sikhs. It is the 'Word', the message, that the Sikhs were to revere. It is in this sense that Sri Guru Granth Sahib acquires the sense of 'Divinity', and certainly not a deity, that Sikhs are to respect and revere and as the presiding entity, is symbolic of Sikh sovereignty. 'Dharam' is the Divine Will (ਹੁਕਮ) in operation, and manifests as 'Shabad'. Sri Guru Granth Sahib is not only the pinnacle of formless revelation of the 'Sat' (Truth) in Guru Nanak, but also a consummation of Ethereal Divinity of all the Gurus.

The Khalsa Panth was manifested by Akal Purakh's Grace (ਪ੍ਰਗਟਿਓ ਆਮਾਤਮ ਕੀ ਮੈਜ). The ethical whole and the contemplation of spirit of the Gurus are concretised in the Panth. The spiritual contemplate of our Gurus' lives is rooted in soul of the Granth Sahib and the Shabad in it comes from Akal Purakh's Grace (ਨਦਰ).

The final edict to the Khalsa Panth given by the last of the Gurus and its founder, three hundred years ago in October 1708, was that after him Sikhs were to worship only the Timeless Akal Purakh (ਪੂਜਾ ਅਕਾਲ ਦੀ) following the guidance of 'Shabad' in Guru Granth Sahib (ਧਰਾਰਾ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਦਾ) and thus attain Divine presence in the Khalsa (ਦੀਦਾਰ ਆਲਮੇ ਦਾ).

Bhayee Sikandar Singh



Celebrating the Tri-Centennial: Guru Granth Sahib (1708-2008)

My Roadmap for Self-Realisation

Ever since I was graced to understand the magnificent teachings of Guru Granth Sahib, I have often wondered whether we have really imbibed them or even tried to imbibe them. My belief is that Guru Gobind Singh's injunction for our perpetual allegiance to our perpetual Guru, Guru Granth Sahib, has been respected by all of us but the spirit of the injunction has not been understood. The holy scripture is indeed our perpetual Guru and we are required to show extreme reverence, utmost humility and respectful presence. What has either escaped our attention or what we have deliberately ignored or what the ever-blinding *maya* and the splendour of the worldly excitement has diverted our attitudes, is the fact that our Guru is neither the holy Book nor its external regalia which, of course, give the scripture exalted royalty but our real Guru is the Shabad, the Word, the message command as set out in various hymns of Guru Granth Sahib. Because of this hiatus between our external devotion and internal alienation, we have failed to reach the heights of gurmukh as envisaged and remain embedded into Karam-Kandi bhakti which Guru specifically eliminated by drawing us to the all-pervading naam and stating 'Shabad Guru Surat Dhun Chela.'



Guru Granth Sahib at Keshgarh Sahib.

I find that Guru Granth Sahib is not just the clearest and effective guide for the Sikhs but for all mankind. In fact every word that I ponder over, every hymn that I sing, every concept that I learn from our Guru represents the authenticity of Guru's love and grace. Let me share with the readers five distinct messages that reach my heart:

- ◆ Not only is every word true and every command everlasting but devotees can experience the truth in their own lives.
- ◆ The Guru governs all aspects of man's life, both spiritual and temporal and the follower of Guru's commands can never go wrong. Indeed, the devotee is required to live spiritually even when engaged in the mundane affairs of life.
- ◆ Humility, and self annihilation is the core point. The easiest way to enter the ashram of the Guru's feet is to become a non-entity, in Guru's words: *jeevatian mar rahiye*.
- ◆ The devotee is required to have full faith in the Guru's Word, the efficacy of Guru's protection and Guru's power of guiding force.
- ◆ One must not have blind faith, but a devoted faith in obedience to the commands in Guru Granth Sahib. There is no virtue in Salam-Jawab

nor can anyone gain the Guru's love by selective interpretations and clever avoidance of Guru's discipline of simran and seva.

And, if a devotee responds to the guidance of the Guru, there is a clear roadmap for him and her to reach the loving embrace of the Creator. When I listen to amrit vela kirtan from Harmandir Sahib every morning and concentrate on the messages being disseminated, I am always enthralled and feel that when Guru's guidance is so simple and clear, why do we get into cumbersome discussions, useless debates, unproductive commentaries on the externals? While I shall discuss other landmarks on the road to devotion, let me share the ecstasy of the roadmap I found in the shabad 'Harjan Dekhau Satgur Naini' of Guru Ramdas on p. 800 of Guru Granth Sahib. The original shabad can be referred to in the texts but I discuss it in my own unofficial translation: the shabad starts with *Khatri Brahman Sood Vaish ko Jaapehar mantar japaini...*

Anyone from any of the Varnas, Kahtri, Brahman, Sood or Vaiskh can recite and meditate on Hari-mantra. Worship Satguru as God Himself and serve him day in and day out. O'men of God, recognise your Satguru by looking at him with your own eyes. When you recite the name of the Lord according to the Guru's commands, you can get whatever you wish. Remember, you can think of so many possibilities but what will happen is what is destined to happen. Everyone wishes well for himself, but the Lord does what has never crossed our minds. O'men of God, get rid of the dictates of your mind; yes, indeed this is very difficult. Concentrate on the Lord's name 24 hours and live in accordance with Guru's commands. My Lord, my thoughts or wisdom is under your control; we are mere instruments on which you play. My Lord, you are the do'er of everything and I speak what you dictate me to speak.

Now the cardinal principles of our philosophy, that is the Sikh philosophy, are complete universality of spirituality, complete equality of man and love of all mankind. Why I call any shabad of Guru Granth Sahib a roadmap to embrace of the Lord will be clear from the analysis of Guru Ram Dass's above shabad:

- ◆ We recognise no divisions in man on the basis of Varnashram of Hindus, nor indeed on any other basis. What unites man in relation to God are his deeds. That is why our Guru insists that one may be Brahman, Khatri, Suhundra or Vaiskh by caste, it has no relevance to his superiority or inferiority. The worship of God or devotion to Lord is available to everyone.

- ◆ The Guru is an extraordinary divine messenger and it is not given to us to question his command. Guru Granth as the Lord's word. We are fortunate in having the Shabad Guru in Guru Granth Sahib which eliminates the slavery of a devotee to a self-proclaimed Baba of a Dera. The seva, day and night, of Guru Granth Sahib means the remembrance of the Lord in every breath and living the message in day-to-day life.

- ◆ What a wonderful concept, looking at the Guru, with our own eyes! Unfortunately, we have been thinking that the darshan of Guru Granth Sahib as a Holy Scripture conveys this meaning. No, what the Guru intends to tell us that within our hearts we should have the innermost understanding of the Word by remembering Him in accordance with Guru's commands. The Guru assures us that we will have whatever we wish. The wonder of our shabad Guru is that on the one hand, he makes it clear that we cannot see the Lord with our worldly eyes because he has no form (*roop no rekha na ran kichch*), on the other he calls upon us to look at him. In my view, it would mean attachment to Guru's Word in word and deed, which will result in Guru's darshan within. Savour this: *Gurka shabad lago man meetha, parbrahman ta te mohe deetha* – when you begin to relish the sweetness of Gurshabad, you can have feeling of having seen the Lord.

This is my experienced truth

Another thought: The real meaning of what the Guru says could also be represented in what another hymn says:

(Just when I had the darshan of the Lord, I lost all kinds of pain and desires, even the thought of asking question of getting all that one wishes? (SGGS: 1097)

- ◆ This is another fantastic thought to meditate on. We make all kinds of efforts, all kinds of labour to attain worldly goods or worldly peace and comfort, but our efforts do not succeed, unless the Lord wants. In fact what really happens is only what God wants.
- ◆ All of us are own well-wishers but the Lord does what He will and what we have never imagined. All of us should shed our own intellectual concept. True, it is difficult but once we accept our Guru's wisdom as our final arbiter, we are easily reconciled.

◆ To achieve equanimity, concentration on God and devotion to Him in self-annihilation enables us to receive and accept Guru's wisdom in all our affairs. In fact, whatever we have is God's gift; we are like hollow flutes which become active only when God breathes His presence in us. To live in peace and harmony, we willingly accept the Lord's control because His protection is always beneficial.

Sometimes I ponder helplessly over the fact that celebrations of Guru Granth Sahib's fourth centenary chisels in us the desire to go into the history, the modalities of preparation, the arrangement of ragas, the skill in the selection of Bhaktas' contributions, the place of compilation and other such attendant concerns. But I bemoan the fact that we have never made it our aim to concentrate on the ever-lasting truth of the Masters' Word in building our character and providing to the world, the personification of our principles by personal examples. I have said ad nauseam that one Sikh example of the truth of Gurbani in action is far more effective than hundreds of articles, magazines, newspapers or lectures.

I wish to examine on the basis of the following two shabads of Guru Arjan, whether we have reached anywhere near where our Gurus envisaged for Gurmukh or Khalsa in terms of their dictates. One shabad centres on self-annihilation to receive the grace of the Lord, The other highlights the limitless peace and bliss that we can experience. Let us take the shabad in which Ardas is the paramount projection.

The shabad begins: *Gobind jeevan prandhan roop...* but I continue the whole shabad in an English translation:

My Lord, you, indeed, are my life, my heart and soul as also my wealth. For an ignorant entrenched in deep attachment to the world, you are like a lamp in darkness. Your darshan, my beloved Lord, is always rewarding and I am enthralled by the beauty of your lotus feet. I bow to you countless times and, in my mind, offer the fragrant dhoop. Having become totally helpless and supportless in the world, I have fallen at your door and I hold now firmly my only support in you. Lift your own Nanak out of the worldliness which is like a form of fire. (Guru Arjan, SGGS: 701)

When I noted this shabad as Hukam this morning from Guru Granth Sahib, I was embarrassed because in the celebration of our Guru's fourth centenary, I had never thought that I am required to do is to beg my Guru to grant me the bliss that has been promised in Guru Granth Sahib. At least this morning, my

heart went out to the Lord to make me determined to hold on to his support for all times and my thoughts emerged from within to get closer to his lotus feet.

◆ Baba Farid calls this world *Bhoom Rangawali* (a colourful earth) in which there is *Vasoola Bagh* (a poisonous garden) but then Guru assures us that those who are protected by the Guru come out unscathed. *Farida Bhoom Rangawal Manjh Vasoola Bagh, Jo Jan Peer Navajia Tinan Anch na Laag*. That is how Guru Arjun pleaded with the Lord in the above ardas-oriented shabad to lift him out of the fire of worldliness, because he holds firm the support of His lotus feet. In our case, the lotus feet of our Guru are the dictates of Gurbani. I ask myself, do I live my 'life in accordance with Guru's commands?

◆ Have I become a non-entity in devotion? Have I recognised that Guru's word is my lamp in my Moh-Maya darkness? Have I, in other words, committed myself to live Gurbani in my day-to-day life?

The Guru's grace is limitless and ceaseless and the wonder I experienced was that the presence of the Lord lifted me from the quagmire of filthy worldliness to enjoy the warmth of the Guru's Word. But scintillating experience came when the second shabad which I quote below, seemed to be the answer to the prayer in the first shabad.

The 2nd shabad begins with *Ja kau bhaye Gobind Gahayee...* and I continue in the translation:

The one whom the Lord shows grace is always in peace, equanimity, bliss and has harmonious relationship with all; he has no problems. The Lord's devotee seems to be present with others but internally remains aloof, he is not influenced by Maya. With Satguru's wisdom he lies ceaselessly in the Lord's presence. The kind saint is the one whom with God's grace, is full of compassion and kindness. Nanak crosses the ocean of life in the company of the devotee, who, with utmost relish and internal ecstasy, sings the praises of the Lord.

Is there any doubt that Guru Granth Sahib always provides a roadmap for serene, blissful, ecstatic life in the lotus feet of our Guru and leads not only to a life of peace and comfort in the world but also assures a place at the feet of the Lord through self-realisation?

Witness this from Sukhmani Sahib:

The Guru embellishes the life of the Sikh here and hereafter. Says Nanak: Satguru holds the Sikh close to his heart. (SGGS: 286)

Bhagawant Singh Dalawari

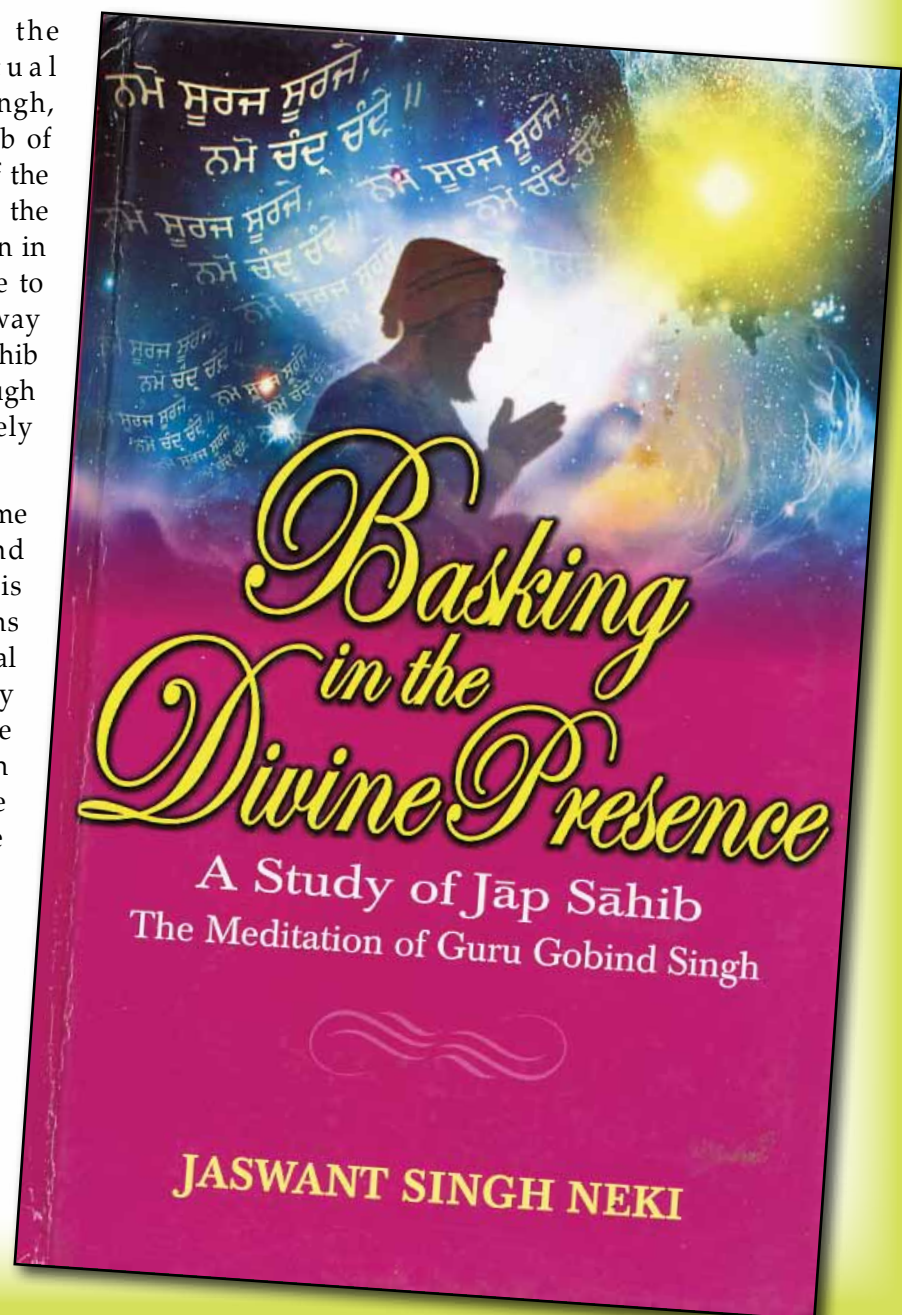
A Study of Jāp Sāhib

The Meditation of Guru Gobind Singh

Jāp Sāhib is one of the celebrated spiritual compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru. Like the Japji Sahib of Guru Nanak Dev, it is also a part of the daily pre-dawn liturgical service of the Sikhs. The Japji provides instruction in spiritual praxis, and introduces one to the different spirit-scapes on the way to the Transcendent Reality. Jāp Sāhib straightway dwells upon God through His attributive names in exquisitely mellifluous verse.

Its composition must have become possible in a state of profound meditation. In it, at places, there is considerable repetition of the terms of salutation. But that is the essential pattern of jāp. Still, however, monotony is kept in abeyance by varying the salutary phrases, at intervals, also in consonance with the change of the metre. It employs amazingly live rhythms. Hence, recitation of this composition makes one feel as if one is hearing the echoing rhythms of the Cosmic Drum.

Stylistically also, the two compositions – Japji and Jāp Sāhib – are mutually quite distinct. While Jap ji flows through serene metres, Jāp Sāhib generates dancing and clanging rhythms that flow like a mountainous torrent, opening the flood-gates of divine intimation.



This wonderful composition gives unambiguous evidence that its writer is in intimate communion with the Cosmic Spirit. It succeeds not only in sprouting a devout relationship with the Divine, but also in generating, in one who recites it, indomitable courage and undaunted valour pregnant with the spirit of sacrifice.

Its majestic diction clothes the intimations of the Divine in highly dignified idiom and sublime grace. Its flow carries the soul of the seeker with it through the portals of sanctimonious inspiration. It undoubtedly mirrors an intimate numinous presence of the Divine that must have been experienced by its author.

Every one of its ten different metres has its specific distinctive lilt; and together they weave a consistently valorous beat. Thus, while the content of the unique composition is steeped in *Shant Rasa* (the aesthetic flavour of serenity), its form is steeped in *Vir Rasa* (the aesthetic flavour of valour). In the traditional poetics, this combination would be considered nothing short of a serious poetic blasphemy, yet the Guru does not let any discord appear at any time. He, on the other hand, succeeds in making it an artistic medium of meditation in the battlefield.

The way its hundreds of expressive terms echo each other and hold each other in alliterative clasps lends a tremendous force and injects an uncommon musicality to its flow. The dignity, profundity and nobility of the expressions employed by the Guru make them worthy reflections on the Divine.

Its metres – ranging from single syllable to over a dozen syllables – all prove the selves to be missiles of intense faith. They awaken the seeker's spiritual consciousness and enliven his quest. On the wings of the sacramental expressions of this bani, the spirit of the seeker wafts into the realms of super-consciousness.

Like Japji, Jāp Sāhib is also one of the five liturgical texts (the three other texts are Sawayyās, Anand Sāhib and Benati Chaupai) that are recited while the baptismal potion, Amrit, is prepared, the same way as it was done on that great Baisakhi day of 1699 when the Order of the Khalsa was initiated.

Re-produced from Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki's transliteration of the Jāp Sāhib

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥
ਜਾਪੁ ॥

Ik Oaṅkār Sat(i)gurprasād(i).
Srī Wāhegurū jī kī Fateh.
JĀP(U).

The One : *Oaṅkār*, the Primal Being,
who dispels darkness through His Grace !
Ever prevails the Wonderful Lord !
JĀP SĀHIB

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਮੁਖਵਾਕ ਪਾਤਿਸਾਹੀ ੧੦ ॥
ਛਪੈ ਛੰਦ ॥ ਤੁ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥
ਚੱਕ੍ਰ ਚਿਹਨ ਅਰੁ ਬਰਨ ਜਾਤਿ, ਅਰੁ ਪਾਤਿ ਨਹਿਨ ਜਿਹ ॥
ਰੂਪ ਰੰਗ ਅਰੁ ਰੇਖ ਭੇਖ, ਕੋਊ ਕਹਿ ਨ ਸਕਤ ਕਿਹ ॥

Srī Mukhvāk Pāt(i)sāhī 10 (Dasvīn).
Chhapai Chhāṇḍ. Tva Prasād(i).
Chakṛa chihan ar(u) baran jāṭ(i), ar(u) pāt(i) nahin jih.
Rūp rang ar(u) rekh bhekh, koū kah(i) na sakat kih.

Uttered by the Tenth Master.
Chhapai Chhāṇḍ. By Your grace.
You have no sign or symbol, colour or caste,
You have no form or feature, mark or garb.

ਅਚਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਨਭਉ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ, ਅਮਿਤੋਜਿ ਕਹਿੱਜੈ ॥
ਕੋਟਿ ਇੰਦ੍ਰ ਇੰਦ੍ਰਾਣ, ਸਾਹੁ ਸਾਹਾਣਿ ਗਣਿੱਜੈ ॥
ਤ੍ਰਿਭਵਣ ਮਹੀਪ ਸੁਰ ਨਰ ਅਸੁਰ, ਨੇਤ ਨੇਤ ਬਨ ਤ੍ਰਿਣ ਕਹਤ ॥
ਤਵ ਸਰਬ ਨਾਮ ਕਥੈ ਕਵਨ, ਕਰਮ ਨਾਮ ਬਰਨਤ ਸੁਮਤਿ ॥੧॥

Achal mūrat(i) anbhau prakāsh, amitoj(i) kahijjāi.
Koṭ(i) indra indrāṇ, sāh(u) sāhāṇ(i) gaṇijjāi.
Tribhavan mahīp sur nar asur, net net ban triṇ kahat.
Tāv sarab Nām kathai kavan, karam Nām barnat sumat(i).(1)

Steadfast your visage, self-luminous and vast,
Infinite your splendour, ever in parables cast !
Greater than million *Indras*, King of kings,
Your Name in the spheres of every universe rings.
Whenever, men, gods and demons, of You thought,
They only said, "You are not this, nor that."
And so say woods and so say blades of grass :
("You are not this, O Lord, You are not that !")
Who can Your Comprehensive Name describe ?
Your Action-Names are all that chant the wise.(1).

ਭੁਜੰਗ ਪ੍ਰਯਾਤ ਛੰਦ ॥

ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਕਾਲੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਲੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਰੂਪੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨੂਪੇ ॥੨॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਭੇਖੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਲੇਖੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਕਾਏ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਜਾਏ ॥੩॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਗੰਜੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਭੰਜੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨਾਮੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਠਾਮੇ ॥੪॥

Bhujāṅg Prayāt Chhāṇḍ.

*Namastwaṇ akāle. Namastwaṇ kripāle.
Namastaṇ arūpe. Namastaṇ anūpe.(2)
Namastaṇ abhekhe. Namastaṇ alekhe.
Namastaṇ akāe. Namastaṇ ajāe.(3)
Namastaṇ aḡaṇje. Namastaṇ abhaṇje.
Namastaṇ anāme. Namastaṇ aṭhāme.(4)*

Bhujāṅg Prayāt Chhāṇḍ

I bow to the One Immortal,
I bow to the One who's Merciful.
I bow to the One who's formless.
I bow to the One who's peerless.(2).
I bow to the One who's garbless.
I bow to the One unaccountable.
To the One who is incorporeal.
I bow to the One un-begotten.(3).
I bow to the One invincible.
I bow to the One infringing.
I bow to the One who's nameless.
I bow to the One abodeless.(4).

ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਕਰਮੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਧਰਮੰ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨਾਮੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਧਾਮੰ ॥੫॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਜੀਤੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਭੀਤੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਬਾਹੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਵਾਹੇ ॥੬॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨੀਲੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨਾਦੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਛੇਦੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਗਾਧੇ ॥੭॥

*Namastaṇ akarman. Namastaṇ adharman.
Namastaṇ anāman. Namastaṇ adhāman.(5)
Namastaṇ ajīte. Namastaṇ abhīte.
Namastaṇ abāhe. Namastaṇ adhāhe.(6)
Namastaṇ anīle. Namastaṇ anāde.
Namastaṇ achhede. Namastaṇ agādhe.(7)*

I bow to the One sans action.
I bow to the One sans credence.
I bow to the One who's nameless.
I bow to the One who's homeless.(5).
I bow to the One unvanquished.
I bow to the One undaunted.
I bow to the One unshakeable.
I bow to the One invincible.(6).
I bow to the One, who's formless,
I bow to the One sans origin.
I bow to the One who's faultless.
I bow to the One inscrutable.(7).

ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਗੰਜੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਭੰਜੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਉਦਾਰੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਪਾਰੇ ॥੮॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਸੁ ਏਕੈ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਨੇਕੈ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਭੂਤੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਜੂਪੇ ॥੯॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਕਰਮੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਭਰਮੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਦੇਸੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਭੇਸੇ ॥੧੦॥

*Namastaṇ aḡaṇje. Namastaṇ abhaṇje.
Namastaṇ udāre. Namastaṇ apāre.(8)
Namastaṇ su ekai. Namastaṇ anekai.
Namastaṇ abhūte. Namastaṇ ajūpe.(9)
Namastaṇ nrikarme. Namastaṇ nribharme.
Namastaṇ nridese. Namastaṇ nribhese.(10)*

*Namastaṇ aḡaṇje. Namastaṇ abhaṇje.
Namastaṇ udāre. Namastaṇ apāre.(8)
Namastaṇ su ekai. Namastaṇ anekai.
Namastaṇ abhūte. Namastaṇ ajūpe.(9)
Namastaṇ nrikarme. Namastaṇ nribharme.
Namastaṇ nridese. Namastaṇ nribhese.(10)*

I bow to the One invincible.
I bow to the One unbreakable.
I bow to the One most generous.
I bow to the One who's boundless.(8).
I bow to the Singular Entity,
In countless forms unfolding.
I bow to the un-elemental,
I bow to the un-entangled.(9).
I bow to the One immovable.
To the One who's un-deludable.
I bow to the One who's home-less.
I bow to the One who is garbless.(10).

ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਨਾਮੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਕਾਮੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਧਾਤੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਘਾਤੇ ॥੧੧॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਪੂਤੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਭੂਤੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਲੋਕੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਸ਼ੋਕੇ ॥੧੨॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਤਾਪੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਅਥਾਪੇ ॥
ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਤ੍ਰਿਮਾਨੇ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੁੰ ਨਿਧਾਨੇ ॥੧੩॥

*Namastaṇ nrināme. Namastaṇ nrikāme.
Namastaṇ nridhāte. Namastaṇ nrighāte.(11)
Namastaṇ nridhūte. Namastaṇ abhūte.
Namastaṇ aloke. Namastaṇ ashoke.(12)
Namastaṇ nritāpe. Namastaṇ athāpe.
Namastaṇ trimāne. Namastaṇ nidhāne.(13)*

I bow to the One who's nameless.
I bow to the One desireless.
I bow to the One immaterial.
I bow to the One immortal.(11)
I bow to the One unshakeable.
To the One who's insubstantial.
I bow to the One invisible.
I bow to the One un-grieving.(12).
I bow to the One un-distressed.
I bow to the un-established.
I bow to the all-time honoured.
I bow to the all-time treasured.(13).

ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਗਾਹੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਬਾਹੇ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਤ੍ਰਿਬਰਗੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਸਰਗੇ॥੧੪॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਪ੍ਰਭੋਗੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਸੁਜੋਗੇ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਰੰਗੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਭੰਗੇ॥੧੫॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਗੰਮੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਰੰਮੇ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਜਲਾਸਰੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਨਿਰਾਸਰੇ॥੧੬॥

Namastan agāhe. Namastan abāhe.
Namastan tribarge. Namastan asarge.(14)
Namastan prabhoge. Namastan sujoge.
Namastan arange. Namastan abhange.(15)
Namastan aganme. Namastan(u) ranme.
Namastan jalāstre. Namastan nirāstre.(16)

I bow to the One unfathomed.
 I bow to the One unshaken.
 To the Lord of all three templets.
 I bow to the un-begotten.(14).
 I bow to the all-time reveller,
 I bow to the all-uniting.
 I bow to the One untainted.
 I bow to the One unbreakable.(15).
 I bow to the One unreachable.
 I bow to the One pervasive.
 I bow to the Lord of oceans.
 To the One who's Self-sustaining.(16).

ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਜਾਤੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਪਾਤੇ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਮਜਬੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਜਬੇ॥੧੭॥
 ਅਦੇਸੇ॥ ਅਦੇਸੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਭੇਸੇ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਧਾਮੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਬਾਮੇ॥੧੮॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਕਾਲੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਦਿਆਲੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਰੂਪੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਭੂਪੇ॥੧੯॥

Namastan ajāte. Namastan apāte.
Namastan amajbe. Namastan(u) ajbe.(17)
Adesan adese. Namastan abhese.
Namastan nridhāme. Namastan nrībāme.(18)
Namo sarb kāle. Namamo sarb diāle.
Namo sarb rūpe. Namamo sarb bhūpe.(19)

I bow to the One, who's caste-less.
 I bow to the One, who's clan-less,
 I bow to the One, who is creedless,
 I bow to the haven of wonder.(17).
 I bow to the One, who's stateless,
 I bow to the One, who is garb-less.
 I bow to the One, who's home-less.
 I bow to the One, who's spouseless.(18).
 I bow to the Great Demolisher.
 I bow to the One, Beneficent.
 I bow to the One so Beautiful.
 I bow to the Cosmic Ruler.(19).

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਖਾਪੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਥਾਪੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਕਾਲੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਪਾਲੇ॥੨੦॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਸਤੁ ਦੇਵੈ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਭੇਵੈ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਜਨਮੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਸੁਬਨਮੇ॥੨੧॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਗਉਨੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਭਉਨੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਰੰਗੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਭੰਗੇ॥੨੨॥

Namo sarb khāpe. Namamo sarb thāpe.
Namo sarb kāle. Namamo sarb pāle.(20)
Namastan(u) devai. Namastan abhevai.
Namastan ajanme. Namastan subanme.(21)
Namo sarb gaune. Namamo sarb bhaune.
Namo sarb range. Namamo sarb bhange.(22)

I bow to the One Demolisher.
 I bow to the One Establisher.
 I bow to the All-Eraser.
 I bow to the All-Preserver.(20).
 I bow to the One most worshipped.
 To the One who holds no secret.
 To the One who's uncreated.
 I bow to His matchless splendour.(21).
 I bow to the One pervasive,
 To the One who's ever ubiquitous.
 Revealed in every colour.
 I bow to the Sole Demolisher.(22).

ਨਮੋ ਕਾਲ ਕਾਲੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਦਿਆਲੇ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਬਰਨੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਮਰਨੇ॥੨੩॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਜਰਾਰੰ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਕ੍ਰਿਤਾਰੰ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਧੰਧੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਤ ਅਬੰਧੇ॥੨੪॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਸਾਕੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਨ੍ਰਿਬਾਕੇ॥
 ਨਮਸਤੰ ਰਹਿਮੇ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਕਰਿਮੇ॥੨੫॥

Namo kāl kāle. Namastan(u) diāle.
Namastan abarne. Namastan amarne.(23)
Namastan jarāraṇ. Namastan kritāraṇ.
Namo sarb dhaṇḍhe. Namamo sat abanḍhe.(24)
Namastan nrīsāke. Namastan nrībāke.
Namastan rahīme. Namastan karīme.(25)

I bow to the Death o' fatality.
 I bow to the Fount of Favour.
 I bow to the Indescribable.
 I bow to the One Immortal.(23).
 I bow to the One never aging.
 To the One who's ever creating.
 To the One who's ever pursuant.
 I bow to the Truth un-ending.(24).
 I bow to the One, who's kin-less.
 I bow to the One, who's fearless.
 I bow to the One ever Merciful.
 I bow to the One most Bountiful.(25).

ਨਮਸਤੰ ਅਨੰਤੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਮਹੰਤੰ ॥
 ਨਮਸਤਸਤੁ ਰਾਗੰ ॥ ਨਮਸਤੰ ਸੁਹਾਗੰ ॥੨੬॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਸੋਖੰ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਪੋਖੰ ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਕਰਤਾ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਹਰਤਾ ॥੨੭॥
 ਨਮੋ ਜੋਗ ਜੋਗੰ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਭੋਗ ਭੋਗੰ ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਦਿਆਲੇ ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਪਾਲੇ ॥੨੮॥

Namastan anant. Namastan mahant.
Namastast(u) rage. Namastan suhage.(26)
Namo sarb sokhan. Namo sarb pokhan.
Namo sarb kartā. Namo sarb hartā.(27)
Namo jog joge. Namo bhog bhoge.
Namo sarb diāle. Namo sarb pāle.(28)

I bow to the One Unlimited.
 I bow to the One exalted.
 I bow to the Love most ardent.
 To the One, who's most Auspicious.(26).
 I bow to the One who dries all.
 I bow to the One who fills all.
 I bow to the One who creates all.
 I bow to the One who annuls all.(27).
 I bow to the Great Renouncer.
 I bow to the One great reveller.
 I bow to the One, who's Clement.
 I bow to the One, who's Provident.(28).

ਚਾਚਰੀ ਛੰਦ ॥ ਤੁ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ॥

ਅਰੂਪ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਨੂਪ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਜੂ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਭੂ ਹੈ ॥੨੯॥
 ਅਲੇਖ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਭੇਖ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਨਾਮ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਕਾਮ ਹੈ ॥੩੦॥
 ਅਧੇ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਭੇ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਜੀਤ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਭੀਤ ਹੈ ॥੩੧॥

Chācharī Chhand. Tva Prasād(i).
Arūp haiṁ. Anūp haiṁ.
Ajū haiṁ. Abhū haiṁ.(29)
Alekh haiṁ. Abhekh haiṁ.
Anām haiṁ. Akām haiṁ.(30)
Adhe haiṁ. Abhe haiṁ.
Ajit haiṁ. Abhit haiṁ.(31)

Chācharī Chhand. By Your Grace.

Formless, peerless,
 Boundless, bondless.(29).
 Probeless, garbless,
 Nameless, passionless.(30).
 Unthinkable, undaunted,
 Invincible, unfrightened.(31).

ਤ੍ਰਿਮਾਨ ਹੈ ॥ ਨਿਧਾਨ ਹੈ ॥
 ਤ੍ਰਿਬਰਗ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਸਰਗ ਹੈ ॥੩੨॥
 ਅਨੀਲ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਨਾਦਿ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਜੇ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਜਾਦਿ ਹੈ ॥੩੩॥
 ਅਜਨਮ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਬਰਨ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਭੂਤ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਭਰਨ ਹੈ ॥੩੪॥
 ਅਗੰਜ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਭੰਜ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਬੂਝ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਬੰਝ ਹੈ ॥੩੫॥

Trimān haiṁ. Nidhān haiṁ.
Tribarg haiṁ. Asarg haiṁ.(32)
Anil haiṁ. Anād(i) haiṁ.
Aje haiṁ. Ajād(i) haiṁ.(33)
Ajanam haiṁ. Abarn haiṁ.
Abhūt haiṁ. Abharn haiṁ.(34)
Aganj haiṁ. Abhanj haiṁ.
Ajbūjh haiṁ. Ajhanjh haiṁ.(35)

Worshipped in all Three Worlds,
 Treasure of all the treasures,
 Fount of all Three Qualities,
 All-causing, yet, causeless.(32).
 Untainted, sans beginning,
 Unconquered, and unbonded.(33).
 Unbegotten and untainted.
 Incorporeal, Self-supported.(34).
 Indestructible and unbreakable,
 Invulnerable, Invioable.(35).

ਅਮੀਕ ਹੈ ॥ ਰਫੀਕ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਧੰਧ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਬੰਧ ਹੈ ॥੩੬॥
 ਨ੍ਰਿਬੂਝ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਸੂਝ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਕਾਲ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਜਾਲ ਹੈ ॥੩੭॥
 ਅਲਾਹ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਜਾਹ ਹੈ ॥
 ਅਨੰਤ ਹੈ ॥ ਮਹੰਤ ਹੈ ॥੩੮॥
 ਅਲੀਕ ਹੈ ॥ ਨ੍ਰਿਸ਼ੀਕ ਹੈ ॥
 ਨ੍ਰਿਲੰਭ ਹੈ ॥ ਅਸੰਭ ਹੈ ॥੩੯॥

Amik haiṁ. Rafik haiṁ.
Adhandh haiṁ. Abandh haiṁ.(36)
Nribūjh haiṁ. Asūjh haiṁ.
Akāl haiṁ. Ajāl haiṁ.(37)
Alāh haiṁ. Ajāh haiṁ.
Anant haiṁ. Mahant haiṁ.(38)
Alik haiṁ. Nrisrik haiṁ.
Nrilanbh haiṁ. Asanbh haiṁ.(39)

Profound, a Friend around.
 Unoccupied and unbound.(36).
 Inscrutable, unconceivable,
 Immortal, and unshakeable.(37).
 One Allah, sans location,
 Unlimited and Supreme.(38).
 Inscrutable and un-rivalled.
 Unbolstered, Un-revealed.(39).

ਅਗੰਮ ਹੈ॥ ਅਜੰਮ ਹੈ॥
 ਅਭੂਤ ਹੈ॥ ਅਛੂਤ ਹੈ॥੪੦॥
 ਅਲੋਕ ਹੈ॥ ਅਸੋਕ ਹੈ॥
 ਅਕਰਮ ਹੈ॥ ਅਭਰਮ ਹੈ॥੪੧॥
 ਅਜੀਤ ਹੈ॥ ਅਭੀਤ ਹੈ॥
 ਅਬਾਹ ਹੈ॥ ਅਗਾਹ ਹੈ॥੪੨॥
 ਅਮਾਨ ਹੈ॥ ਨਿਧਾਨ ਹੈ॥
 ਅਨੇਕ ਹੈ॥ ਫਿਰਿ ਏਕ ਹੈ॥੪੩॥

Aganm haiṁ. Ajanm haiṁ.
Abhūt haiṁ. Achhūt haiṁ.(40)
Alok haiṁ. Ashok haiṁ.
Akarm haiṁ. Abharm haiṁ.(41)
Ajīt haiṁ. Abhīt haiṁ.
Abāh haiṁ. Agāh haiṁ.(42)
Amān haiṁ. Nidhān haiṁ.
Anek haiṁ. Phir(i) ek haiṁ.(43)

Inaccessible, un-begotten,
 Impalpable, im-material.(40).
 Invisible and un-grieving,
 Sans ritual, undeluded.(41).
 Unconquerable, unafraid,
 Unshakeable and unfathomed.(42).
 Sans measure, virtue's treasure.
 Innumerable, albeit One.(43).

ਭੁਜੰਗ ਪ੍ਰਯਾਤ ਛੰਦ ॥

ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਮਾਨੇ॥ ਸਮਸਤੀ ਨਿਧਾਨੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਦੇਵ ਦੇਵੇ॥ ਅਭੇਖੀ ਅਭੇਵੇ॥੪੪॥
 ਨਮੋ ਕਾਲ ਕਾਲੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਪਾਲੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਗਉਣੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਸਰਬ ਭਉਣੇ॥੪੫॥
 ਅਨੰਗੀ ਅਨਾਥੇ॥ ਨਿਸੰਗੀ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਥੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਭਾਨ ਭਾਨੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਮਾਨ ਮਾਨੇ॥੪੬॥

Bhujang Prayāt Chhāṇḍ.

Namo sarb māne. Samastī nidhāne.
Namo dev deve. Abhekhī abheve.(44)
Namo kāl kālē. Namō sarb pālē.
Namo sarb gauṇē. Namō sarb bhaṇē.(45)
Anaṅgī anāthe. Nisaṅgī pramāthe.
Namo bhān bhāne. Namō mān māne.(46)

Bhujang Prayāt Chhāṇḍ

Hail ! the One utmost acclaimed,
 Hail ! the Treasure of all abundance,
 Hail ! the God of all the gods,
 Hail ! Ungarbed and Unconcealed.(44).
 Hail ! the One Eraser of Death,
 Hail ! the One sustainer of all,
 Hail ! Pervades who every place,
 Hail ! who dwells in every Spot.(45).
 Hail ! the One sans form, sans Master,
 Hail ! the unparalleled Destroyer,
 Hail ! the Source of all the suns,
 Hail ! the soul of all reverence.(46).

ਨਮੋ ਚੰਦ ਚੰਦੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਭਾਨ ਭਾਨੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਗੀਤ ਗੀਤੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਤਾਨ ਤਾਨੇ॥੪੭॥
 ਨਮੋ ਨਿੱਤ ਨਿੱਤੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਨਾਦ ਨਾਦੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਪਾਨ ਪਾਨੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਬਾਦ ਬਾਦੇ॥੪੮॥
 ਅਨੰਗੀ ਅਨਾਥੇ॥ ਸਮਸਤੀ ਸਰੂਪੇ॥
 ਪ੍ਰਭੰਗੀ ਪ੍ਰਮਾਥੇ॥ ਸਮਸਤੀ ਬਿਭੂਤੇ॥੪੯॥

Namo chandra chandre. Namō bhān bhāne.
Namo gīt gīte. Namō tān tāne.(47)
Namo nritt nritte. Namō nād nāde.
Namo pān pāne. Namō bād bāde.(48)
Anaṅgī anāthe. Samastī sarūpe.
Prabhaṅgī pramāthe. Samastī bibhūte.(49)

Hail ! the Moon of all the moons,
 Hail ! the Sun of all the suns,
 Hail ! the Song of all the songs,
 Hail ! the Tune of all the tunes.(47).
 Hail ! the Dance of all the dances,
 Hail ! the Sound of all the sounds,
 Hail ! the Beater of all the Drums,
 Hail ! the Striker of all the notes.(48).
 Hail ! the formless and the nameless;
 Hail ! the all-pervasive Beauty,
 Hail ! the wielder of the Doom.
 Hail ! the Source of all the wealth.(49).

ਕਲੰਕ ਬਿਨਾ ਨੇਕਲੰਕੀ ਸਰੂਪੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਰਾਜ ਰਾਜੇਸੁਰ ਪਰਮ ਰੂਪੇ॥੫੦॥
 ਨਮੋ ਜੋਗ ਜੋਗੇਸੁਰ ਪਰਮ ਸਿੱਧੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਰਾਜ ਰਾਜੇਸੁਰ ਪਰਮ ਬ੍ਰਿਧੇ॥੫੧॥
 ਨਮੋ ਸਸਤ੍ਰ ਪਾਣੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਅਸਤ੍ਰ ਮਾਣੇ॥
 ਨਮੋ ਪਰਮ ਗਿਆਤਾ॥ ਨਮੋ ਲੋਕ ਮਾਤਾ॥੫੨॥

Kalaṅkaṁ binā ne-kalaṅkī sarūpe.
Namo rāj rājeswarāṁ param rūpe.(50)
Namo jog jogeshwarāṁ param siddhe.
Namo rāj rājeswarāṁ param bṛidhe.(51)
Namo shastra pāṇē. Namō astra māṇē.
Namo param giātā. Namō lok mātā.(52)

Hail ! the One without a blame,
 Hail ! the One without a blemish,
 Hail ! the Ruler of all the rulers,
 Hail ! Existence most Supreme.(50).
 Hail ! the Lord of all the Yogis,
 Hail ! the One *Siddha* supreme,
 Hail ! the Kings of all the gods,
 Hail ! deserves who all Esteem.(51).
 Hail ! the One wielder of weapons,
 Hail ! the hurler of missiles,
 Hail ! the Wisdom ultimate,
 Hail ! The Cosmic Mother of all.(52).

ਅਭੇਖੀ ਅਭਰਮੀ ਅਭੋਗੀ ਅਭੁਗਤੇ॥
ਨਮੋ ਜੋਗ ਜੋਗੇਸ਼ੁਰੰ ਪਰਮ ਜੁਗਤੇ॥੫੩॥
ਨਮੋ ਨਿੱਤ ਨਾਰਾਇਣੇ ਕੂਰ ਕਰਮੇ॥
ਨਮੋ ਪ੍ਰੇਤ ਅਪ੍ਰੇਤ ਦੇਵੇ ਸੁਧਰਮੇ॥੫੪॥
ਨਮੋ ਰੋਗ ਹਰਤਾ ਨਮੋ ਰਾਗ ਰੂਪੇ॥
ਨਮੋ ਸਾਹ ਸਾਹੇ ਨਮੋ ਭੂਪ ਭੂਪੇ॥੫੫॥

*Abhekhī abharmī abhogī abhugte.
Namo jog jogeshwaran param jugte.(53)
Namo nitt nārāṇe krūr karme.
Namo pret apret deve sudharme.(54)
Namo rog hartā namo rāg rūpe.
Namo shāh shāhan namo bhūp bhūpe.(55)*

Hail ! the Lord who has no garb,
Hail ! the One deluded never,
Hail ! the One detached unravished,
Hail ! the One who's tempted never,
Hail ! the Yogi utmost skilled.(53).
Hail ! the One God omnipotent,
Hail ! the author of awesome deeds,
Hail ! the Lord of all the spirits,
Hail ! the God of angels, devils,
Hail ! the Light of Faith benign.(54).
Hail ! the Healer of every ailment,
Hail ! the Form of Ultimate Bliss,
Hail ! the Sovereign of the sovereigns,
Hail ! the Paramount potentate.(55).

ਨਮੋ ਦਾਨ ਦਾਨੇ ਨਮੋ ਮਾਨ ਮਾਨੇ॥
ਨਮੋ ਰੋਗ ਰੋਗੇ ਨਮਸਤੋ ਸਨਾਨੇ॥੫੬॥
ਨਮੋ ਮੰਤ੍ਰ ਮੰਤ੍ਰੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਜੰਤ੍ਰ ਜੰਤ੍ਰੇ॥
ਨਮੋ ਇਸ਼ਟ ਇਸ਼ਟੇ॥ ਨਮੋ ਤੰਤ੍ਰ ਤੰਤ੍ਰੇ॥੫੭॥
ਸਦਾ ਸੱਚਦਾਨੰਦ ਸਰਬੇ ਪ੍ਰਣਾਸੀ॥
ਅਨੂਪੇ ਅਰੂਪੇ ਸਮਸਤੁਲ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ॥੫੮॥

*Namo dān dāne namo mān māne.
Namo rog roge namastan snāne.(56)
Namo mantra mantran. Namo jantra jantran.
Namo ishṭ ishṭe. Namo tantra tantran.(57)
Sadā Sacchdā-nānd sarban prāṇāsī.
Anūpe arūpe samastul nivāsī.(58)*

Hail ! the Generous Giver of gifts,
Hail ! Bestower of every honour,
Hail ! Dispels who all disease,
Hail ! Restores who perfect health.(56).
Hail ! the *Mantra* of all the *mantras*,
Hail ! the Charm of every charm,
Hail ! the Deity of all the deities,
Hail ! the Spell of all the spells.(57).
Hail ! the Ever, Truth-Conscious-Bliss,
Hail ! the sole Destroyer of all,
Hail ! Unique, without a form.
Hail ! the Spirit indwells who all.(58).

ਸਦਾ ਸਿਧਦਾ ਬੁਧਦਾ ਬ੍ਰਿਧ ਕਰਤਾ॥
ਅਧੋ ਉਰਧ ਅਰਧੋ ਅਘੰ ਓਘ ਹਰਤਾ॥੫੯॥
ਪਰੰ ਪਰਮ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ੁਰੰ ਪ੍ਰੋਛ ਪਾਲੰ॥
ਸਦਾ ਸਰਬਦਾ ਸਿੱਧ ਦਾਤਾ ਦਿਆਲੰ॥੬੦॥
ਅਛੇਦੀ ਅਭੇਦੀ ਅਨਾਮੰ ਅਕਾਮੰ॥
ਸਮਸਤੋ ਪਰਾਜੀ ਸਮਸਤਸਤੁ ਧਾਮੰ॥੬੧॥

*Sadā sidh-dā budh-dā bridh kartā.
Adho urdh ardhan aghān ogh hartā.(59)
Paran parm pameswaran prochh pālān.
Sadā sarab-dā siddh dātā diālān.(60)
Achhedī abhedī anāmaṇ akāmaṇ.
Samasto parājī samastast(u) dhāmaṇ.(61)*

Hail ! the Source of every Power,
Hail ! the Fount of every wit,
Hail ! the Cause of Power occult,
Hail ! the sole Eraser of sin.(59).
Hail ! Transcendent Lord Supreme,
Hail ! Provider un-observed,
Hail ! Bestower of Powers Occult,
Hail ! the one clement Provider.(60).
Hail ! the One impregnable Lord,
Hail ! Existence impenetrable,
Hail ! the Nameless, passion-less Lord,
Hail ! Defeats who might of all,
Hail ! Who dwells in every spot.(61).

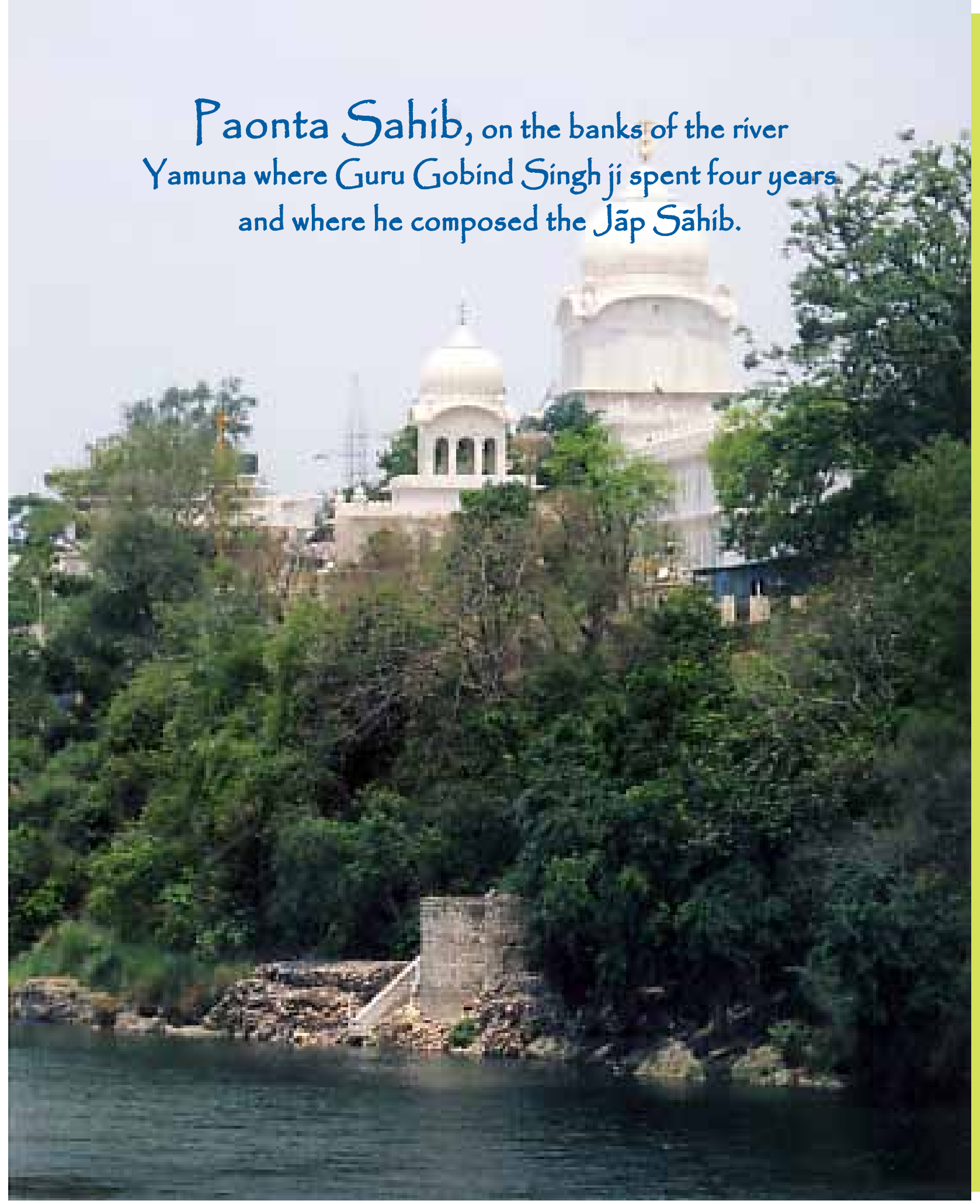
ਤੇਰਾ ਜੋਰੁ॥ ਚਾਚਰੀ ਛੰਦ॥
ਜਲੇ ਹੈ॥ ਥਲੇ ਹੈ॥
ਅਭੀਤ ਹੈ॥ ਅਭੇ ਹੈ॥੬੨॥
ਪ੍ਰਭੂ ਹੈ॥ ਅਜੂ ਹੈ॥
ਅਦੇਸ ਹੈ॥ ਅਭੇਸ ਹੈ॥੬੩॥

*Terā Jor(u). Chācharī Chhaṇḍ.
Jale haiṇ. Thale haiṇ.
Abhīt haiṇ. Abhe haiṇ.(62)
Prabhū haiṇ. Ajū haiṇ.
Ades haiṇ. Abhes haiṇ.(63)*

By Your Power. Chacharī Chhaṇḍ.
(You, O Lord,)
Preside over waters,
Pervade in the land,
Transcend all fear,
The Mystery Beyond.(62).
The Master of all,
Immutable ever,
Without an abode.
Without any guise.(63).

[.... continued in Nishaan II/08]

Paonta Sahib, on the banks of the river
Yamuna where Guru Gobind Singh ji spent four years
and where he composed the Jāp Sāhib.



The Life Divine

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs and the author of Jāp Sāhib, was born to his parents, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Mata Gujri, on 22 December 1666 AD at Patna.

When the news of his birth reached a Muslim fakir, Bhikhan Shah in Ambala, he made a reverent bow towards the East. His disciples were perplexed, because the Muslims always bow towards the Mecca, which was to the West from their place. They, therefore, asked him, "You have always made your bow towards the West, why this departure from it and making your genuflection towards the East?" He replied "Today a great soul has been born in the East and I have bowed towards his stars." Then, at the behest of his disciples, he went to Patna to have a look at the infant Guru. He is said to have taken with him two containers filled with candies. When he brought them before the infant Guru, the infant Guru touched both the containers with his hands. Bhikhan Shah had a smile of satisfaction on his face. When his disciples asked him the reason of his smile, he said, "These containers were presented to him, representing the Hindu and Muslim communities. Touching them both with his hands signifies to me that he shall look upon Hindus and Muslims with equal favour and without any adverse discrimination."

The Guru received his education in Patna. His childhood is replete with many interesting and instructive stories. One of these is how he taught his playmates the tactics of warfare. He would divide them into two groups and instruct them to fight mock battles. These, he supervised in person and appreciated those who fought well. Whoever witnessed these play-battles was not only highly impressed with his leadership qualities, but could also perceive his undoubted potentiality for becoming a great hero. Many, who witnessed him in that role, even began to worship him – for that, to them, appeared nothing short of divine power cum divine intellect.

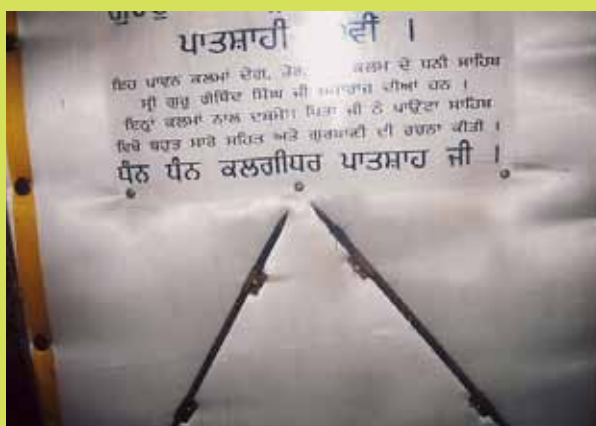
Those were the days of Mughal tyranny over the Hindus. Under the orders of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor, forcible conversion of the Hindus to Islam – even at the point of death – had been instituted. Distressed Brahmins of Kashmir, who were considered supreme leaders of the Hindus community, came over in the form of a deputation to Anandpur to inform

Guru Tegh Bahadur of their plight. With tearful eyes they narrated their dismal condition and reverently sought his advice. While the Guru gave them solace, he himself became absorbed in deep thought. At that critical moment, the child Gobind Rai happened to come there. He noticed the sign of some unusual concern on his father's face. He enquired of him the cause of that concern. The Guru told him the story of the Pandits' plight. "Then what solution have you thought of?" asked Gobind Rai. "The need of the hour is that someone of high spiritual stature should come forward and offer his own life as sacrifice in order to stem this tyranny." The Guru told his nine-year old son. Gobind Rai pleased Guru Tegh Bahadur who took him into his arms and showered his fond love on him. The Guru then assured the Pandits of his support and told them, "Go and convey the Emperor through the Governor of your state that if Tegh Bahadur agrees to accept Islam, you would follow him."

This was duly conveyed to the Emperor through the appropriate channels. The Emperor construed this message as a kind of challenge and got the Guru arrested and brought over to Delhi along with his three disciples who, at that time were keeping him company. Before leaving for Delhi, however, the Guru posted Gobind Rai with detailed instructions about what steps to take in the case the threatening eventuality took place.

In Delhi, Aurangzeb held a series of dialogues with the Guru proposing that he accept Islam. When that did not work, he tried to lure the Guru with all kinds of temptations. Finally, he came down to threaten his life if he would not comply. The Guru, however, stood resolutely firm and declined to oblige the Emperor. When the Emperor did not succeed, he ordered cruel execution of three of his disciples right in front of him so that the Guru would see the intensity of the threat to his own life and succumb out of fear. Even those three disciples did not show any signs of fear and with exceptional calm withstood the cruel death imposed on them. The Emperor tried once again to persuade the Guru and remind him again of the fate he would meet, should he not change his mind. The Guru, however, stood resolute. That irked the Emperor and he ordered the Guru's execution. The Guru was executed at the Chandni Chowk, the royal square, where Gurdwara Sis Ganj stands today.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had, even before leaving for Delhi, made all necessary arrangements for Gobind Rai to be installed as his spiritual successor as the tenth



The sacred qalams.



Inside the kavi darbar.

Guru of the Sikhs. So, Gobind Rai was promptly made the tenth Guru and accepted reverently by the entire Sikh people. The young Guru took a vow, not only to bring the tyrant rulers to book, but also to infuse such valiant spirit into the people that they would rise, and even lay down their lives, to attain freedom from tyranny.

He advised his Sikhs to arm themselves. Very soon, an army of a respectable size took shape. In addition to the usual spiritual instruction, the Guru also started providing his Sikhs physical

and martial training. However, the Hindu hill rajas of the neighbouring states became jealous of the Guru's increasing following and his rising military might. They decided to mount an attack on him.

Yet, one of them was well disposed towards the Guru and invited him over as a guest to his state. The Guru was pleased to accept his invitation. One day, while in pursuit of game, the Guru discovered a picturesque spot on the banks of the river Yamuna to which he took great liking. When the Raja came to know about it, he persuaded the Guru to stay on at that spot since he liked it so much. The Guru agreed, and very soon a whole township came to grow around it. The Guru spent around four years there (today's Paonta Sahib in the Doon valley).

The reputation of his erudition attracted to him a bevy of scholars and poets including some of those whom the impoverished Mughal Emperor had disbanded from his Court. He encouraged them to translate many Sanskrit and Persian classics into Braj Bhasha, the popular folk language of that time. Much of this valuable material however, was destroyed by the enemy hordes vengefully after the Guru eventually vacated Anandpur.

The hill princes had several battles with the Guru and his Sikhs, but were always soundly defeated. After the first of these battles that occurred at Bhangani, and the Sikh forces had successfully repulsed the forces of the hill chiefs, some Sikhs came to seek the Guru's permission to follow the receding attackers and to wrest a sizeable part of their territory. The Guru, however, declined to give them any such permission saying, "our mission in life is to protect the downtrodden and root out the tyrants; and not to annex land or set up our own kingdom." Not only were the attacks of princely states repulsed several times, the Sikhs defeated even a number of Mughal expeditions against the Guru.

On the festive day of Baisakhi in 1699, the Guru conveyed a special massive assembly of the Sikhs from all over.



Contemporary chroniclers have reported that around 40,000 Sikhs attended. In the midst of that assembly, the Guru stood upon a platform, specially erected for the occasion and announced that he wanted someone to come forward and present him his head. It is chronicled that the entire assembly was stunned. Yet, soon a volunteer came forth to offer his head to the Guru. He was not the only one. The Guru made five calls and every time a volunteer stepped forward to make the offering of his own head. The Guru called those five his *Panj Piare* (his 'Beloved Five'). Then he initiated into a special Order called Order of the Khalsa, or God's Knights-at-Arms, by baptising them with Amrit. Then he prescribed some special rules of conduct for them including a number of taboos. He also added the epithet 'Singh' (a lion) to the name of everyone so baptised.

Then he requested the *Panj Piare* to initiate him too into the new Order in the same manner in which he had initiated them. Thence on, Gobind Rai became Gobind Singh.

The very next day, thousands more volunteered to be recruited into this Divine Army, and were baptised the same way.

This frightened the hill-rajahs, who reported the matter to Aurangzeb, soliciting his active intervention to quell this "rebellious venture" of the Guru. The Emperor, who had already been peeved by the defeat of his previous expeditions upon the Guru, chose this time to dispatch a huge army which, along with the forces of the twenty-two hill-chiefs, and local Gujjars and Ranghar tribes, mounted a massive attack on Anandpur, the Guru's abode.

The battle raged on for days. A devoted Sikh, Bhai Kanhaiya, every night, after the fighting of the day was called off, began visiting the battlefield to provide water to thirsty soldiers without discrimination

whether they were Sikhs or not. He was asked why he was providing water to the adversary soldiers, he said, "I see no alien, no enemy; every thirsty face appears to me to be the face of my Guru. How can I deny him water?" When the Guru came to know of this he was immensely pleased and commended his conduct as exemplary.

The battle went on for many days. The Mughal generals soon realised that they would not be able to win in straight fight. So they decided to lay a massive siege to Anandpur and confine the Guru along with his followers within it, and thus derive them of supplies. They hoped that through that strategy they would be able to make the Guru surrender.

The siege continued for months. There was still no sign of the Guru giving in. The Mughal generals, then, over the oath of Koran, gave solemn assurance to the Guru, that if he and his family vacated Anandpur, they would be provided safe passage. On account of this solemn assurance by the Mughal generals, the Sikhs prevailed upon the Guru to leave Anandpur. He did so at midnight along with his family and the handful of Sikhs who had survived the hardships of the siege. It was a cold night in December and to add to the misery of the troupe, it began to rain heavily. Contrary to their assurances, however, the Mughal forces fell upon the Guru and his companions. In the melee, the Guru's two younger sons and his aged mother fell into the hands of the Governor of Sarhind owing to the treachery of their own Brahmin cook. The Governor ordered that these children (merely six-and four-years old) be walled alive and thus suffocated to death.

The Guru, along with his elder sons (twelve and nine years old) reached a place called Chamkaur, while they were being pursued by the Moghul hordes. A fierce battle raged there in which the Guru's two elder princes who were accompanying him attained martyrdom. The Guru was left with only five Sikhs. They counselled him to leave. When he declined, he was reminded that he himself had bestowed upon them the authority of Guru Khalsa when he sought to be baptised. "With that authority" they said, "we command you, Gobind Singh, to leave." The Guru was left with no option but to obey. As he left, three Sikhs chose to accompany him, while the other two stayed back to keep the Mughal hordes engaged as long as they could. In the dark night, however, his companions got separated from him. He alone waded through forests and wildernesses. On the way, two Muslim brothers, who had been in the Guru's service

at one time, helped the Guru escape in disguise. He stayed with some of his admirers on the way and eventually reached Khidrana still being pursued by the adversary forces that were on the look out for him.

Earlier, when the Guru was at Anandpur under siege, forty men had deserted him. After however, they reached their homes, their wives refused to admit them, being ashamed of their husbands having deserted the Guru. They succeeded in awakening remorse in them, and drove them back led by a lady, Mai Bhago, in command. They came to know that the Guru had gone towards Khidrana. They hurried thither and engaged the hordes pursuing the Guru some way before Khidrana. All of them, except Mai Bhago, were martyred fighting but were able to drive the pursuing hordes back. The Guru from an elevated mound at some distance, where he had camped saw all that happen. He came to the site and kissed the brows of each one of them and showered his blessings on them. Only one of them, Mahan Singh who was on his last breath could seek forgiveness for their desertion. The Guru told him that they all had proved their worth and made him proud of them. The Guru further told Mahan Singh that those who had laid down their lives here, shall ever be remembered as *muktas* (the liberated ones). Mahan Singh was overjoyed to hear this and breathed his last in peace.

After some sojourns on the way, the Guru reached Talwandi Sabo where he spent over nine months. That place, since then, is known as Damdama Sahib (the sacred resting-place).

During his stay there, the Guru produced the final recension of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He also resumed his literary activity there. That is why Talwandi Sabo came to be known as Guru's Kashi, a seat of learning. From there, the Guru produced an epistle, in Persian, addressed to Aurangzeb, in which were mirrored to him the tyrannies and treacheries that he perpetrated upon innocent people. In that epistle, which was titled *Zafar Namah* (the Epistle of Victory) he also chastised the Emperor for not keeping his word after swearing on the Koran. The Guru also informed him that he (the Guru) was a peace-loving person, "but if all efforts to preserve peace fail, it becomes legitimate to pick up arms."

Aurangzeb received the letter and was filled with remorse, and invited the Guru for discussions. However, he died soon after that and a war of succession ensued between his sons. Bahadur Shah, the eldest among them, sought the Guru's help and with the Guru's timely help in Agra, requested him to accompany him to the South. The Guru agreed to do

so, but after some time, parted company with him and left for Nander in the Deccan area of India.

In the proximity of Nander there was an ashram on the bank of River Godawari which belonged to a *bairagi* (hermit) Madho Das. When he saw the Guru, he was so captivated by his personality that he surrendered himself before the Guru. The Guru baptised him into the Order of the Khalsa and gave him the name of Gurbaksh Singh, who considered himself as the *banda* (bondsmen) of the Guru and was pleased when people remembered him by that name. The Guru dispatched him to the Punjab to take charge of the Sikh forces there and to continue the mission of protecting the weak from the tyrannous rulers. The Guru gave him letters addressed to leaders of the Sikhs to help him in his mission. Five Sikhs were to accompany him. As a token of his personal blessing, the Guru also gave him five arrows from his own quiver.

The Nawab of Sarhind who was responsible for the cruel death of the Guru's younger sons was much concerned when he came to know of the Guru's proximity with the Emperor. So he hired two Pathan mercenaries to assassinate the Guru.

One day, when the Guru was taking some rest, one of those Pathans struck him with a dagger. But before he could give a second blow, the Guru struck him dead with his sword. His companion tried to escape but some alert Sikhs captured and executed him.

The wound that the Guru got was healing well, but one day when the Guru tried to bend a bow, it gaped again. The Guru felt that his end was near. Now he invited all the Sikhs around to assemble and declared to them that after him Sri Guru Granth Sahib shall be their eternal Guru. Then he loudly chanted, "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa Waheguru ji ki Fateh" and thereafter passed away.

He had lived amidst mortals for just forty-two years, yet the world has not witnessed another life that was at once so sublime, so inspiring, so action-packed, so replete with sacrifice, so devoid of fear and yet to so full of compassion – so complete in all respects.



Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki

Semiquincentennial Year Of Martyrdom Baba Deep Singh Shaheed

Christianity, the world's most pervasive religion, exalts four virtues above all others: Mercy, Truth, Righteousness and Peace (from Psalm 85, Verse 10). These virtues, in turn, stand for traditional values for which countless innocent men and women have been prepared to give their lives. To be rightly martyred, therefore, in Christian faith is to perish in the pursuit of these virtues.

The row of ten niches immediately over the Great West Door of Westminster Abbey are filled with ten statues of individual Christian martyrs of the 20th Century, drawn from every continent and many Christian denominations, intended to represent all others who have died (and continue to do so) in similar circumstances of oppression and persecution.



Westminster Abbey.



Baba Deep Singh Shaheed.

Interestingly, Christianity and Sikhism coalesce in their respect for these individual virtues which have also been articles of Sikh faith. Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion, elevated Truth to the pedestal of God ('sat naam'). Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Guru, espoused this cause unto death ('soor veer bachan ka bali': the true man of courage is a man of his word), thus initiating the holy tradition of Sikh martyrdom. His son, Guru Hargobind, took up 'just war' as an article of righteousness, while his son, Guru Tegh Bahadur, bore the cross of brutal Mughal persecution and death, on the behest of Kashmiri Pandits for peace and freedom from tyranny. His son,

Guru Gobind Singh (who sacrificed his family), also described as 'Dusht Uparin' (destroyer of tyrants), took up the sword of 'righteousness' and taught the sparrow to fight the hawk, no matter the odds:

*Ham aih kaj jagat mo aai; Dharam het Gurdev pathai;
Jahan Tahan tum dharma bitharo; dust dokhyan pakar pacharo;*

Yahi kaj dhara im janmang; samajh leh sadhu sab manmang;

Dharma chalavan sant ubharan; dust saban ko mool uparin.

[I came into the world with the Duty to uphold Righteousness

In every place, and to destroy sin and evil. Oh, Holy men,

The only reason I took birth was to see that Righteousness

May flourish, Good may prevail, and tyrants be uprooted.]

Mercy ('daya'), too, is among the primary virtues of Sikh theology and practice, perhaps, best exemplified by Guru Gobind Singh's disciple, Bhai Kanhaiya, who even tended enemy soldiers after battle.

Beginning essentially as a faith of 'conciliation' between Muslims and Hindus, Sikhism adopted martial traditions over the centuries purely as a 'righteous' reaction against repression. Throughout the turbulence of 18th century North India, it was, therefore, the virtue of righteousness that inspired thousands of Sikhs to fight tyranny under one banner and to withstand decades of brutalities before they finally succeeded in stemming the tide of both foreign rule and invasion.

Deep Singh: the Warrior Scholar

It is to this period of Indo-Sikh history that Deep Singh, reverently referred to as 'Baba' (Persian word for 'father' or 'grandfather' used among Sikhs as a title of affection and reverence) belonged. Among the most respected spiritual leaders of his time, and 'one of the most revered heroes of Sikh history', he was equally a warrior-leader of repute who participated in all major battles of his time. He lived a life of pious revolt against the evil forces of oppression and cruelty that characterised the period, and died leading a Sikh army in a 'just fight' in the face of heavy odds.

Interestingly, the 60th year of India's Independence coincided with his Semiquincentennial (250th) year of martyrdom (at Amritsar on 11 November (30

Katak) 1757), and it is only appropriate that the world reads and learns of this saint-soldier and martyr who resisted foreign yoke with valour so sanguinary and inspiring that he came to personify courage and resolve in the face of tyranny.

Baba Deep Singh was born on 26 January (14 Magh) 1682 to Bhai Bhagtu and Mata Jeoni at village Pahuwind, about 40 km from Amritsar. A true disciple of Guru Gobind Singh who had personally initiated him into the Khalsa fraternity as well as schooled him in the scriptures and warfare, Baba Deep Singh was a colossus who bestrode his times with a breadth of achievement seldom equaled. His contribution in the scholastic field alone would secure him a place in Sikh history:

✦ Along with Bhai Mani Singh, under the tutelage of Guru Gobind Singh, he compiled the first Adi Granth that was to succeed to the Guru Gaddi (throne of Guruship).

✦ He prepared four hand-written copies of this Granth (scriptures) of 1430 pages, retained one at Dam Dama Sahib (where it was prepared) and conveyed others to different holy seats of worship (Sri Takhat Patna Sahib, Sri Takhat Hazur Sahib and Sri Takhat Keshgarh Sahib). He also prepared a copy in Arabic which was sent to Arabia, and where it is known to have been well-received.

✦ He edited the Dasm Granth (writings of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru), and made some important editorial changes, the most notable being that of 'fakiraan' to 'muridaan'.

✦ He was the first Jathedar of the Dam Dami Taksal.

A tall, strong, and uncommonly brave Sikh, Baba Deep Singh was among the most respected personages of his time for he combined in himself the qualities of a warrior and spiritual leader, commanding immense influence in the region. Some of his principal achievements are:

✦ Fought alongside Banda Singh Bahadur in all battles, beginning with that of Sarhind in 1709.

✦ During this period, he also resolved the conflict over 'darshani fateh' and 'waheguru ji ki fateh'.

✦ Despatched Mehtab Singh and Sukha Singh to avenge the sacrilege perpetrated by Masa Rangar in Harmandar Sahib.

✦ Resolved a conflict between the rajas of Bikaner and Jaisalmer.

- ❖ Influenced all misls to fight conjointly against the tyranny of Adina Beg, Governor of Jullundur, and on the latter's defeat, conferred the conquered territory to Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, ancestor of the royal house of Kapurthala.
- ❖ In 1732, he went to the rescue of Sardar Ala Singh who had been besieged in Barnala by Manjha and Bhatti Rajputs in collaboration with the faujdar of Jullundur and Nawab of Malerkotla.
- ❖ In 1733, when the Mughal governor of Lahore sought peace with the Sikhs offering them a nawabship and a jagir, Baba Deep Singh and his jatha joined Nawab Kapur Singh at Amritsar to form the Dal Khalsa in 1734, which was soon divided for administrative convenience into the Buddha Dal and the Taruna Dal, the latter being further split into five jathas. Deep Singh, now reverently called Baba, was given the command of one of these jathas which, in 1748, were re-designated as misls.
- ❖ His jatha later came to be known as Shahid misl. Some scholars, however, suggest that the misl took its name during his lifetime for two reasons: one, that Baba ji forswore to give his life in the service of the Panth after amending 'fakeeran' to 'muridan' while editing the Dasam Granth; two, his band of warriors always fought in the van, and were so named for their sanguinary courage. The tower in which he lived in the vicinity of Takht Sri Damdama Sahib is known as Burj Baba Deep Singh Shahid.
- ❖ He was among the few survivors of the Chhota Ghalughara (Lesser Holocaust) on 1 May 1746 in Kahnuwan, where about 10,000 Sikhs were killed.

Baba Deep Singh is best remembered for his achievement in the final moments of his life when at the age of 75 years, he collected, led and inspired a body of Sikhs to face an Afghan Army far superior in numbers and equipment.

Righteous War

When Ahmed Shah Abdali (also referred to by his clan name, 'Durrani') was returning to Kabul in April 1757 after his fourth invasion of India, his baggage train was repeatedly attacked by bands of Sikh horsemen in the Punjab and thousands of prisoners, including women, were freed and returned to their homes in Delhi, Mathura and Brindavan. Enraged, the invader first sacked the holy Sikh town of Kartarpur on his way to Lahore and, later that year, had the Sikh sanctum at Amritsar destroyed and desecrated. When Baba Deep Singh learnt of this at Dam Dama, some 250 km from Amritsar, he vowed to evict the imperial forces from Harmandir Sahib and restore its sanctity.

He sent word throughout the region for all able-bodied Sikhs to gather in Tarn Taran for battle around the time of Diwali, usually celebrated in the second week of November. It was then a custom for Sikhs to gather at Harmandir Sahib for Baisakhi and Diwali to pay homage and discuss pressing collective issues.



Baba Deep Singh drawing a line in the ground at Fateh Chak before the battle. The incident is commemorated by Gurdwara Lakir Sahib.



Gurdwara Lakir Sahib, Fateh Chak (Tarn Taran)

Having paid obeisance at the historic Gurudwara Guru Arjan Dev at Tarn Taran, the Sikhs, numbering about 5000, moved to Fateh Chak on the outskirts of the town (now a flourishing city and administrative District). Aware that his body of volunteers would be no match for the large, well-equipped Afghan army under personal command of Jahan Khan, Governor of Lahore, that was on its way to intercept his advance to the Harmandir, Baba Deep Singh drew a line in the ground with his broadsword (khanda) and bade only those prepared for the supreme sacrifice to step across. Equally aware that in the circumstances only the most desperate courage could prevail against the enemy, almost five times their strength, he vowed, 'Maron to Har ke Dwar' (if I die, it shall be only at Harmandir Sahib). The spot today has a commemorative Gurudwara called Lakir Sahib: 'lakir' for 'line'.

On sighting the firmly entrenched enemy near the present day village of Gohalwar, about 7 km ahead of Tarn Taran, the Sikhs challenged them to combat. The spot is today commemorated with Gurudwara Lalkar Sahib ('lalkar' means 'challenge'). The fighting that erupted thereafter was intensely fierce and there is no better tribute to Sikh martial prowess than the following eyewitness account by Tahmas Khan Miskin in his Tazkirah-i-Miskin, who was part of the opposing force,.

"The Sikhs closely besieged the Muslim forces and from every side kept the fighting fierce and distressed them so much that many of their men turned to flee in desperation."

Breaking through the Afghan lines with few casualties, the Sikhs made a dash towards Amritsar only to be intercepted some 4 km ahead of Gohalwar near the present day village of Chabba by a second Afghan Army, or reinforcements, led by one Atai Khan. Many brave Sikhs fell in this battle, including the veteran 95-year old Sikh commander, Naudh Singh. His cenotaph on the Amritsar-Tarn Taran road is a place of worship where passers-by from all communities stop to pay homage.

At one point during the battle, Baba Deep Singh engaged in single combat with the Afghan commander, Jamal Shah (some



Gurudwara Lalkar Sahib, Gohalwar, 7 km from Tarn Taran.

historians record his name as Atai Khan). By the coincidence of a simultaneous stroke of swords, Baba Deep Singh was grievously wounded in the neck, while his opponent's head was completely severed.

With life starting to ebb, Baba Deep Singh would have relinquished his mission, but reminded of his pledge of that morning, he steadied himself with superhuman strength and, in an instance that has no parallel in history, supporting his head and stanching the flow of blood with his left hand, started to wield the sword with amazing vigour with the right. The spot where he received the mortal injury is commemorated today with Gurudwara Tahla Sahib ('tahli' is a species of tree common to the terrain) a little over a km ahead of Chabba, and approximately 6 km (2 kos) short of Harmandir Sahib.

In the face of such overwhelming odds and, in spite of their exceptional courage, the tragic outcome of the battle can be easily surmised. Although Baba Deep Singh and his devout band of martyrs were almost killed to a man, it is a historical fact that Baba Deep Singh lived to keep his pledge, breathing his last only when he reached the parkarma (rectangular promenade around the sacred water tank and shrine) of Harmandar Sahib.



Gurudwara Shaheed Ganj Baba Deep Singh, Ramsar (Amritsar).

Patwant Singh is apt in his description of the battle in which the Sikhs 'fought to the last man with demonic fury', while Baba Deep Singh, although mortally wounded, 'hacked his way through the Afghan lines to die in the parkarma'. The spot where Baba Deep Singh succumbed to his wounds is marked with a gurdwara that serves as a cenotaph where pilgrims today pause in reverence.

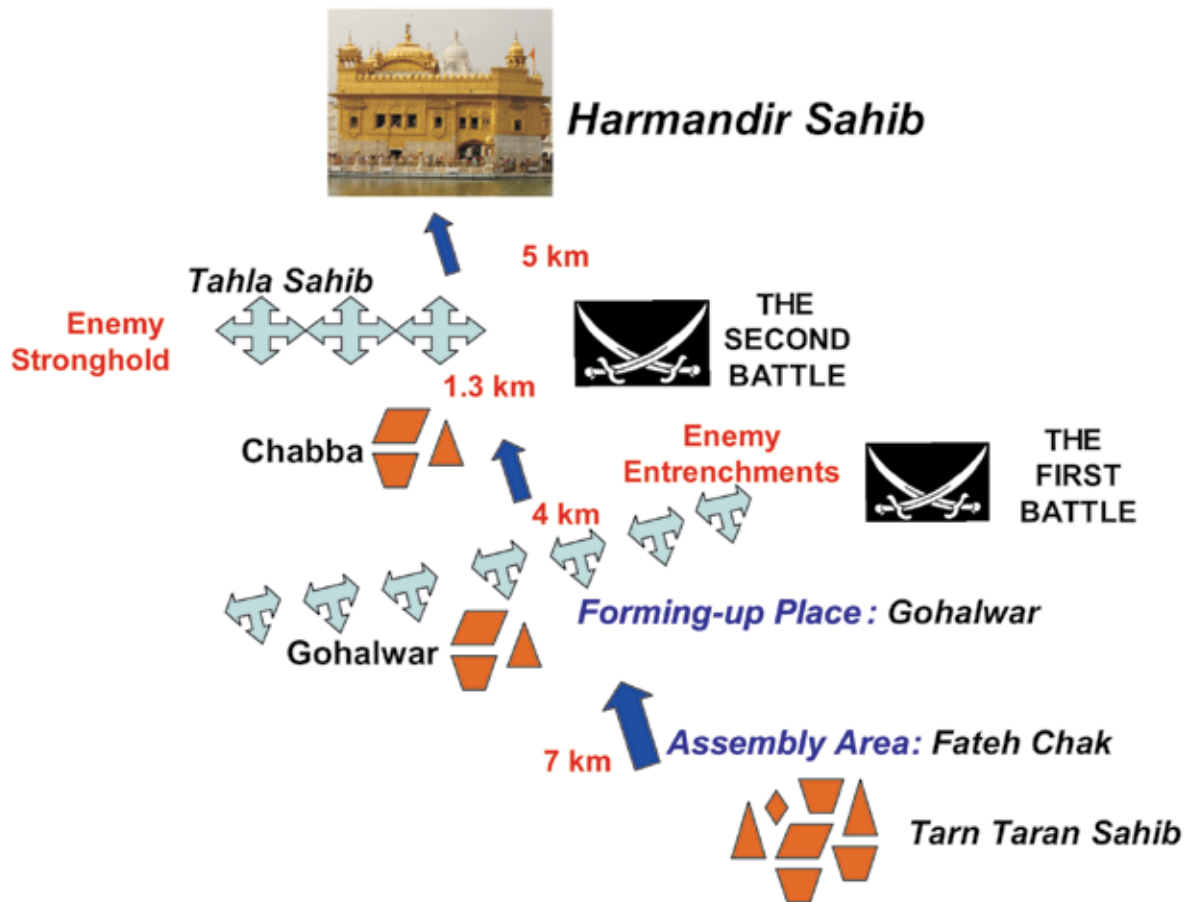
While medical science and reason might ever remain incredulous of this superhuman feat depicted reverently in colour prints to this day, devotees continue to marvel and believe in its veracity. But, is it not reasonable to ask why and how, in the first place, the 'severed head' legend arose? How could it possibly be without substance when the events occurred not too far back in time, only 250 years, the same year as the Battle of Plassey, less than ten generations ago? Besides, the legend has also been chronicled and continues to be sung by troubadours and bards alike in words which, in many cases, were composed very long ago, probably, not long after the event itself. This

is strong evidence, indeed, since much of Sikh history of the period has been similarly passed down, orally.

It is also difficult to surmise the precise distance over which Baba Deep Singh fought in the extraordinary manner depicted—about six kilometers, or less? Possibly, grievously wounded in the neck, he may have pressed on by dint of sheer determination, until the phenomenal exertions may have completely severed his head, either on reaching the parkarma, or some distance before it. Alternatively, he may have received a second more grievous wound that may have actually severed his head, near the present gurdwara at Ramsar, barely one km short of Harmandir Sahib. This is supported by an allied belief that he received his fatal wound at Ramsar, which is also the spot where his mortal remains were cremated and commemorated with Gurudwara Shaheed Ganj.

Several arms and accoutrements of Baba Deep Singh are preserved in the Akal Takht, and it is believed that although he wore no armour, his arms and accoutrements together weighed some 16 kgs.

THE BATTLEGROUND: 11 NOV. 1757



- ⚔ Dudhara Khanda (double-edged sword)
- ⚔ Paeshkabaj
- ⚔ A sword-like weapon
- ⚔ Pistol
- ⚔ Medium sized Khanda
- ⚔ Two kirpans
- ⚔ Two small Khandas
- ⚔ Several quoits (chakras) of different sizes.

Best remembered for his final act of sacrifice that shall ever rank among the most selfless and bravest the world has ever known, his legacy to Sikh scholarly tradition by way of calligraphy, scriptural analysis and explication is also profoundly significant. However, it is his motivational leadership and exceptional daring to 'fight the just fight' against overwhelming odds that has, perhaps, had the greatest impact in forging Sikh martial traditions, relived with unfading glory in numerous battlefields across the world.

Indeed, there would be few who could rival him in his breadth of stature as the perfect warrior-saint who was also spiritual master, intellectual scholar, and martyr.

Harsimran Singh

Rally round the French Sikhs



The right of an ethnic community

The French law which has insidiously affected the Sikh turban, bans “ostentatious” signs of religion. Three questions arise: is the turban essential to Sikhs? Yes! Can one community be exempted as ‘special’ from a common law, by any government? Almost never. That leaves only one option. Does the law really apply?

The law banning religious items in French State institutions was first established in 1905, separating the secular State from any association with religion. All visible signs of religion were stripped from the walls of State institutions including State schools. The clergy, including nuns in State Schools, were required to wear non-clerical clothes.

This law was a development of the historic French Revolution and its subsequent preference for secularism and human rights. Rigid secularism mostly evolved as a reaction against the bloody and protracted conflicts between Catholic and Protestant in which millions died. Moreover, the Church often collaborated with monarchies. Robespierre’s infamous reign of terror did not spare the Church, stripping it of power.

Even when out of power, the Catholic and Protestant institutions continued to compete

insidiously in State institutions, often accusing the government of being partial to the other. A weary State disassociated itself completely from any religion. Hence the 1905 law. A deep suspicion of institutional religion as a predatory, oppressive and reactionary force is embedded in the French psyche.

Muslim migrations to France in the twentieth century brought new challenges, as some Muslim girls wore the hijab as a religious requirement. The French State system allows Schools some local desertions. However the number of hijab-wearing girls increased exponentially, with increasingly politicised Islamic movements after 2001, and wore down French tolerance. Sarkozy, who is President now, was the interior Minister who precipitated such reaction. Citing 1905 Laicite he stressed that standards had fallen. New provisions were proposed.

Not to be accused of targeting Muslims, the proposed law mentioned the hijab, the Jewish yumlka and the large Christian cross as ostentatious signs. Neither the Jews nor the Christians were practically affected as both had long established private educational institutions.

For some reason the turban was not mentioned. Nevertheless, some Sikh groups raised a public alarm

despite being advised to first hold discreet talks first the French government. By going public they exposed the issue to media hacks who then challenged the French Government. The government responded that it was an oversight and the law would include turbans! The first damage was done. I was thereafter contacted by concerned Sikhs in France.

Through my association with the French Human Rights Ambassador to the UN, I was able to organise a number of meetings with high profile officials in the French Prime Minister's office, the Ministry of Interior, the External Affairs Ministry and the Education Ministry. Finally there was a meeting with the French Education Minister. The dialogues opened up possibilities of resolving the issue.

With a crash course on the French constitution, its political history and philosophy, I felt the best line was to suggest that the law does *not* apply to the Sikhs. My argument was that working definition of the words 'ostentatious' and 'religion' as implied in the law are inconsistent with the Sikh practice of wearing turbans.

The French concept of religion was rooted in European Christian doctrinal history, as a proscriptive and exclusivist institution interfering with human freedoms, intolerant of non-believers and other beliefs and is forever seeking to 'save souls' through conversion.

The French position was that an ostentatious sign of religion is a form of propaganda to encourage others to engage in a dialogue and subtly covert! The French State saw this as the human rights of its atheist pupils not be exposed to religious propaganda of any form.

Clearly this was diametrically opposite to Sikh beliefs and history as well as the significance of the turban. It does not make legal or administrative sense to argue that the worlds religion be understood differentially for different religions. The best line was that the turban was incommensurate with the words ostentatious and religion as comprehended by the French State.

I strengthened the argument with facts. Over 90 per cent of Sikhs who wear turbans are not 'baptised' in the formal sense. If they are not even totally committed to their 'religion' as the French understand, why would they start converting others? On the other hand, a lady with a hijab, a Jew with a yumlka or a Christian with large cross is consciously stating that he or she is fully committed to their religion.

Secondly, one never sees any of these people voluntarily present in places where the deeply religious do not venture. But you can see non-baptised turban-wearing Sikhs in all venues of social life, including pubs, dance halls and other public places.

Furthermore, there are famous people like the agnostic Khushwant Singh and the atheist Harkishan Singh Surjit of the CPI(M) who are Sikhs. If the French working definition of turban as an ostentatious religious sign was used we would have to ask these people to remove their turbans or their change habits, in other words the large majority of Sikhs. The inconsistency between the French understanding of a religious item and the Sikh practice of wearing turban was quite evident.

The law also sought people to 'conceal' their signs of religion. If there is a religious requirement among the five K's it is unshorn hair (*kesh*). The turban conceals it. Surely we are getting into paradoxes now.

Lue Ferry, the then French Education Minister, a professor of philosophy, appreciated the inconsistencies. He said that an exception could not be made but the argument of inapplicability put forward could be considered to find a way forward. He suggested that a discrete form of turban, i.e. a keski type, be worn for some time until matters settled. The ministry also agreed to send circulars explaining the inconsistencies.

Unfortunately, by then many Sikhs groups and individuals had started their own campaigns, sending letters stating that the turban was an essential item of Sikh identity and religion and an 'exception' had to be made! Even while details were being sorted with officials, such letters and phone calls increased.

French Government officials were in a quandary and then started to back-track. They said that clearly there were two interpretations of the turban and it was not the responsibility of the French Government to either arbitrate or chose one. There is no provision for a separate cultural or ethnic identity entertained in France. The formal circular as an official position was dropped but they agreed to verbally explain as such to concerned schools. A battle already won was now slipping away.

But, more was to come. At the height of French-US tension over Iraq, many Sikhs lobbied United States Senators and Congressmen then wrote sarcastic letters reminding the French of their obligation to the

freedom of religion and human rights! Matters went downhill fast and French officials lost the will to help the Sikh community.

It is testament of the first generation of Sikh migrants from villages to the west that they protected the turban through pragmatic solutions. The right to wear the turban in the UK was not won as a religious right, but as the right of an ethnic community, as confirmed in the famous House of Lords Mandla decision in 1984.

It is a sad indictment of the current young leaders among Sikhs that not only have they failed to improve upon the diplomatic and political skills of their parents, but have in fact become more fundamentalist and unrealistic. The issue can still be resolved if mature and diplomatic minds take charge of the issue. Whatever one may say about the French, they are a reasonable people who will concede when an argument is rational.

Jaidev Singh Rai, Director, Sikh Human Rights Group, Southall, Middlesex, United Kingdom

French Foolishness

The French government's ban on turbans and other symbol of religious identity is driven by a curious political wisdom that aims at putting into practice a curious interpretation of secularism in a thoroughly befuddled bid to tackle the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and its impact on the West. In doing this, France has in fact only managed to provoke a burning indignation among religious and ethnic groups that have, until now, viewed this country as a secure, democratic haven, in which they had the freedom to practice and given voice to their concerns.

And among those affected are a small but potentially vociferous 7,000-strong community of French Sikhs. In early November 2007, three young Sikh boys were expelled from the state-run Louis Michel College because they refused to remove their turbans. Wearing a turban is an essential part of being a Sikh and the state education authority's action has denied the boys a basic freedom that is otherwise guaranteed under France's Constitution. Sikh community leaders in France believe the interpretation and application of the new law is a definite attempt to discourage young Sikh children from adhering to their religious creed. They say asking the children to forsake the turban is in fact a manner of directing them to forsake Sikhism. It is a new form of Apartheid, which though applicable to adherents of all religious

The French law that bans the Turban

"Art.L.141-5-1.: In primary schools, schools and high schools, the wearing of a sign or dress by which the students reveal ostentatiously a religious affiliation, is forbidden.

About the Turban Ban in France:

As a result of the law passed by France banning the turban in French schools in 2004, a Sikh student is not allowed to wear a turban to school. Six French Sikh children have been expelled from schools. As a consequence of the law, French Sikhs have also not been able to renew their driving licence, passport or refugee card because they refuse to remove their turban for their ID photographs.

communities, in its practice, discriminates against Muslims, Jews and Sikhs. France's Sikhs have vowed to combat this in the country's highest court. They are confident that a nation that had once revolted against and have overcome a tyrannical monarchy will eventually also rise up against legislation driven by a mindset that can be traced back to the time of Napoleon. Rather than look for more tolerant environments in the increasingly prejudiced Western world, the French Sikhs say they will stay and fight it out and if need be take the matter to the European Court. They have pointed out that not only is the ban on religious symbols against the principles of natural justice and free choice but is also a contravention of the Charter of the European Union.

An overwhelming majority of the French Sikhs are of Indian origin besides which this country is home to the second largest Muslim population in the world. And the added fact that Indian Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh is an upright and widely respected Sikh brings on a definite collective responsibility upon India, also the world's largest democracy. India must employ all the influence it can to bring pressure on the French government to amend its preposterous new legislation. And there could perhaps be no better occasion for this than right now, when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is in direct dialogue with the European Union. India and EU are setting common goals on combating global terrorism. They must also, together, put down all knee-jerk responses that throw the lives of their own citizens into peril!

[Editorial in The Asian Age]



Addressing the media at Le Meridian is S. Gurpreet Singh, accompanied by S. Manjeet Singh and Bhayee Sikander Singh (right).

A fight for their right

In January 2008, Sikhs in New Delhi pressed upon the international community and urged Sikhs all over the world to join hands to fight for the “just cause of French Sikhs”. The SGPC had already announced its decision to raise the issue at the international level, including the United Nations. The Sikh community is disturbed over the fact that despite its “contribution in the French economy,” they have been equated with Muslim fundamentalists, with the French Government declining to withdraw its controversial order.

Stressing that the Indian government had not done its bit for protecting their religious right in France, the community have urged the Centre to take up the issue of three Sikh pupils with the French Government – Jasper Singh, Bikramjit Singh and Ranjit Singh – who were recently expelled from a French school for wearing turbans.

Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC) member Manjeet Singh said: “It is a direct attack on the Sikh community. The issue is not just of wearing or rejecting religious signs but also about preserving the cultural diversity in the world.”

“Governments must allow cultural diversities to bloom. A French law banning religious symbols amounts to cultural repression in the name of secularism,” he said, adding that there was more than 40 lakh Sikhs



Image of Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of India and one of the world's most outstanding statesman, is synonymous with his turban.



Mejindarpal Kaur, director with the 'United Sikhs', leading the legal challenge to the French 'ban'.

living outside India. If this were allowed to happen, similar problems could occur elsewhere.

It is curious to note that various Congress leaders have been claiming that the issue has been "resolved to the satisfaction of the Sikh community".

According to the SGPC member Harinderpal Singh, they have been forced to take up the issue at international forums since Hardayal Singh, the father of one of the expelled students, has lost the case in a French court recently.

"We extend all our support to Hardayal Singh in

his plan to fight a legal battle. We will support all other parents, irrespective of whichever faith they belong to, in their legal moves to preserve their cultural and religious identities," he said. Reacting sharply to the expulsion of three Sikh students from a school over their refusal to remove their turbans, SGPC chief, Bibi Jagir Kaur has said that this was an attack on religious freedom of the Sikh community.

Speaking to newsmen at the quadricentennial celebrations of Guru Granth Sahib in Dehra Dun, Bibi Jagir Kaur said, "this was not a question of the turbans of three Sikh children but of the entire community." Such religious interference would not be tolerated at any cost and "we will talk to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Indian Embassy in France" to look into the matter. "We will contact the Ministry of External Affairs and if the need arises, the community would go the United Nations Organisations (UNO) on the issue," the SGPC chief said.

Even as the schools in France have been warning that they will expel students wearing turbans to school for sometime now, this was the first time that stringent action was taken under the new law prohibiting conspicuous religious signs and apparel to school.



The electronic media covered the event in New Delhi with live broadcasts.

The turban: a matter of pride and honour

Pride and honour make a potent potion and the turban evokes these feelings in those Sikhs who wear a turban. People have been wearing turbans since time immemorial and one finds individuals wearing turbans in many nations in Asia and Africa. While for some people, turbans might be an optional, formal, attire, for the Sikhs wearing a turban is an imperative.

Turban-wearing Sikhs stand out in a crowd, for good or bad, and there are many documented cases, spread over centuries and spanning the globe, when the Sikhs have faced discrimination or worse because of their turbans.

Often prominent people would stand up for their rights. When the question of Sikhs wearing turbans and refusing to wear steel helmets came before the British Parliament, Sir Winston Churchill said it was “a matter of deep regret that consequent to contemporary cynicism, people had been toying with many precious social and religious values, but those who want to retain and maintain them with due respect should receive our appreciation as well as help. The Sikhs need our help for such a cause. We should help them willingly. He who is familiar with Sikh history knows the Sikhs’ relationship with England, the high degree of their achievements, and we must help them with full strength. The Sikhs should be exempted from wearing steel helmets because it hurts their religious sentiments”.

Especially in the final decades of the last century, Sikhs increasingly took recourse to legal systems of the nations where they faced discrimination, and more in time would be granted relief since courts worldwide recognised fundamental rights of the Sikhs to wear an item of their religious attire. This was so in Britain, Canada and the US, to name just three major nations.

In France, however, it was the state that discriminated against Sikh school students and banned them for wearing turbans to school, because turbans were seen as “conspicuous religious symbols” in 2004 and enforced it vigorously. Others affected by the law include Muslim girls wearing headscarves, Jewish boys wearing skull caps and Christians wearing large crosses.

The logic behind this decision is to take secularism, not as equal respect for all religions, as it is seen in India, or a separation of the church and the state as is practised in most of Europe and the US, but a particularly narrow and strident interpretation that seeks to stamp out religion and religious symbols to “preserve secularity”.

French courts have supported the government in this and now the principle is being extended – the Sikhs are being asked to uncover their heads while being photographed for driving licences! Recently, *United Sikhs*, an international charitable organisation that has also been fighting for the cause of the turban, reported that its appeal regarding Shingara Singh Mann, 52, a French national who was refused at replacement driver’s licence because he did not take off his turban, was turned down by a top French court. Similarly, appeals by eight French students, who have sought to be allowed to attend school, have met with similar fate.

The January 2008 visit of French President Nicolas Sarkozy to India has drawn attention to this issue again. The issue of banning turbans in French schools has been raised, protest marches have taken place, and vigils are being planned.

It is a historical fact that nearly 100,000 Sikh soldiers fought for France and many lost their lives during the two world wars, fighting major battles in Ypres, La Basse, Neuve Chapelle, Festubert, Loos, Givenchy and the Somme.

The legendary Sardar Hardit Singh Malik awarded the French Legion of Honour Award in 1952. He had served as a fighter pilot first with the French Air Force, and later the British and won nine aerial battles in World War I. The highly respected turbaned HS Malik also served as Indian Ambassador to France soon after India became independent.

The issue is neither the contribution of Sikhs to the freedom of France, nor the ties they have with France and the French people. What is at stake here is a fundamental matter of giving people the freedom to profess and practise their faith.

The following are excerpts from a statement by the French President Nicolas Sarkozy speaking at the UN General Assembly in New York on 25 September 2007, which is being circulated on the Internet:

“Attachment to one’s faith, to one’s language and culture, and to one’s way of life, thought and belief – all this is natural, legitimate and profoundly human... To deny that is to sow the seeds of humiliation. A ‘clash of civilisations’ will not be averted by forcing everyone to think and believe alike; cultural and religious diversity must be accepted everywhere and by all.”

Quite so, Mr President.

Roopinder Singh
[From TheTribune]



The French turban ~ in the Napoleon Hall

The irony was not lost on some. A high profile media conference took place in New Delhi's prestigious Le Meridien Hotel, and in its Napoleon Convention Hall, on eve of President Nicolas Sarkozy's visit to India in January 2008.

United Sikhs, a United Nations-affiliated international advocacy NGO and other Sikh organisations requested the Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to publicly state if he would discuss the Sikh turban issue in France with French President Nicholas Sarkozy during the latter's visit to India, starting 25 January 2008.

In the previous week, *United Sikhs* and Sikhs organisations globally requested a meeting with Dr Manmohan Singh that he raise the French ban on the Sikh turban issue with Mr Sarkozy and had also written to the Chairperson of the UPA, Sonia Gandhi and the Indian External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, seeking an assurance that the issue would be on the top of Dr Manmohan Singh's agenda with Mr Sarkozy.

"No Sikh organisation has been granted a meeting with Dr Manmohan Singh or the External Affairs Minister, but we will persist in our request for a meeting so that we are able to effectively apprise him of the issues," said Mejjindarpal Kaur, *United Sikhs* director who is leading the legal challenge to the French ban on the Sikh Turban in schools and ID document photos.

"We are concerned that the details of the problems faced by French Sikhs and the legal arguments that have been presented in the French and in the International courts are not known to Dr Manmohan Singh," she told a press conference at the Meridien Hotel on 25 January 2008.

"We understand that Dr Manmohan Singh may be preoccupied presently, but we hope that he will grant us a meeting by next week," said Daljeet Singh, chairman of the Dharam Parchar Committee of DSGMC.

"Dr Manmohan Singh, a turban-wearing Sikh, cannot turn a blind eye to the injustice suffered by Sikhs in France, who have not been allowed to practice their faith freely, since a law was passed in 2004 that banned the wearing of the Sikh turban in schools. Since the law, France has also not issued passports, driving licences and residence cards to Sikhs who refuse to remove their turban for their ID photos," said Gurdial Singh, an Indian national living in France, who travelled to New Delhi to campaign for the Sikh turban ban to be lifted in France.

"Dr Manmohan Singh, a Sikh who has never been seen without his turban, is the best evidence France needs to be convinced that a Sikh is inseparable from his turban," added Manjeet Singh, President of the Akali Dal (Panthik).

The French President has also been approached by *United Sikhs* and other Sikhs organisations and individuals. On 16 January 2007, *United Sikhs* director, Gurpreet Singh, and other members of a Sikh delegation presented a memorandum, addressed to Mr Sarkozy, to the French Ambassador in Delhi, Jerome Bonnafont. The Ambassador informed the Sikh delegation that the French government takes a serious view of the concerns of the Sikhs and he would raise with Mr Sarkozy the issues raised in the memorandum.

The memorandum forcefully stated that the Sikh turban is the most recognisable feature of a Sikh. Unlike other head coverings, it is an inextricable part

of the Sikh identity and is worn by Sikhs at all times to cover their unshorn hair, a mandatory article of their faith. As a part of the core identity of a Sikh, this law essentially has the effect of banning the practice of Sikh religion in France.

The meeting with the Ambassador was also attended by Paramjit Singh Sarna, President of the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC), Anoop Singh of the International Sikh Confederation and Sikh Samaj Sudhar chapters from all over the world. "Our mission is to transform underprivileged and minority communities and individuals into informed and vibrant members of society. We have been in the forefront of a legal campaign on behalf of French Sikhs, since France passed a law in 2004 banning the wearing of a turban in schools and on identification documents."

United Sikhs has argued in the French courts that the French ban is in violation of its treaty obligations under article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), on the right to manifest one's religion. Enclosed are legal arguments in one of the cases to be filed with the UN Human Rights Committee shortly.

Further, *United Sikhs* has argued in all courts that the Sikh turban poses no identification risk as a Sikh is recognisable only because of his turban and not without it. Further, the turban does not interfere with identification in today's age of biometric photos, as evidenced by the fact that French immigration does not prohibit a Sikh national from any other country who wears a turban on his passport photo.

The law banning religious signs in schools was passed to promote secularity. However, Sikhs do not proselytise; wearing the turban is an expression of a Sikh's identity and in no way threatens the secular space in French society.

Despite numerous promises in the past by various French officials and President Sarkozy's unambiguous statement, the policy in France has not changed towards Sikhs. "Instead, France's stance on this issue has, we believe, led other countries to follow suit by discriminating against turbaned Sikhs in airports and schools. It is our concern and belief that if this law is not repealed or acted against, it will lead to widespread abuses and discrimination against Sikhs and their right to practice their faith freely and openly worldwide."

The Right to Turban (RTT) Campaign

RTT was started by *United Sikhs* in December 2003 after France announced that a law would be passed banning religious symbols in schools. This resulted in Sikh children no longer being allowed to wear their turbans and other head coverings in schools. The law has had far-reaching consequences in various sectors of public and private education, employment and public life not only in France, but increasingly throughout the world. French Sikhs are also not allowed to wear a turban for their photos on identification documents. The legislation has had a snowball effect and Sikhs now face a growing challenge to their right to practise their faith across Europe – perhaps globally.



S. Gurdial Singh, Surjeet Kaur and Amanjeet Singh from Bobigny in France, at Le Meridien.

Almost 100 years after the start of the First World War in which turbaned Sikhs fought for the freedom of France and Europe, French Sikh schoolboys have started a battle for their right to practice their faith and their right to education. Teenagers Jasvir Singh, Bikramjit Singh, Ranjit Singh, Gurinder Singh, Jasmeet Singh and Maha Singh were expelled from school because they refused to remove their turban, mandated to wear by their religion, that has been banned in schools across France. All the boys consider themselves French Sikhs. They speak fluent French and fully participate in French life; they eat croissants, play football, listen to modern French music and dress in the latest trends. Yet their country seems to be asking them to abandon their faith.

The turban ban has not only been implemented in schools, 52-year old French national, Shingara Mann Singh, has not been able to obtain a replacement driving licence or renew his passport because he refuses to remove his turban for his ID photo.

Another victim of the turban ban, Ranjit Singh, is an elderly political refugee who has been living in France since 1991. He has not been able to renew his residence card because he refuses to remove his turban for his ID photo. As a result, his welfare benefits have been stopped and he has no right to any medical insurance. His failing health is now a cause for real concern.

There are a growing number of global cases on the right to wear a turban. For example, Sikh students are being expelled from schools in Belgium because of their refusal to remove their turban, even though there is no law banning it. Sikhs has also experienced the humiliation of being arbitrarily asked to remove their turbans during airport security checks.

United Sikhs has intervened to ensure that Sikhs do not suffer humiliation at airports and other security checkpoints. United Sikhs lawyers have filed cases on behalf of Shingara Singh and Ranjit Singh in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and the UN Human Rights Committee in New York. Cases will also be filed in these international courts on behalf of the expelled Sikh students in due course. "We need your help to support the freedom for thought, conscience and religion."

And yet... France desperate for defence and nuclear deals in India

The visit of the French President Nicholas Sarkozy in January 2008 took place in the backdrop of the cancelled \$ 1 billion agreement to purchase 197 light helicopters from Eurocopter, a part of European aerospace major, EADS. Prior to the visit, Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner was in Delhi just before Christmas, 2007 to meet Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and salvage his President's trip; there was to be no big ticker "deliverable" for the visit after, all. The day Kouchner arrived, a court in Delhi asked the CBI to conduct a preliminary inquiry to see if there were any improprieties in the Scorpene submarine deal, also signed with the French.

Traditionally, after Russia, France has been the biggest arms supplier to India with sales touching



Sikh officers and men with one of the first tanks in history, seen on a battlefield in France, 1917.

nearly four billion Euros in 2005. India, however, has not yet accepted France's 1.5 billion Euro offer to upgrade 52 Mirage 2000 fighters the \$40 million price tag being too expensive. India is the biggest weapons buyer among emerging nations and is tipped to spend \$30 billion between 2007 and 2012.

The French are also interested in investing in India's nuclear energy sector, but are waiting for India to sign the required pact with the IAEA. Kouchner used his visit to say that France was "in favour of initialling a sort of strategic agreement". France is the only country in the world with 90 per cent of its total energy requirements serviced by nuclear power. After calling on the Prime Minister, Kouchner told journalists in context of the cancelled helicopter deal, "This is trade behaviour, international bidding we are used to. This is just an episode... this is not the end of the world".

Clearly, France is looking at the Indian defence and nuclear sector with more than interest.

A lot needs to be done if the two countries are yet to become significant trade partners and if the defence relationship from the Mirage-sale days needs to be revived. Though bilateral trade has more than doubled in the past three years and stood at \$6.23 billion in 2007-2007, it is woefully short of India's bilateral trade with China and the US which is nearing the \$40 billion mark in each case. Besides, there are questions of cultural rights in context of the Sikh-turban issue that need to be addressed. A bilateral relationship cannot be seen through a narrow prism.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is soon to visit France. Hopefully, the visit will have more to say for it than the French President's visit earlier in 2008.



The Sikh Identity and the Virtual State

In his Foreword to the book *BEYOND IDENTITY* by Preminder Singh Sandhawalia, the former Queen's Counsel Justice Mota Singh in the UK opines that: Books are written with a twofold object – to entertain and to inform. Books of fiction with Sikhs as central characters are uncommon with the result that a majority of the huge book-reading public is denied the change of learning who the Sikhs are, how they live and what issues concern them and their existence. We now have a book that fills this gap. This novel starts with a young college student in Punjab and then traces the trajectory of his life over the next 33 years, through travels in foreign lands with a false identity, to spectacular rise and prosperity, then to tragedy and denouement and a return in disguise to poverty in Punjab. That is the story. But this is a serious book about Sikh identity and the Sikh quest for a homeland quest and it is on these matters that I will focus upon.

The philosopher Bertrand Russell's prolific writings on religion, politics and morals always stimulated interest, often to his own detriment. He often expressed what he regarded as absurdities of religion. He was once asked what he would say to God when he came face to face with him. "I would say," he replied, "Why did you give so little evidence of your existence?!" But he said this about the Sikh

religion : "If some lucky men survive the onslaught of a third world war of atomic and hydrogen bombs, then the Sikh religion will be the only means of guiding them." Russell was asked if the implication of his statement was that the Sikh religion was a third world war, he replied, "No. It has the capability, but the Sikhs have not brought out, in broad daylight the splendid doctrines of their religion which has come into existence for the benefit of entire mankind. That is their greatest sin and the Sikhs cannot be freed of it!"

The Sikh religion, the fifth largest world faith is revealed religion and not an offshoot of one faith or a syncretic blend of different and often conflicting faiths. Along with Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is a monotheistic religion. All monotheistic religions believe that man is made in the image of God. They speak of the oneness of God and plurality of men. The challenge before us is to see God's image in one who is not in our image. Attacking another's identity, for whatever reason (whether with a view to compelling its surrender in favour of another or simply to discredit it) is not a new phenomenon; it has been known throughout history. The most telling example of this was in India during the period of the Mughal Empire, when the adherents of the ruling minority religion considered it their divine obligation to convert to their religion non-Muslims, who constituted the majority of the population, whose

religion was different. Recent examples of attempts to destroy the identity of others-ethnic cleansing, as it has been referred to-are to be found in countries in Eastern Europe such as Bosnia and the Middle East. Even more recent example can be said to be found in India where, according to Amartya Sen, “political activists prefer to dwell on inter-religious confrontations, rather than on the traditions of peaceful presence of different faiths, side by side. The Hindutava movement has had a strong effect on recent political developments in India, and has added very substantially to the politics of sectarianism.”

Sikhism began, and continues to this day, as a protest against empires and imperialism. Imperialism is an attempt to impose one’s truth, one’s culture, one’s way of doing things on others. Sikhism came into the world to protest against that. Sikhism is God’s protest against empires. God says, no people are entitled to force their beliefs on any other people. “Down here, in the world that I made, there are many cultures, many faiths, many civilisations – each of which was made by Me, each of which therefore has its own integrity, its own gifts to humanity, its own contribution to make its own voice, its own language, and its own character. It wants to communicate that truth of the world.” Sikhism is the truth of the unity of God, but the diversity of mankind.

Religious leaders make wonderful speeches; they say the same thing: “Peace is great, but our religion believes in peace. Therefore, all you have to do is become like us.” But they do not seem to understand that that is not the solution. That is the problem. “Talk about the dignity of difference,” says Sir Jonathan Sacks, the Chief Rabbi, “because peace is what we make with people who aren’t like us, who never will be like us, and have no reason to be like us. Too much of human history has been written in the blood of human victims who, because they were not like ‘them’, who didn’t live like ‘them’, who didn’t share ‘their’ faith, were regarded by ‘them’ as the infidels, the unredeemed. Never before have we needed to realise that we will only preserve our natural environment if we respect bio-diversity. And we will only preserve our human environment if we respect religious and cultural diversity. I know only of one idea of adequate to such a world: the idea that emphasises both our shared humanity as one family under the parenthood of God, and the dignity of difference because every one of us and every culture and every faith is different and equally a way of God.”

This book is about identity. Now, there have been many assaults on Sikh identity – some with

the avowed intention of wiping it out altogether. The vital issue of Sikh identity and its preservation has exercised the minds of many Sikhs, scholars and others for a long time. Some important questions spring to mind. What do we mean by Sikh identity? What is Sikh identity? How do we define it? Does the definition accord with the common perception?

What is the common perception about it? Is it that the Sikh identity is inextricably bound up with and governed by Guru Gobind Singh ji’s prescription, identified by the 5 Ks-unshorn hair, a comb, a kara, specific shorts and a kirpan? If so, there is another perception, among some Sikhs, some very learned Sikhs: they question whether Guru Gobind Singh’s prescription only applies to those Sikhs who choose to become Amritdhari. Because there is no such thing as ex-communication from the community in the Sikh religion, hundreds and thousands of those born in Sikh families go about, proclaiming to be Sikhs, even those with shorn hair or trimmed beards. This view would seem to receive some support from the definition of a Sikh given in the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC) *Rehat Maryada* (Code of Conduct) which defines a Sikh “any woman or man who believes in one Almighty God, in the Ten Gurus from Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji to Sri Guru Gobind Singh, in the Guru Granth Sahib and the Guru Sahibans Bani and teachings, has faith in Dasmeshji’s Amrit and accepts no other religion.” The expression “has faith in Amrit is clearly ambiguous. The definition would seem to suggest that only one who has been initiated into the Khalsa Panth (in other words, an Amritdhari Sikh) is a Sikh. If so, it clearly excludes others, some referred to as ‘Sehajdhari Sikhs,’ who believe in One God, the Guru Granth Sahib and in the Ten Gurus and have no other religion. Then, there are the Keshdhari Sikhs who, in addition to answering the description of a Sehajdhari Sikh, habitually adopt either all or some of the five symbols of an Amritdhari Sikh. An Amritdhari Sikh is one who, in addition to answering the description of a Keshdhari Sikh, has taken Amrit, is able to read and write Gurmukhi, and is able to recite from the daily prayers. It is a sad fact that Sehajdhari Sikhs or those who have, by choice, discarded their hair and their beards, account for a large number of the Sikhs both in and outside the Punjab. By the SGPC definition they would cease to be Sikhs even though they may hold the beliefs and/or are visibly Sikhs.

Whatever view one may take, for the purpose of this Foreword and so as not to disenfranchise millions of Sikhs, I am prepared to accept that any woman or man who believes in one Almighty God, in the Ten Gurus from Sri Guru Nanak Devji to Sri Guru Gobind

Singh ji, in the Guru Granth Sahib and the Guru Sahiban's Bani and teachings and accepts no other religion, is a Sikh. I say this because during the last century Sikhs have taken their faith almost to the ends of the earth.

If you were to ask the man in the street to define a world religion he would probably think immediately of size and distribution. Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism meet these criteria so they are world religions. But what about Judaism? Yes, the man in the street would say, Judaism is a world religion. Its range of distribution cannot be denied. There are Jews in every continent and in most countries – yet, Judaism is a small religion numerically. However they would probably say, the influence of Judaism, its contribution to human development gives it a place among the great religions. Sikhism belongs to the world. And it has the ability to transcend cultural constraints and to respond positively to the challenges and demons of the 21st Century. Yes, it has that ability; it is up to the Sikhs to determine whether it will. Guru Nanak was commissioned to reawaken humanity in the Kalyug to the truth, which is God. His target was the whole of humanity, rich or poor, Brahmin or untouchable, Hindu or Muslim, man or woman. His purpose was to replace the religiosity of his day—a ritualism which seemed to him to lead nowhere – with something which offered eternal hope of giving access to God's grace.

It is often said that nations are usually, but not always, associated with politically determined geographic boundaries. That is not necessarily so when one realises that the Jewish nation existed in the Diaspora for almost 2000 years. We see, do we not, that people who constitute a nation are bound together less by geography and arbitrarily-drawn lines in the sand and more by a shared history, a heritage and common ethos. They cannot be successfully bound together as a nation without a shared memory and values. Language, culture and religion often but not always provide the common bonds that construct nations. Europe, for instance, is many nations that share large eras of history. There are different languages but culture, religions and values cut a wide swath across the continent. Religion alone cannot hold a nation together. We find most European nations moving towards a common fiscal unit, the Euro, while still maintaining their political independence and individual entities.

Guru Gobind Singh ji described Sikhs as a QAUM. The word Qaum is sui generic; it has no apt equivalent in the English language. It was time the word found a

place in the dictionary. Sikhs have created an identity for themselves through their shared dreams of justice, dignity and human rights. It is a powerful testimony to the amazing silence of the Sikhs who have, through the ages, earned a unique place in history. Sikhism is a source of comfort and reassurance to me and gives me a sense of belonging to a proud and vibrant community. To be a Sikh is to inherit a faith from those who came before us to live it and to have it over to those who will come after us. To be a Sikh is to be a link in the chain of the generations of Sikhs. Sikhs do not become Sikhs; they are Sikhs by birth, Sikh identity then is not only a faith, but a fact. It is not an identity as self evident, given at birth, in fact, not a decision. We have not chosen it, it has chosen us. Sikhism depends for its very existence on the willingness of successive generations to have over their faith and way of life to their children, and on the loyalty of children to the heritage of their past.

This book is I have said, is about identity, Sikh identity. The author refers to this identity, forged over centuries, as "an amalgam of religion, language, culture, customs, symbols, traditions and legends unique to Sikhs. An identity into which generations of Sikhs are born. This identity is there – palpable, real and visible. If we have respect for it and pride in it, we will retain it. Otherwise we will abandon it and assimilate." Although this book is a work of fiction, the author adroitly uses different characters to articulate different crucial issues and raises a serious concept – the concept of a Virtual State. Is it necessary for Sikhism to flourish for Sikhs to have an autonomous, geographical area? Is that what our Gurus envisaged? And in answering such questions, the author may be said to be challenging some cherished beliefs. For that reason, and that reason alone, the book may attract a certain amount of criticism. But the author is well able to handle the subject and he does so with tact as well as with discretion. He regards this as a "strategy for ensuring that the Sikh identity prevails the world over. So much has changed because of, among other things, the effects of globalisation, that the earlier concept about a specific small geographical area somewhere on this globe to be called the Sikh State has been overtaken by events and needs a major re-think..." I have little doubt that the author does so with a view to starting a debate on the subject. The concept, exceptional but not unique, is based on the conviction that a catholic religion such as the Sikh religion, which came into being for the benefit of whole mankind, cannot be confined within artificially drawn boundaries. Though not a proselytising religion, the teachings of Sikhism are of

universal application – non-exclusive, non-spatial and non-territorial, in the author's words.

The author expresses the belief that “for the Sikhs to prevail the world over, they need to set-up that which can expand through transition and changes. They should have their own virtual State core that can function in any and all systems that may come up. I base this Virtual State on the belief that technological advances will continue. Advances in transportation, communications, information technology and currency movements will make it easier for a globally dispersed people like the Sikhs to be one. Lack of contiguous territory will not longer be a factor. It will be alleviated by instant communications, video conferencing and quick transportation. The Sikhs in Punjab, Canada, USA, UK, Australia and even the South Pacific will be one united people in the Sikh Virtual State in which the focus will be not on market or trade but on humankind.”

How will the concept of Virtual State work? The Sikh State, he says, “will exist in a political system of Concentric Circles. The outer circle will be the United Nations Organisation. The next circle will be the Regional Union of States of which the nation-state is a member. The penultimate circle will be the sovereign nation-state itself in which the Sikhs reside all over the world. The fourth, innermost circle, is the SVS territory in every nation-state. You will note that my concentric circles do not intersect, thereby avoiding all conflicts, all friction points and all confusions. The outer circle represents an idea that we all have to behave as responsible world citizens with standards of acceptable behaviours that are embedded in world culture. Issues that transcend state sovereignty like Human Rights, environment, population, women rights, global engineering standards, international aviation regulations and similar items need discussions at the United Nations. The next circle of Regional Union of states is a purely voluntary membership-based group of nations that seeks jointly to improve their economies or ensure their supplies or widen their export markets and can, therefore, have no conflicting points. The Nation-State itself is sovereign in the model that it has adopted. This brings us to the smallest core concentric circle, the SVS circle. Since this circle is concentric it does not and cannot intersect the nation-state circle. In practical terms this means that it does not supplant any of the always of the regimes ruling the different geographic areas in which Sikhs reside. The SVS functions within the boundaries of the concentric circle of the nation-state enclosing it.”

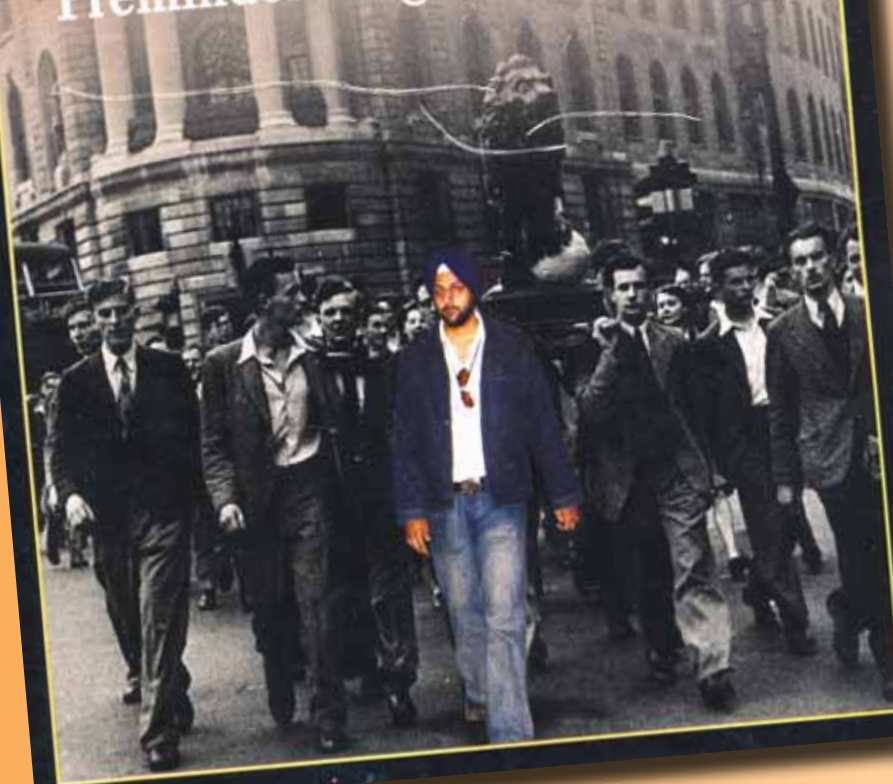
The author concludes that “the SVS will protect the cultural identity of the Sikh Qaum, it will seek to look after the welfare of its people and it will attempt to maximise their developmental opportunities. It will also be charged with the responsibility of ensuring that all Sikhs must be patriotic, law-abiding contributors to national prosperity and accepted as model citizens of the Nation-States in which they reside. To achieve these objectives it will have to co-ordinate with all Sikhs centres of influence the world over, the societies, the think-tanks, the charities, the Gurdwaras and the various other groups that at times talk at cross purposes. SVS will have to concentrate on education, career development, entrepreneurship, role models, political lobby strength, demographic issues and various such measures to improve the well-being of the community and its international image. Encouraging media ownership and media even participations will also be a function. It will be active in managing the effects of new technologies and use e-education, e-commerce and e-governance to look after the interests of the Sikhs. The SVS core circle in every nation-state will be the single-window reference point for all Sikh issues in that nation-state and the globally interlinked network of these SVS core circles will constitute the Sikh Virtual State.”

This not an easy subject to tackle. Only a person imbued with love for his community could undertake the task. That person is the author. His credentials and his background are impeccable. He is well qualified by his background and experience to tackle the subject. He traces his ancestry back to the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh where the Sandhawalias were prominent. He is within his rights to take the view that such a catholic religion does not need to be confined within artificially drawn boundaries. Sikhs are to be found in all part of the world; they have taken their religion with them. This book is the author's vision statement for the Sikh people, looking for into the future. The book may raise some eyebrows, but it calls for serious debate. It is an imaginative, futuristic and provocative book. It will set people thinking. We may always agree with his vision and work on the details, or we may disagree with it and think of alternatives. But we should not ignore it.

Sikhism stands at the cross-roads. It has to make up its mind which way it will go. It is the one world religion that, as Bertrand Russell said, has the ability to guide mankind. That is the call that beckons us.

BEYOND IDENTITY

Preminder Singh Sandhawalia



The book **Beyond Identity** expertly weaves the two strands of love and identity across three continents over fifty years from 1982 to 2032.

As a work of fiction it explores various aspects of Ranjit Singh's identity. In 1982 he is a young student in a small town college in the Punjab. Law-abiding and serious, his ambition is to join the Civil Service and serve his country. He is also in love with his beautiful college-mate, Amrita. However, then militancy in Punjab and the disturbances in Delhi in 1984 cause him considerable suffering not for what he does but because of who he is. To survive, he flees to the UK with a false passport and identity to become Ravinder Singh. In London he has a good life and a prospering career, but an ever-present dread of discovery of his identity change. He is repulsed by terrorism in 2004 when his Jewish wife dies in a suicide bomber's attack in Israel. He relocates once again. A new continent and a new life reunites him with the long-lost Amrita. But he is no longer Ranjit, he is now Ravinder. She is still Amrita but not the small town girl from Punjab. She is now a sophisticated, westernised Canadian career woman. With his old flame rekindled, Ravinder pursues her, offers marriage, but is rejected. When his false identity is exposed in his work-place he is dismissed and returns to his village in Punjab in some disgrace.

The backdrop to the above storyline is the role of a minority in the nation-state which is a democratic political system deriving its legitimacy through the principle of majority rule. Minorities can exist anywhere at any time in history, like the

Christians in China, the Hindus in Pakistan and the Muslims in UK. Should they assimilate or should they seek recognition?

The author uses the Sikh minority as a case study before extending his thesis to the other minorities like the Armenians, the Kurds, the Karens and the Magyars. He argues that there is a resurgence of the core or primordial identity because far more important than the person's own view of his identity or his own choice out of the multiple identifies which he can juggle, is the identity that others assign him. Examples abound in how the Muslims viewed the Hindus in 1947, or the Hindus viewed the Sikhs in 1984 or how the Israelis view the Palestinians today. Since the minority cannot escape its core identity, it has no choice but to seek recognition for what it is. The author's case is that the best way to do this is for the minority to have pride in its image, secure worldwide acceptance for its character, capabilities, diligence and vigour, while its members continue to be model citizens of the nation-state in which they reside.

Having argued against assimilation, which for reasons of colour, accent, rituals and history, he considers an exercise in self-deception, the author lays out a vision for a virtual state set-up that every diasporic minority can adopt. In this option the minority can administer itself through a globally inter-linked network of community units to protect its interest and also safe-guard it against becoming a pawn in political manoeuvres by the majority or other competing groups. The author feels that violent struggles by minorities against real or perceived discrimination will cease with the adoption of the Virtual State model by them and by the acceptance of the concept of Diversity by the majorities. There will then be peace on earth.

Author's Profile

Preminder Singh Sandhawalia secured an Honours degree in Engineering, worked in the Government of India and on the Board of the Airports Authority of India before joining the International Civil Aviation Organisation of the United Nations in 1984. He retired



to settle in Chandigarh in 1997. He traces his ancestry back to the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his first book, published in 1999 is a family history titled *Noblemen and Kinsmen*.

This new book *Beyond Identity* moves beyond family to the community. It is a book about the Sikh people in Punjab and in the Diaspora. The trauma of the 1980s is examined to see the direction that the community must now take to ensure that it continues to prevail world-wide and not face dissolution or assimilation due to an absence of vision.

Sandhawalia is proud of his lineage and feels strongly that if a people have pride in their identity they will prevail, otherwise they will assimilate. His vision for his people is to inculcate this pride by eulogising the role models they had, by extolling the role models they have and by developing a whole new lot of role models by the pursuit of excellence. Their community will then, even as a minority have a positive image and secure world-wide acceptance.

The uniqueness of *Beyond Identity* is that as a popular book of fiction, it attempts to layout a totally original path that the Sikh community should follow in the years to come to be recognised as a model people. Based on the author's extensive travels as an international civil servant, *Beyond Identity* is a global vision statement. It is a flexible concept that can be modified, adapted and refined in the coming years to conform to different situations at different times.

An Interview

What led you to write *Beyond Identity*?

I wanted to write a popular book about the Sikhs so that the vast book-reading public can know who the Sikhs are, how they live, their successes and their problems. The way Pahmuk has made the Turks better known or Achebe writes about the Nigerians or Grass about the Germans.

But there is already a lot of written material about the Sikhs.

Yes, mainly in two categories: Non-fiction by historians and serious articles by academics for other academics who read journals. I want others to pick out a book at random from the shelves like I do, and read about the Sikhs like I read in fiction about the Europeans or the Americans.

But Beyond Identity is not just a story about the life, loves and confusion of a Sikh as he travels from one place to another, it reads like a serious book about the Sikh identity.

Even works of fiction have to be etched across specific backdrops. They must have dates, locations and events across which the characters move. I have used the Sikh community's concerns about its identity as the backdrop.

One gets the impression in the latter half of the book of 'tail wagging the dog', the backdrop dominating the story.

That can only be at places where my passion about the issues overcomes my telling of the story. But I did want to write about some topics that often get brushed under the carpet. I wanted to discuss core or primordial identity versus multiple identities, politics of recognition versus politics of homeland and the position of a minority in a democratic nation-state that derives its legitimacy from the principle of majority rule.

You cover a fifty year period from 1982 to 2032. What gives you the confidence to peer into the future in these uncertain times of rapid change?

A people must have a vision. The more uncertain the times, the more necessary it is to have a goal and a strategy. My book defines the goal in 2015 and has another 17 years modifying, adapting and fine-tuning the actual implementation.

Basically is your book about Sikh identity?

The book has a story and an idea. The storyline is about something that has fascinated me. How we are at times swept away by 'tides in the affairs of men' and cast as flotsam on some distant beach. So my hero is subject to sufferings, not for what he does but because of who is. His identity. The idea is that a minority should have pride in its identity.



Steps into the future.

I have used the Sikh minority as a case study and extended the concept to other minorities. For a minority it is necessary to secure recognition for its capabilities, character, diligence and behaviour and model citizens. It should also administer itself effectively to counter unwarranted politicisation. If it does not do this it may end up like a community that just faded away. Professor Kohtari's lament is that since the Sindhis did not pass on a legacy of pride in Sindhihood to the next generation, they "paid a heavy price for their assimilation. They have not only cast off their language, modified their clothes and food habits, but have also lost a very integral feature of their history their syncretism.

You haven't mentioned the Virtual State theory in your idea.

The current world order and the United Nations Organisation are based on the Westphalian concept of sovereign nation-states. In this set-up there are many groups who claim historical and political legitimacy to have their own separate state, and failing to secure one continue to agitate for it. These agitations have a potential to disturb world peace. The new trends of quick transportation, instant communication, rapid capital flows, worldwide trading and massive intermingling of people, give us a mechanism to solve this problem. The people can now have their own Virtual State in the political system of Concentric Circles which I have suggested in the book.

Will your idea work?

I have focussed on the minority to prevent it from either resorting to violent struggle or going the way described by Professor Kothari. The other side of the coin is the majority. My idea will work if the majority in the nation-state embraces the concept of Diversity. But don't forget the story!

An identity crisis?



Not really! At the international level, Sikhs have a very good image. Recently, when the Hyde Act, 2006 was signed in the USA, one red-turbaned Sikh gentleman was witness at the ceremony. Dr Manmohan Singh and President George Bush signed an historic agreement in July 2005. Dr Manmohan Singh, perhaps the most qualified Prime Minister ever, represents more than one billion people of the Republic of India.

Guru Nanak says, *Sachhe marg chaldian ustad kare jahan* – “the followers of the true path earn the praise of the whole world”.

A Sikh scholar, Surinder Singh Matharoo has recently been appointed Professor of Sikh Musicology in the Thames University of London. He will teach the various ragas of the Sikh scripture to foreign students, not necessarily Sikhs. Indeed, he is spreading the message of love as preached far and wide by Guru Nanak. There are numerous other such examples.

At the national level, we have Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission. He thinks of infrastructure, health care and education for all with no reservations, nor any bias nor prejudices. Then, there was General JJ Singh recently retired from Service as Chief of the Army Staff.

So, where is the crisis?

However, I find the Sikh psyche in Punjab brutally bruised because of their own actions which run contrary to Sikh values which seek a life of peace for everybody.

I am reminded of a story. Once Guru Nanak accompanied by Mardana, a Muslim, visited a village. The villagers spoke harsh words to Guru Nanak but he blessed them saying “Be happy and stay here”. The Guru moved on to another village. The villagers served food and listened to his hymn. Guru Nanak blessed them saying “Be dispersed”!

“Why do you wish them to leave their hearth and home?” asked Mardana. Guru Nanak replied, “These folk will carry goodness and love where ever they go”.

A Sikh, following this tradition, creates an environment of love, works hard and shares the fruits of hard labour wherever he goes. Think of the Sikhs living in India or abroad. They have, indeed, created a fine image of the Sikh way of life. For instance, in the of the hill-state of Uttrakhand, Sikhs have converted barren land into fertile tracts through immense hard work and brought prosperity to the people of that area. In MP and Gujarat, Sikhs are doing exceedingly well in industry and providing gainful employment to many local people.

Many Sikhs occupy high positions in foreign countries. For example, Ujjal Singh Dosanj is the Prime Minister of a Canadian province. He has identified himself with the aspirations of the country in which he has settled. Harbhajan Singh Yogi established the credible Akal Security in America. Amrit Singh, the youngest daughter of Indian PM, Dr Manmohan Singh, is a staff attorney at the American Civil Liberties Union. She is well known for her investigations of the alleged torture in American prisons in Iraq, and other countries.

Let us look into the historical events which influenced the Sikh psyche to understand the nature of crisis if any. Guru Tegh Bahadur says that unless one introspects truly, one can not dispel illusions: *bin appa cheeney, mitte na bharm ki kai*.

Sikhs have faced hostilities since their very inception, but they have always stood for truth, equity and honour. The empire but did not survive for variety of reasons. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was not really a saint-soldier. It appears that he was soldier first and last. Sikh values were not cultivated widely. Treachery reigned supreme among his courtiers. They never understood humility, the basic philosophy of Sikh Panth. Guru Nanak says *man ka sootak lobh hai, jiva ka sootak, kur*. ‘the pollution of mind is greed; that of tongue is falsehood’. In other words, greed of material things, pride or power, wealth leads one astray from truthful life.

With the death of Ranjit Singh the 40-year glory of the Sikh Raj was gone. The 19th century was indeed a difficult time for Sikhs, yet the Sikhs gained everywhere.

Five events of 20th century are important which display the changing image of peaceful Sikhs to that of them brandishing swords. The sword is a weapon of war, ordained to be used sparingly and that too for self defence. Once Guru Nanak was asked who is great, Hindu or Muslim? He replied both will weep unless they have good actions: *Shubh amlan bajhon, donon royee.*

☆ Gurdwara Act 1925: A peaceful Morcha, the non-violent protest liberated Gurdwaras from the clutches of Mahants who wielded political and gun power. Consequently the Shiromani Prabandhak Gurdwara Committee (SGPC) was established to administer these historical Gurdwaras in accordance with Sikh principles.

Sadly it appears now that the SGPC which dabbles in state politics has lost its focus and is no longer a guiding star for the Sikhs. Elections are fought for the control of a vast treasury that come by way of money offerings and property. Huge offerings by devotees are used for pomp and show. Irrational superstitions are common. For example, a board hung on a gurdwara wall announces "the wish of begetting a son is fulfilled here." Rituals, the bane of Sikh life, are glorified and being practiced.

☆ "Independence Act," 1947: should actually be called Partition Act! The Punjab, the land of five rivers was torn asunder. The Sikhs suffered terribly, had to migrate to India leaving behind fertile land and flourishing business. Emotionally, heart of the Sikh nation remains in what is now Pakistan – the birth place of Guru Nanak at Nankana Sahib.

This partition left a scar on the mind of Punjabis, especially Sikhs. The harmony of the Punjab was badly disturbed. However, the Sikhs which then settled in different parts of India, re-emerged as a hard working community and achieved distinction in many fields especially in the armed forces. The name of General Jagjit Singh Aurora, the warrior Sikh, is a legend. Ninety thousand soldiers surrendered to him on the Eastern Front. Another legend is General Harbaksh Singh but for whom Pakistani tanks would have run over most of north India!

☆ PEPSU Merger Act, 1956: The Patiala and East Punjab States Union was merged to form the Punjab. Many Hindus almost immediately after 1947 disowned

the Punjabi language as their mother tongue. The recruitment in military on the basis of population was an unfortunate decision. There were few incentives for entrepreneurs to set up industry in Punjab to employ the youth gainfully. Farming became less profitable. This led to restiveness among Sikhs in the Punjab. There was an increased division between urban Hindus and rural Sikhs.

☆ Re-organisation Act, 1966: The Punjab was truncated three states: Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and the Punjab on the basis of language. Chandigarh, was built in lieu of Lahore as the new capital of the Punjab but now has to be shared with Haryana. Division of water resources remains another major issue.

There began a conflict of interest between the two majority communities in the Punjab: Hindu and Sikh. Punjabi culture the cementing factor for generations lost its flavour. Rivalry in politics spelt havoc for the Punjab. The Anandpur Resolution widened the divide. A doubt on the patriotism of Sikhs come up, although the sacrifices of Sikhs for the freedom of India remains unparalleled in history. Bhagat Singh is an enduring legend in India's freedom movement.

☆ The Akal Takhat was attacked in 1984 by Indian armed forces. Sikh youth were dubbed as 'militants'. The alleged militants were hiding in the Golden Temple premises. It is unfortunate that some extremist Sikhs stored weapons in the premises of the Golden Temple, an abode of peace, calmness and love. The spirit of seeking truth, being tolerant to differences in opinion, and free discussion of issues, inherent in Sikh philosophy seemed to have taken flight.

The holy of holies was assaulted and thousands of innocent people were butchered.

☆ Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India was assassinated by a Sikh, her security guard who could hardly realise the consequences of his action. Terror was then let loose on Sikhs throughout India.

Giani Zail Singh, a Sikh, was at that time the elected President of the Republic of India. He saved himself from the wrath of the Akal Takht but could not calm wounded sensibilities of the community.

The Sikh psyche was immensely injured. A section of Sikhs in Punjab harboured extremist tendencies – a root cause of alienation of Sikhs from the mainstream.

The Sikhs need to appreciate the voice of Guru Arjan Dev when he being was tortured to death,



The symbolic key to Gobindgarh Fort at Amritsar, being presented by GOC 15th Infantry Division to Amarinder Singh, CM of the Punjab and Dr. Manmohan Singh, PM of India.

ulahano mein kahu na deeo, man meeth tuhara keeo. 'I do not blame any body. I have simply pleased you, O God.' He accepted the will of God. That was the spirit of forgiveness which uplifted Sikhs in times of turmoil. The liberal Sikhs who had firm belief in Sikh tenets emerged from the ruins of Punjab. Yet they face new challenges in consequence:

- The apostasy of Sikh youth is a matter of concern. It appears there is lack of awareness of Gurbani among the Sikh masses.
- The neglect of Nanak Panthis: there are tribal Sikhs who have faith in Guru Nanak but are socially, educationally and economically very backward.
- Dasam Granth: Who is the author of this Granth? Which contents stand the test of Gurbani? What is its status vis-à-vis Guru Granth Sahib?
- Mushrooming growth of deras which continue to spread falsehood in the name of Sikhism.

In view of these challenges, we need to consider a programme that can soothe the injured psyche of Sikhs. Guru Gobind says *saach kahon sun leho sabhe jin prem keyo tin he prabh paayo*: "I tell the truth, hark ye all, those who love one another shall find God."

We need to deliberate on the following issues seriously. I pray that Waheguru grants us strength to follow the path of righteousness, tolerance and love:

- Translation of Guru Granth: Parrot-like reading does not make sense. It becomes a ritual.
- Absence of Research and Education on Sikh Philosophy: The Sikh priests are not adequately qualified to interpret the Gurbani in its true spirit of *ek pita, eks ke ham balak* in its widest sense. "We have one father God, we are all His children."
- Setting up educational institutions and Health Centres of excellence.
- The continuing menace of Deras.
- Status of Akal Takht: It seems not a binding force. *Hukam namas* get issued for minor issues. Consequently, battle lines are drawn between contrarians.

Guru Hargobind wished Akal Takhat to be the seat of power. Power not that of gold, nor that of sword but that of love. Good men can win hearts by actions only. But then their actions and words must match. To spread this message of love we need to work with firm faith to resolve the conflicts of life. Youth who understand bani meaningfully and who for truth and honour's sake stand fast, can achieve miracles, of course, only by peaceful means.

Surjeet Singh

[From: *The Sikh Way of Life*, published by Sanbun Publishers]

The Sikhpoint Calendar : Into the Future, with Faith

The Sikhpoint calendar has steadily morphed into the face of Sikh Art. Nishaan readers now get to know the man behind this face - Bicky Singh - a "doer and mover, in the fullest sense of these American terms," who is colourful as the turbans he sports, "generous to a fault," and both a little amazed and extremely humbled at the effect of his labour of love.

"I at Sri Akal, this is Bicky -" pleasant, matter-of-fact and no frills, that was my first impression. It didn't take him long to get to the subject at hand, "There are three things that people are attracted to - food, music and art. Art is a great icebreaker; someone says, 'I love this painting,' and you have a chance to tell him or her a bit about yourself, your faith, your history and your community."

Bicky is the founder of sikhpoint.com, a popular Sikh website, which can be summed up as Bicky's base for all his seva. Born in Agra, Bicky did his schooling in Delhi and moved to the USA in the early 1980s, and worked through the PC boom. Today he is President and CEO of Future Computing Solutions Inc. and SecureMart.com in Yorba Linda, California. Here is his home with wife Gurpreet and their three children Anupreet, Manveena, Gurveer. Besides being a prominent collector of Sikh art and coinage, Bicky is popular for his colorful turbans. Rumour has it, he owns over 500 coordinating ties and turbans. [see Nishaan IV-2007]

As much as the written or spoken word, art too is an interpretation of religion and spirituality - it expresses a viewpoint. May be, because *Sikhie* shuns religious imagery we tend to ignore this form of expression. However, in the last few years, we have been making



Bicky Singh proudly displays the 2007 calendar.

a conscious effort to explore and rediscover our artistic background and aesthetic roots as a people. Film festivals, galas, auctions, art exhibitions are the proof. "People shy away from a direct approach to religion; they usually perceive it as propaganda. With art half your battle is won because it appeals to one's aesthetic sense - you don't have to get the next person interested, he already is," points out Bicky.

In the 1980's when Bicky had just moved to America, he would keep a look out for Sikh Art in galleries and museums. However, there was nothing much to talk about in those days. Now, all major museums in the USA and Canada receive the calendar. This means approximately 450 calendars are distributed free to these institutions each year. Says Bicky, "You see a lot more of Sikh art - contemporary as well as historical - in galleries and museums nowadays than what was available even just a decade ago. Plus, the calendars become a reference point for them - they know what Sikh Art is, separate and not to be confused with Hindu, Pahari or South Asian Art. To forge and maintain their identity has been a constant Sikh struggle and it is no different where art is concerned."

The Sikhpoint calendar is best described as a platform and paintings are but one facet of this calendar series. The calendars are informative, interesting, with concrete themes that enhance a different aspect of

Sikhism each year. Why calendars? "They are practical, useful, an everyday item of use that has a life-span of at least 12 months. Plus calendars are hung everywhere - homes, offices, Gurdwaras, schools. It may be perceived as an informative tool for kids and adults alike. Once the year is over, a lot of people frame the pictures as well," Bicky proudly adds. "People keep track of the calendar; I've had people send me emails stating that they have moved and they would like the calendar delivered to their new address. This to me is amazing; usually people do that only with their banks and utilities."

Bicky will send the calendar without charge to anyone, anywhere in the world. All you have to do is ask and pay the required shipping charges. "There's a lot that goes into it and I don't want them languishing outside a *Gurudwara*," says Bicky.

The quality of paper and ink used is top class, the layouts, exquisite. What started off rather stereotypically in 2000 with photo/paintings of the Gurus then moved on to showcase different Sikh artistes for a few years. In 2007 Bicky tied up with renowned artist K.P. Singh and came out with an 'Inter-faith' calendar.

K.P. Singh's fine pen and ink drawings set against muted tones were a drastic change visually from the colour fest of artists Arpana Caur (2006) and the Singh Twins, Amrit and Rabindra, (2005) The 2005 and 2006 calendars encased the life, soul and spirit of the respective artists. In comparison K.P. Singh's drawings of various religious architectural landmarks were often accompanied a brief script and history. "Sikhism is the fifth largest religion in the world, yet most people from other faiths remain unaware of it for most part. It is only when you can relate to another religion from your spiritual point of view do you want to learn more about it. I think we have definitely taken a step towards fulfilling this goal," says K.P. Singh.

The 2008 calendar moves yet one step forward. Designed and conceptualised by the Singh Twins, it combines together both Sikh art and history in a uniquely prosaic fashion, bringing alive the tone of the British Raj. The images are sourced from the Twins' archive collection, comprising printed memorabilia relating to the Sikh community dating from the early 1800s to 1935. "In putting the calendar together we bore several things in mind. Firstly, we wanted to select 12 images that would enable us to give a chronological overview of different aspects of the Sikh community - its religion, history, achievements and art."

"Secondly, since we knew that the calendar would be sent to many non-Sikhs we were keen that it should relate to them as well as to the *sangat*. So, we decided to choose images that focused significantly on aspects of shared heritage between the Sikhs and the western world," explain the Singh Twins.

"Lastly, since one of the main objectives of the Sikhpoint calendar is to inform the wider community about the Sikh community, through the arts, we were keen make the most of the opportunity to do this. So, we wanted the explanatory texts accompanying the images to be as important as the images themselves - and we think that this approach is quite different from your average calendar which normally just has 'pretty pictures' and maybe the usual highlighted festival dates and holidays etc. We also thought that if we designed the calendar this way - i.e. as a mini book - it may have a longer life span and use beyond the year for which it was produced".

"In design terms, we had in mind to create an antique manuscript feel to the calendar that would compliment the style and period of the images whilst at the same time presenting a very modern and stylish look. We added decorative bands and borders extracted from our own art to represent our personal aesthetic and taste for the ornate and to retain something of the style for which we are known as visual artists," the Twins add.

Bicky is currently trying to run a re-print of 10,000 copies of the 2008 edition - proof of how popular the calendar has become. So, what is the secret of Bicky's success?

Says his friend T.Sher Singh, who is on the calendar's creative board, "the fact is that Bicky enjoys on pushing the envelope that he never rests on his laurels; each year's calendar is better than ever. He is committed to the level of excellence and the Sikh spirit of ever striving for better and higher. With the talent that the artists bring to the table and the passion that Bicky adds to the mix, it all ends up as a fun project which gives as much delight in the making of it, as it does in the final product!"

Bicky has an interesting mix of sensibilities and perspectives in his bag. On his board are academic authorities on Sikhism like T.Sher Singh - Founder and Editor of *sikhchic.com*, and Founder and Trustee of The *Spinning Wheel Film Festival International* - and the Singh Twins. On the other hand, his team of graphic artists are all American.

For the 2008 calendar the Singh Twins, Bicky and his team had a few meetings in California but most of the coordination was done via emails, postal service and phone. "The Sikhpoint team oozes with talent and skills. It's a pleasure working with each one of them. Raymond Huerta, the graphic wiz, is but one example. He picks up the nuances of Sikh icons through osmosis, and performs his magic seamlessly. And I like to think they have as much fun as we do!" says T.Sher Singh.

"Difference of opinion is inevitable in a creative environment. But we never lost track of our vision. Our focus remained the calendar and everything was achieved towards it, and not to serve our respective personal purposes," adds K.P. Singh.

"One of the main objectives of the Sikhpoint calendar is to inform the wider community about the Sikh community, through the Arts...it (the calendar) offers a way to inform without being seen as too heavy or preachy. And there is such a rich source of artistic heritage to draw on, which can be used to explore so many different aspects of our community," explain the Singh Twins.

Bicky is careful to point out that this is what sets apart the Sikh Point calendar from a strictly religious pamphlet. Perhaps this is why the *Khanda*, a logo usually seen in his calendars is missing in the recent issues? He lets T.Sher Singh answer that question, "The Khanda is a lovely and very potent symbol of our faith. I know my fellow Sikhs everywhere love it passionately. And, in expressing their love for it, I note that they plaster it everywhere. I think it should be displayed more carefully ...overuse of it dilutes its impact. I think we need to learn to use it dramatically and strategically...but the first step is to educate ourselves, and others, of its many layers of meaning."

Preparations for the 2009 calendar are already well under way. Bicky refuses to divulge the tiniest details about next year's theme. "It will ruin the surprise," he says, "You have to wait for the launch in November like everybody else!" The launch will be a grand affair in Orange County, California and is based on the theme of the calendar. Bicky also keeps a keen eye on up-and-coming talent, "Pradeep Singh from Chandigarh and Manjit Shergill of Singapore are two emerging artists you will probably see featured in the future." But all that after 2015. Till then the calendar is booked solid.



Singh Twins autographing the Calendar at the Sikh Heritage Dinner, California.



T. Sher Singh (sikhchic.com), Singh Twins, Bicky Singh and Dr. B. Ahluwalia

"Ideas for projects or the subject matter for each of them, such as, for example, the focus of future calendars is always being bandied about in our daily discussions. There are always ideas sitting on both the front and the back burners. Such community projects take on a life of their own...there is a lot of *barkat* involved, without which they would go nowhere," says T.Sher Singh, "We live in wonderful times," he adds, "Sikhs around the world are discovering *Sikhie* in totally new and hitherto unexplored dimensions. It appears that nuclear energy has been unleashed within the community ... I look around me and am simply bowled over by the incredible variety, quantity - and quality - of the seva being done by our youth today. That, in turn, is energising everyone around them."

Likewise, Bicky Singh remains the catalyst between various artistic and intellectual compounds. Drawing together, meshing creativity, fulfilling the common yen for seva. Each drop makes the ocean, united in a bowl, they will quench thirst, refresh, cleanse...

Sanmeet Kaur

Images from the Calenders 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008...

The Singh Twins

Amrit & Rabindra K.D. Hans Singh (Twin Studio)

"Considered amongst the freshest of the new British artists"
— The Daily Telegraph



London born twin sisters Amrit and Rabindra are contemporary British artists of international standing whose award winning paintings have been acknowledged as constituting a unique genre in British Art and for initiating a new movement in the revival of the Indian miniature tradition within modern art practice. Describing their work as Post-Modern (as opposed to Post Modern), their work engages with important areas of critical debate – challenging existing stereotypes and redefining generally accepted, narrow perceptions of heritage and identity in art and society. Combining elements from Western and Eastern aesthetics they assert the value of traditional and non-European art forms to the continuing development of Contemporary Art practice – exploring cultural, social and political issues of global significance within a highly decorative, often witty and symbolic style which has universal appeal and transcends cultural barriers.

With paintings in private and public collections world wide the Singh Twins continue to be invited to speak on their work at institutions such as the Tate Gallery, London; The Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada; The National Museum of Modern Art in Delhi and Mumbai; the University of California, Santa Barbara; The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco; Smithsonian Washington and The Otago University, New Zealand. At the same time a significant interest from academics, individual art students and University research graduates has resulted in their work being incorporated into the Open University syllabus and other sectors of Britain's formal education system.

As well as being profiled in numerous mainstream publications including the Penguin History of Scotland, Marg Publication's New Insights into Sikh Art and Open University course books, their work is featured in two fine art books (Twin Perspectives and Post Modern) and has been selected for the next 'Pocket Art Series' by Roli books.

Amongst the global media coverage they have received, they have been interviewed by BBC's Women's Hour, Mid Week and Belief and appeared as house guests on American CBC Radio Here and Now Show and Carlton TV's Gloria Hunsford Show. Granada TV broadcast a documentary about their work called Singh Out Sisters and an independent Arts Council film about them ('Alone Together') received 'The Best Film Of The Year' prize at the 2001 Audio International Film Festival. That same year, they were short-listed for the Asian Women of Achievement Awards and in 2002 were appointed Official Artists in Residence to Commonwealth Games. The work they produced in response to the Games gained wide publicity and was even featured as a question on Who Wants to Be A Millionaire?

In 2002, a major solo India tour was launched by The British Council, at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Delhi – making them the only British artists (besides Henry Moore) to have been offered a solo at this, India's most prestigious venue for International Contemporary Art. They've been invited to the U.S.A. and Canada and future exhibitions plans include a New Zealand and Australia tour. Their works are in public and private collections worldwide including the Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art, the Royal Museum, Scotland and the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., U.S.A.

Three of their major works, including their landmark painting depicting the storming of the Golden Temple, titled 'Nineteen Eighty-Four', were profiled at the historic launch of the new Sikh Gallery at the Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C. – to remain on view to international audiences over the next 5 years.

In 2003 their work toured the U.S.A. and Canada. Future plans include exhibitions in New Zealand and Australia.



© Dr. R. Singh, Toronto Indian Photography

"Some of the most optimistic images of our multicultural world"
— The Guardian

ARTISTS' STATEMENT:

Our art and collaborative partnership developed largely in response to the serious criticisms we faced during our first degree for pursuing common interests and goals in developing personal styles which were not only deemed to be unacceptable because of their similarity, but because they were 'inappropriately' rooted in Eastern cultural aesthetics and our experience as British Asians.

Against this hostility our determined exploration of the Indian miniature style and established practice of working and exhibiting together (as well as dressing identically), is a political statement against the hypocrisy of an establishment which advocated self expression as the 'be all and end all' of Modern Art, yet denied the validity of anything which did not comply with the expectations dictated by a selective, Eurocentric perspective. Whilst asserting the right to define our own cultural and artistic 'individuality' in a way that is meaningful and true to who we are as British Asians, artists and twins our work, more importantly, addresses the need to re-evaluate established cultural definitions, values and role models within the wider context of an evolving global society dominated by western consumer markets and popular culture. This is because ultimately, our artistic strategy is defined by a sense of responsibility to look beyond personal issues of identity towards exposing wider cultural prejudices and highlighting other concerns of more global significance. The desire to make a real difference through our work has fuelled our determination in establishing an international profile that demands acceptance on our own terms – creating a recognized platform for serious debate, which has meaningful impact in challenging prevailing social, political and cultural attitudes.

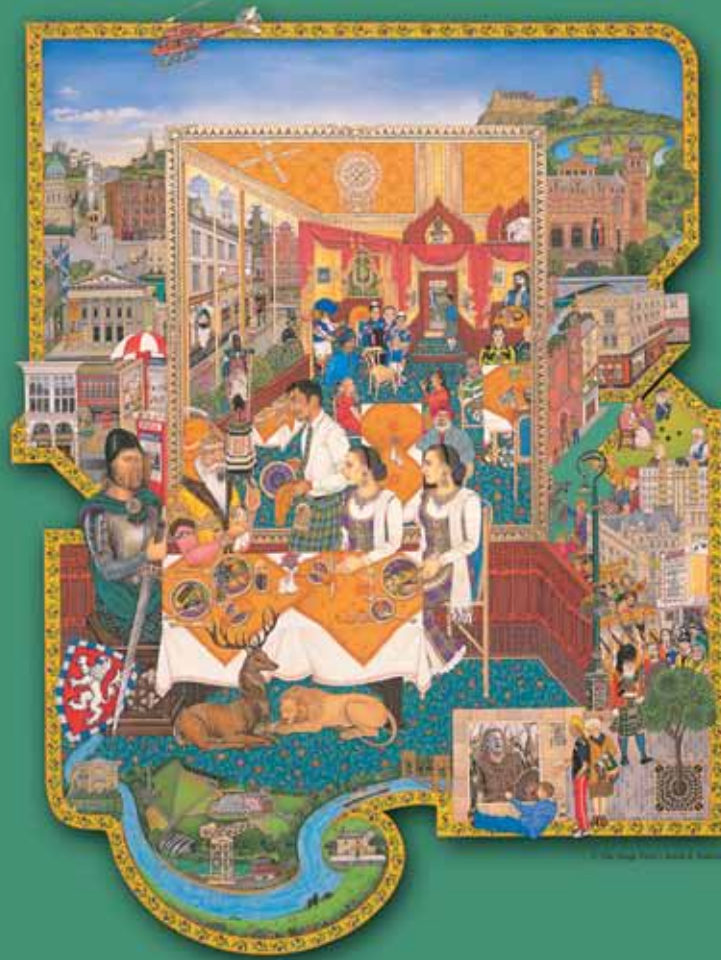


© Dr. R. Singh, Toronto Indian Photography

"A brilliant, highly perceptive visual experience from two of Britain's most genuinely talented younger artists"
— The Scotsman

Amrit & Rabindra Singh

www.sikhpoint.com/singhtwins



© The Singh Trust & Kishor Singh

Mr. Singh's India 1999/2000

Power, riches, glamour and gold show the modern world
99.7 x 76.2cm (23.3 x 30in)

Artist: The Singh Trust, Anant and Rakesh K.D. Kaur Singh
Collection of Glasgow Gallery of Modern Art

The painting is a commentary on the modern world, showing the artist's view of the world as a place of power, riches, glamour and gold. It is a commentary on the modern world, showing the artist's view of the world as a place of power, riches, glamour and gold.

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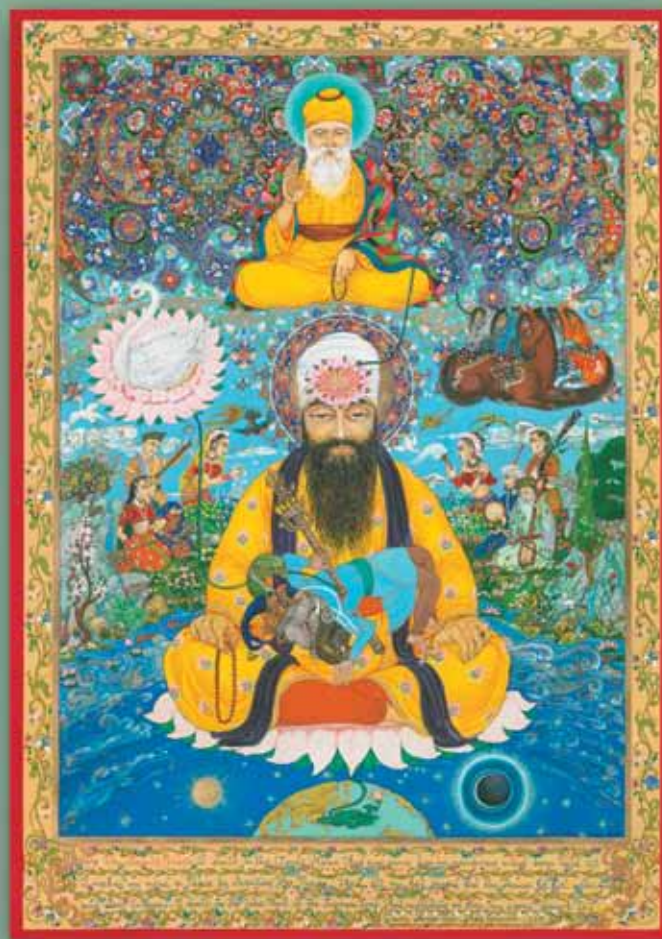
The painting is a commentary on the modern world, showing the artist's view of the world as a place of power, riches, glamour and gold. It is a commentary on the modern world, showing the artist's view of the world as a place of power, riches, glamour and gold.

JANUARY

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
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DAYS OF OBSERVANCE

- 1 - New Year Day
- 5 - Good Friday
- 10 - Indian New Year
- 11 - Makar Sankranti
- 12 - Christmas
- 13 - New Year's Eve
- 14 - New Year's Day
- 15 - New Year's Day
- 16 - New Year's Day
- 17 - New Year's Day
- 18 - New Year's Day
- 19 - New Year's Day
- 20 - New Year's Day
- 21 - New Year's Day
- 22 - New Year's Day
- 23 - New Year's Day
- 24 - New Year's Day
- 25 - New Year's Day
- 26 - New Year's Day
- 27 - New Year's Day
- 28 - New Year's Day
- 29 - New Year's Day
- 30 - New Year's Day
- 31 - New Year's Day



The Spiritual Enlightenment of Guru Arjan Dev Ji

29.5 x 41.5cm (11.6 x 16.4in)

MARCH

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
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W - St. Peter's Day - Vacation
 D - Seven Fasting Days - Vacation
 Z - Nine Fasts - Vacation
 B - B - B
 Z - Seven Fasts - Vacation



Ascension of Guru Ram Das

(1999)

29.3 x 41cm (11.5 x 16in)

Poster color, gouache and gold dust on paper

Artist: Anant K. D. Kaur Singh

This painting represents the passing on of the Guruship from the fourth Sikh Guru Ram Das to his son Arjan Dev Ji. It is an event witnessed by the whole of creation, blessed by the previous three Gurus and glorified by the presence of the Divine in all his myriad forms of expression. Whilst the sacred scenes upon which the painting is based take only of the Guruship passing on to Arjan Dev Ji, the painting itself presents a contemporary update – showing how this was to have occurred in the Sacred Sikh Scriptures of Guru Khanda Sahib Ji. As the physical embodiment of the Guru's eternal teachings, it is given due respect placed on a throne and shaded by an umbrella (symbol of royal status or authority). The umbrella is decorated with a map of the world denoting the global outreach and relevance of Sikh teachings today.

The first followers and lifelong companions of Guru Nanak (Guru Nanak and Mardiana) are also depicted top right carrying the objects by which they are traditionally identified in Sikh iconography – the gurmukhi and Khanda (sacred instrument). As a Hindu and Muslim respectively, they present a tribute to the universal outlook of Guru Nanak's teachings and flow of subsequent Gurus enshrined in the Sikh scriptures. The many lot flowers upon which the Guru Ram Das Sahib Ji is decorated with the emblem of the Sikh Gurus in Khanda. This denotes the dual secular and sacred responsibilities of Sikhs and to particularise the most sacred moment, situated under the backdrop of the earth and tenth Sikh Gurus, Harigobind and Harigobind Singh Ji. To the left of the Guru Ram Das Sahib Ji is a figure, in a way extending a crown and the crown – the crown used in the passing on of Guruship ceremony, adopted by Baba Buddha Ji (an early follower of Guru Nanak). As with other paintings in a series of works which illustrate particular scenes from the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, the five types of lot are presented here in some language (creations) whose characters are shared by those of the specific animals they represent. In keeping with conventions adopted for miniature depictions in art, the figure of Guru Ram Das Ji is repeated in different parts of the composition, representing a transition in time and space to the story of his departure from earthly existence and spiritual union with God within.

MAY

DAYS OF OBSERVANCE

- 5 - Vaisakhi Purnima
- 6 - Baisakhi Purnima
- 14 - Baisakhi Purnima (Baisakhi Purnima)
- 20 - Baisakhi Purnima (Baisakhi Purnima)
- 30 - Baisakhi Purnima

Arpna

*Her work is intense, sophisticated...
a rare cross-cultural success.*
— The Guardian, London —



*Her art is the art of our times. The theme of duality runs
like a powerful undercurrent through all her works.*
— The Hindu —

Arpna Cam, is Sikkpoint.com's featured Artist for the 2006 Calendar. Born in Delhi in 1954, Arpna grew up in an environment that was rich in art and music. Arpna's mother is an award winning novelist, whose influence resonates in Arpna's very essence. Arpna attended Delhi University and graduated in 1984 with a MA in Literature. As a self taught painter, Arpna's influences came from her mother's writings, Punjabi folk literature, and the Pahari miniature tradition and Indian folk-art motifs. Her art is a direct reflection of her personal experiences, inspired by local and world events. Over the years, her main focus has centered on Indian women, and capturing the essence of their day-to-day activities inspired by social, cultural and spiritual themes.

Now, at the age of 51, Arpna has become a well known and much celebrated artist around the world. For the last three decades her exhibitions have been shown in Delhi, Mumbai, Calcutta, London, Cardiff, Amsterdam, New York, Berlin and Munich. She has participated in group shows in Japan, USA, Algeria, Singapore, Australia, Austria, Iraq, Cuba, USSR and Germany.

Reviews of her work have appeared time and again in Indian Press and TV and in the Guardian, New York Times, International Herald Tribune, Svenska Dagbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Die Welt etc. BBC and Star TV have made documentary films on her in the 1980's apart from a documentary by Sudharth Tagore.

For the past 5 years, three of her works including 'Nanak' and '1984' have been on display at the Sikh Art Gallery in the Smithsonian, Washington DC. She had done murals from 1981 to 2005 in India and one in Hamburg, all of them noncommercial, as a commitment to Public Art.

She has been officially invited to USA, USSR, Japan, Greece, Iraq, Austria and Germany to see Museums and participate in International Visual Art Events. She is the first and only Indian artist to be commissioned in 1995 to do a large work for the Hiroshima Museum of Modern Art, for the 50th Anniversary of the Holocaust, and is included in "A Century of Art", published by Deutsche Bank along with world masters like Miro, Kandinsky, Basquiat and Hockney, in all a hundred artists.

Her awards, commissions and exhibitions include:

- All India Fine Arts Society Award 1985
- Research Grant from Lalit Kala Akademi Delhi 1984-85
- Commendation Certificate in Algiers Biennale
- VI Triennale India Gold Medal for Painting, 1986
- She has served on the Jury of National Exhibition, 1989 and Republic Day Pageants 1990, '91, '92.
- Nominated Eminent Artist by Lalit Kala Akademi.
- On Selection Committee of Republic Day pageants for Ministry of Defense, Govt. of India, 1995-98.
- On Advisory Committee of National Gallery of Modern Art Delhi, Lalit Kala Academy and Sahitya Kala Parishad 2004.
- Curator for 1986 "Women Artist Exhibition" for the Festival of India held in the USSR.



Artist's Statement: India is an exciting mixture of the old and new. Rural and urban India coexist in the strangest of ways. Even the capital of India, Delhi, my city, is dotted with medieval monuments and awesomely urban growth, leading to a rich exciting assault of imagery that inspires my being. The Ajanta and Ellora and the Pahari miniatures flow through my veins. Myths linger in the mind, along with tales of freedom fighters like Bhagat Singh and saints like Nanak, Kabir and Meerabai. Spirituality takes us to unbelievable heights. Religious divisions tear us asunder. It is a land of contradictions, but always growing, never static, always full of surprises. This pulsating, expanding milieu has given rise to a rich and colorful visual art of which I am a small part. An art which is bold and contemporary, touching universal socio-political or philosophical issues, without losing the fragrance of its roots.





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SOHNI MAHIWAL

Oil On Canvas

5'x7'

2000

The love story of Sohni Mahiwali is extremely well known in Punjab, where Sohni's grave is, in the district Chhamb, but to the entire nation. The distance of dividing space, painting a river, painting, is the distance between the lovers that Sohni sought to bridge by plunging into the river. The two equal fragments of the water is inspired by several schools of Indian miniature painting and the upward pointing finger of Mahiwali points to the transcendence of earthly love into spiritual love, or the half-moon.

This destined love story is in the tradition of many such stories. This was chosen so that the artist could paint her forever world of 20 years - water.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Monday Rajasthan Festival									Monday Rajasthan Festival				
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Friday Rajasthan Festival	Saturday Rajasthan Festival	Sunday Rajasthan Festival	Monday Rajasthan Festival	Tuesday Rajasthan Festival	Wednesday Rajasthan Festival	Thursday Rajasthan Festival	Friday Rajasthan Festival	Saturday Rajasthan Festival	Sunday Rajasthan Festival	Monday Rajasthan Festival	Tuesday Rajasthan Festival	Wednesday Rajasthan Festival	Thursday Rajasthan Festival	Friday Rajasthan Festival



© 2005 Arpana Chatterjee

DANCING NANAK

Oil On Canvas

5' x 6'

2002

Collection - Roli Books India

A lot of Baba Nanak's verses celebrate the beauty of Nature and the Seasons. If life is a river (if not in the painting the best way to cross it is the path of devotion).

Sweet sound of water gurgling down the water-spout

*The peasant's shell, a child's cry
 Since, it's summer, the mouth of rain!
 It is the mouth of Chet
 It is spring, All is steady,
 The blossoms bubble-berry
 The seedlings in flower;
 But there is a sorrow in my soul
 For away is the Lord my Master*

Mardana also joins Guru Nanak in his hymns to the Divine. Mardana and Baba were Guru Nanak's constant companions in his travels. Here Mardana is shown as part of Nanak's being, totally blended with him.

JULY	SATURDAY 1	SUNDAY 2	MONDAY 3	TUESDAY 4 Independence Day	WEDNESDAY 5	THURSDAY 6 Martyrdom of Bhai Gurbaksh	FRIDAY 7	SATURDAY 8	SUNDAY 9	MONDAY 10	TUESDAY 11 Guru's Birthday Gurpurab Gurpurab Gurpurab	WEDNESDAY 12	THURSDAY 13 Guru's Birthday Gurpurab	FRIDAY 14	SATURDAY 15
	SUNDAY 16	MONDAY 17	TUESDAY 18	WEDNESDAY 19	THURSDAY 20	FRIDAY 21	SATURDAY 22	SUNDAY 23	MONDAY 24	TUESDAY 25	WEDNESDAY 26	THURSDAY 27	FRIDAY 28	SATURDAY 29	SUNDAY 30
															MONDAY 31

2006

KANWAL PRAKASH SINGH

"It is an honor and a privilege to participate in the 2007 Sikhpoint Interfaith Calendar. I trust that those who receive this Calendar will be inspired to know and learn about other faiths and find echoes of their own spirituality reflected in the words, sacred quotes, and the visual images presented in the Calendar."

— Kanwal Prakash Singh



Photo Credit: Richard W. Clark

"Divine Messengers revealed, affirmed, and exemplified continue to enlighten, remind, and inspire us to a higher calling; the true mandate of living our faith is service; extending love and service to all God's children across the entire human universe and striving to make the dream of a world-at-peace with itself and God's Wonderful Creation a true reality."

— Kanwal Prakash Singh

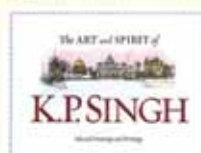
Born in India, Kanwal Prakash (KP) Singh came to the United States in 1965 for higher studies. KP was educated in India (B.A. from Punjab University; Bachelor of Architecture and Master of Technology in Regional Planning from Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur) and the United States (Master of City Planning from the University of Michigan). He has made Indianapolis his home since 1967.

KP has been a tireless advocate and supporter of historic preservation, cultural diversity, and the importance of the arts to life and human spirit. KP considers community service as a major focus and commitment of his Sikh faith and as a civic responsibility. Over the years, he has served as a volunteer on many committees and events. He is a founding member of the International Center of Indianapolis.

KP is a recipient of many awards and honors. Among them: Doremus Award in Architecture (University of Michigan – 1965); Sagamore of the Wabash (State of Indiana – 1992); International Citizen of the Year (International Center of Indianapolis – 1995); and Award of Excellence in Arts (Asian American Alliance – 2002).

KP Singh Designs, founded in 1972, specializes in fine arts. KP's distinctive, finely executed pen and ink drawings of historic architecture and monuments in India, Europe, USA, and around the world reflect the combined skills of an architect, artist, historian, and educator. His art and advocacy have continued to heighten awareness of the special place of significant buildings and sites in the visual, cultural, and spiritual fabric of our communities. KP's drawings of architectural landmarks: Indiana courthouses, college campuses and other historic sites are present at many fundraising events. His artwork is in many public and private collections in the USA and around the world.

KP's art and words are a constant reminder of his passion and commitment to preservation and celebration of our unique and outstanding architectural, artistic, and cultural treasures. KP believes that they are the collective heritage of mankind. KP has been a guest writer for The Indianapolis Star, served on its In Touch Editorial Board, and is a frequent contributor to various print and online publications including Sikhpoint.com.



KP's writings and drawings, featured in his recently published book, *The Art and Spirit of K.P. Singh – Selected Drawings and Writings* (Guild Press – Emmis Publishing, 2003), offer rich imagery and reflect a deep interest in matters of spirit. His writings reveal cultural sensitivity and spiritual awareness that transcend diverse spectrums of thought and wisdom, recognize universal human struggles and sufferings, and honor our individual and shared destiny. KP is a guest speaker at colleges, companies, and organizations and a frequent participant in community, cultural, international, and interfaith events.

For information about KP's artwork or book: www.KPSinghDesigns.com or www.sikhpoint.com/kpsingh





*By Your Grace and in Thanksgiving, may I: Learn that as Father, Mother, and Benevolent King, You alone govern and guide all Life.
Witness Your Light in every spiritual "Courtyard" and seek Your Peace at each temporal "Crossing."
— Kausal Prakash Singh —*

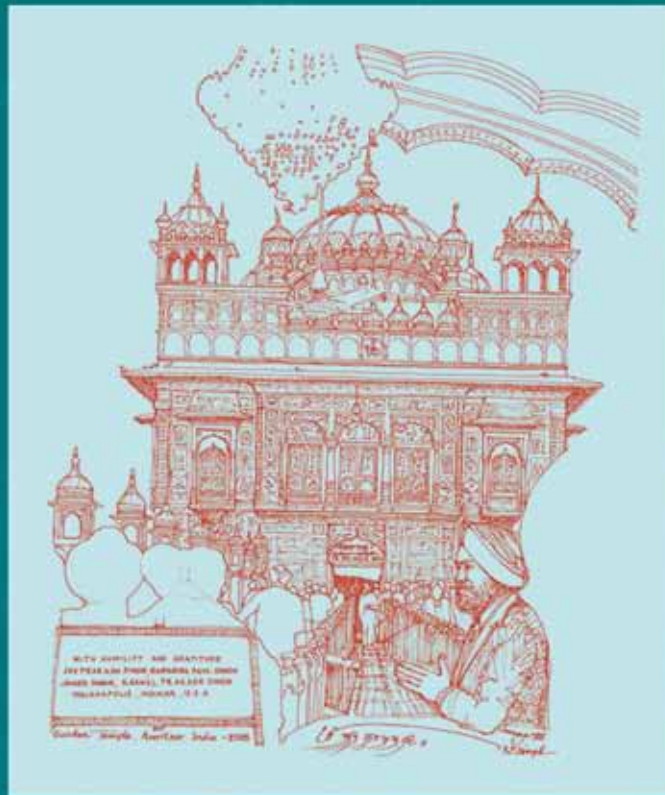
ਸੇ ਕਿਉਂ ਮੇਰਾ ਆਖੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਜੀਅਹਿ ਰਾਜਾਨ ॥ ਭੰਡਹੁ ਹੀ ਭੰਡੁ ਚੁਪਿਐ ਭੰਡੇ ਬਾਝੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਭੰਡੇ ਬਾਹਰਾ ਏਕੇ ਸਚਾ ਸੋਇ ॥

*Why should we consider woman cursed and condemned when from woman are born leaders and rulers? From woman alone is born a woman;
without woman, there can be no human birth. Without woman, O Nanak, only the true one exists.
— Raag Aun, Mehl 1, Page 473, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Scripture) —*

SIKHISM: The Sikh faith reveals and advocates the doctrine of Universality and Unity: Oneness of God, Equality, Human Dignity, and Sanctity of all Faiths and sacred Traditions. Naam Simran (meditation and remembrance of God's Name), Kirat Karni (righteous labors), Wand Chhakna (sharing of blessings), and Seva (service), form the major pillars of the Sikh faith.

June

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	Flag Day 14	15	16
Father's Day 17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30



*"I am lost in the maze of your awesome Majesty and Mystery revealed in Song and Spirit by the Great Gurus (Teachers).
Teach me Your Ways, take me O' Father as I am, surrendering all gifts at Your Palace of Light."
- The Art and Spirit of K.P. Singh -*

ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਬਿੰਦੁ ਤੇ ਸਭ ਓਪਤਿ ਹੋਈ ॥੨॥ ਮਾਟੀ ਏਕ ਜਗਲ ਸੋਸਾਰਾ ॥ ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਰਾਂਝੇ ਘੜੈ ਕੁਮਾਰਾ ॥੩॥

*One God created all men: All men were manifested of the same clay, the Great Potter hath merely carved the shapes of them.
- Rag Bhairon, Metre 3, Page 1128, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Scripture) -*

SIKHISM: Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh Holy Scripture) enshrines 5,894 compositions in exalted poetry, each assigned a designated Raga (a musical pattern).
This unique immortal Scripture (with contributions from Sikh Gurus, Muslim and Hindu Saints of diverse traditions and cultures) reverberating
a message of Immaculate Glory and Oneness, is honored by Sikhs as a Living Guru.

August

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			Leave / Holiday	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



2008

Sikhs in Print



FIVE HUNDRED YEARS AGO, Punjab (the land of the five rivers), a fertile area of North West India spreading down from the foothills of the Himalayas, witnessed the birth of Sikhism - one of the world's youngest but now, fifth largest religion. Punjab is regarded as the homeland of the Sikh people whose evolving faith, strength of character, independent spirit, collective pride and sense of National identity have since the time of Sikhism's founder, Guru Nanak Dev Ji, continued to shape the destiny of this ancient stronghold against successive waves of foreign invasion into India. This 2008 Sikhprint calendar brings together a small selection of historical printed imagery from the Twin Studio Sikh Print Archive that highlights western interest in, and connection with, the Sikhs and Punjab from the early 19th to the mid 20th century.

Given the particularly strong and long standing relationship between Britain and India, most of the images relate to the Anglo Sikh connection, focusing especially on four major periods within their collective history - the Sikh Raj, the British Raj, the two World Wars and Indian Independence. As the 2007 celebrations of the 500th anniversary of Sikhism come to a close, the choice of images and accompanying text commentaries for the 2008 Sikhprint calendar, also touch upon aspects of Sikh achievement and the community's ongoing contribution to, and impact on, the West, well beyond the later half of the 20th century.

The selection gives an overview of the variety of printed formats and mediums comprising the Twin Studio Print Archive. With the exception of the December page, the majority of images are taken from journalistic, documentary and literary sources produced by, and, or, intended for the European (mostly British) readership. As such, it must be recognized that some of these sources (both the text and images) betray an Imperial British or Western Orientalist viewpoint. Nevertheless, from an historical perspective these sources offer an important insight into the power of words and images for communicating how the Sikhs were perceived by western peoples and governments as recorded by the historians, illustrators and journalists of the day. They also provide some priceless information about the range of artists both European and Sikh who were employed at the time and who have provided future generations with a unique visual map shot of Sikh history, culture and religion during a particularly fascinating period.



Stamps



Poster Art



Stereoviews



Collectors Cards



Maps



Postcards



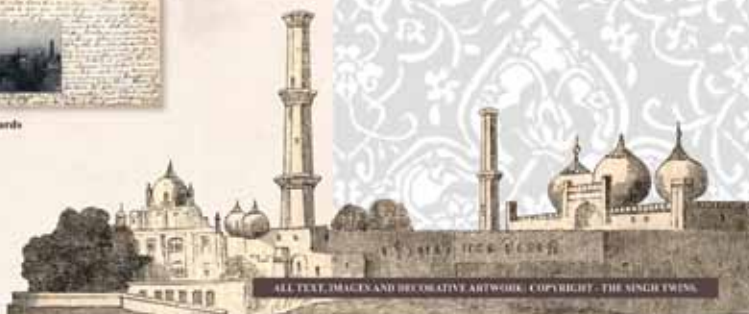
Lithographs

The Twin Studio Sikh Print Archive

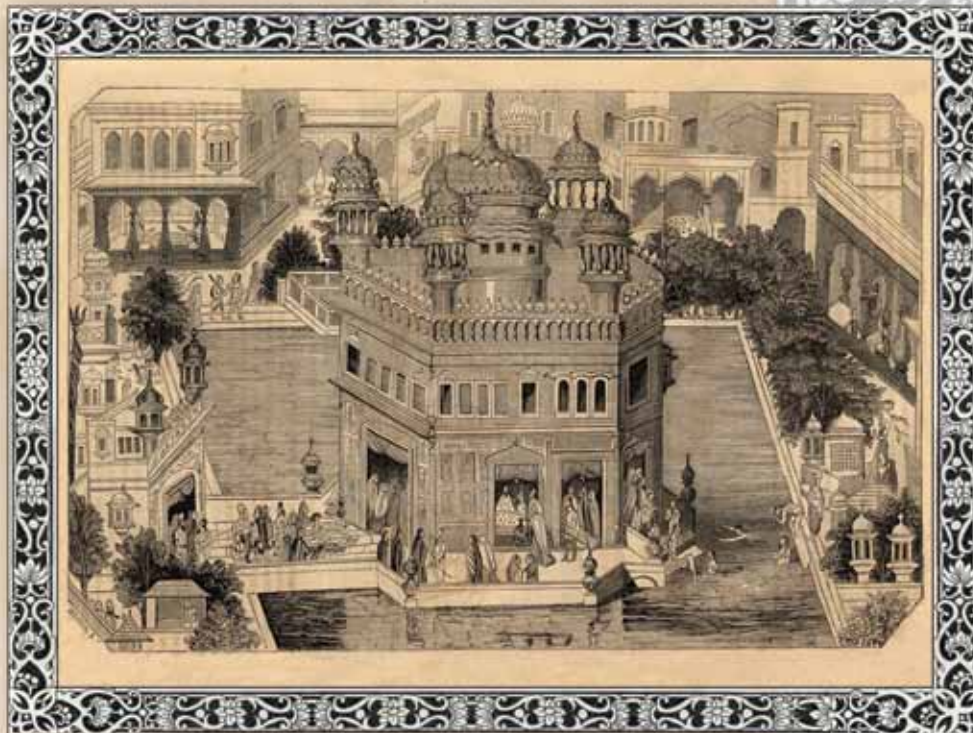
The archive, comprising several hundred original artworks, is dedicated to documenting the history of Sikhs in print. It covers a variety of printed formats and techniques which record how Sikh imagery has developed against an ever evolving technology.

Whilst the majority of the collection focuses on Sikh themes depicted by artists from different cultural and religious backgrounds (Sikh Gurus and personages, places of worship or Gurdwaras, monuments, historical buildings, places and events directly connected with Sikhism), it also includes non-Sikh themes produced by Sikh artists.

The archive was begun in 1990 by twin sisters and Contemporary British artists Amrit and Rabindra Singh as part of their Ph.D. research into Sikh art and has developed over the years as their interest in Sikh iconography has continued to grow.



ALL TEXT, IMAGES AND DECORATIVE ARTWORK: COPYRIGHT - THE SINGH TWINS



MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
				1	2	3
4	5	6 <i>Valentine's Day - Birthdays of Saintesses</i>	7 <i>Chinese New Year - Good Luck</i>	8	9	10
11 <i>Vincent Van Gogh - Birthdays</i>	12	13	14 <i>Valentine's Day</i>	15 <i>Shrove Tuesday - Good Luck</i>	16	17
18 <i>President's Day</i>	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26 <i>Ascension Day - Birthdays</i>	27	28	29		

Harmandir Sahib

Harmandir Sahib or the Golden Temple, as it is more universally known, is one of Sikhism's most sacred and historic shrines. Situated in the holy city of Amritsar, Punjab, the foundation stone of this secular and spiritual centre of the Sikhs was laid in 1588 by the Muslim Saint Saahib Mir Ji at the invitation of the Fifth Guru, Arjan Dev Ji - a gesture which sought to demonstrate the universal outlook and all embracing nature of Sikh teachings. Since then, the main shrine and surrounding complex have been damaged or destroyed and rebuilt several times over the centuries, particularly during periods of intense persecution of the Sikhs - targeted because they are seen as key symbols of the community's identity, unity and defiance against oppression. Designed by the Guru himself, it is a classic example of Sikh architecture which borrows from both Hindu and Muslim traditions. One of the unique features of its design are the four doors, each facing a different direction indicating a 'welcome to all, regardless of religion, class, nationality, gender or race'. The shrine sits on a lake whose sacred origins and healing properties date back to ancient antiquity. The Adi Granth, a precursor to the current-day Sikh Scriptures known as Guru Granth Sahib was installed in the Golden Temple in 1604.

The British described the Golden Temple as "one of the most striking and picturesque scenes in the whole of the Indian Empire." Little wonder then, that it features prominently within the history of printed Sikh imagery.

Main Image: From Magazine Pittoresque, 1836 - One of the earliest known engravings of Harmandir Sahib and providing a unique glimpse of the complex during Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time. As one of several illustrations from a multi-page feature about the Sikhs, published by a French journal, it indicates the level of western interest in the Sikhs and Punjab, beyond Britain.

Detail: Gurdwara (Sikh Shrine) Baba Arjan, Amritsar, 1858.

February





Maharaja Ranjit Singh

Maharaja Ranjit Singh, (1780 - 1839) was a man of great charisma and military skill who at a remarkably young age succeeded in forging the Sikh Kingdom of Punjab from the separate Sikh Mils or independent clans that came to power in the century following the death of the Tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh Ji. After being proclaimed the first Sikh ruler of Punjab in 1801, he set about modernizing his administration and established an army called the Khalsa which although taking its name from the Khalsa community originally created by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1699, was modelled on Western lines (even down to some of the uniforms) and employed Europeans amongst its top ranking officers. His kingdom, which stretched from Afghanistan in the West, Kashmir to the North, to the Chinese border on the East and just short of Delhi to the South, was secular in character, with people of all religions being afforded equal rights, protection and opportunity.

It was under Ranjit's patronage that the arts of Punjab flourished and Punjab's main cities of Amritsar and Lahore became major centres of trade and commerce. Leather craft, metal work, calligraphy and printing were amongst the more popular skills developed. Significant trade links with the west included exports of the highly prized Kashmiri shawl - subsequently popularized as the Paisley shawl, after the Scottish town which was to master the skill from weavers under Ranjit's patronage and become a centre of manufacturing in Britain.

After his death, the Kingdom which he had ruled for forty years became the object of intense political intrigue and betrayal, eventually resulting in annexation by the British in 1849. It remained under British rule until 1947 (when India gained independence) and was then divided through Partition between India and Pakistan. Ranjit Singh owned the famous Koh-i-Noor diamond which was confiscated by the British from his youngest son and eventual heir Duleep Singh, cut in three and incorporated into the British Crown Jewels.

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
					1 Good Friday - Holy Week	2
3	4	5	6 Easter Monday - Holy Week	7	8	9 Easter Tuesday - Holy Week
10	11	12	13	14	15	16 Good Friday - Holy Week
17 Easter Monday	18	19	20 Good Friday - Holy Week	21 Easter Tuesday - Holy Week	22 Good Friday - Holy Week	23 Good Friday - Holy Week
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

March



Main Image: From the Illustrated London News, 1857.

...stand by for 2009 !



The Punjab War: 1845-46

As the first War of Indian Independence

The Punjab War of 1845-46, which is tendentiously misnamed the First Anglo-Sikh War by the British was, in reality, the first war of independence. Indeed that war changed the thinking of Indian military men who, earlier had considered themselves inferior to the British soldiery. The Punjab forever demolished the fiction of invincibility of the British Army, and proved that Indians were by no means inferior warriors.

The army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh did not consist of Sikhs alone and Shah Mohammed, the contemporary Punjabi writer sang about the Muslims participation in the Punjab war thus:

Mazar Ali and Maghe Khan marched out from the city.
The bridge of Sultan Mehmood also came out
With invincible Imam Shahi, guns in tow.
Elahi Baksh too brought out his guns after polishing them
And showing them worshipful burning sticks.
O! Shah Mohammed! In such a way did the Guru shine:
As if these were the flashes of lightning out to dispel the darkness."

[Translated from Punjabi verses]

The Punjabis fought unitedly against the British. The army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was organised on a secular basis and comprised the finest Muslim, Sikh and Hindu soldiery. Only the Dogras under Gulab Singh remained aloof. He had his own reasons as he had been won over by the British and was intriguing with them against the Lahore Darbar. All other Punjabis fought against the British. Had there been no treachery by the Dogra trio of Gulab Singh, Tej Singh and Lal Singh, the British would have been defeated resoundingly.

The British had for long been following an aggressive policy towards the Lahore kingdom and admittedly were the first to violate the treaty of permanent friendship of 1809, signed between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the East India Company, decades before the Punjab forces crossed the Sutlej. Upholding the position of the Lahore Durbar, Major G. Carmichael Smyth writes, "We have been told that the Sikhs violated the Treaty by crossing the river with their army, but the question ... I only ask, had we not departed from the rules of friendship first? The year before war broke out, we kept the island between Ferozepur and the Punjab, although it belonged to the Sikhs ... regarding the Punjab War, I am neither of the opinion that the Sikhs made an unprovoked attack nor that we have acted towards them with great forbearance. If the Sikhs were to be considered entirely an independent state in no way answerable to us, we should not have provoked them, for to assert that bridges of boats brought from Bombay was not a *causus belli* but merely a defensive measure all the way is absurd."

That the British had been preparing in advance for the eventuality of war, is further proved by following facts:

Before 1838, Ludhiana was the only cantonment of the British close to Lahore frontier, with only three thousand men and twelve cannon. By the end of 1838, Ferozepur had been converted into a British cantonment with five thousand men and many additional cannon. Cantonments came up at Ambala, Kasauli and Simla and 14,000 European troops and forty eight cannons were stationed there. After his arrival in India, Lord Hardinge aggressively increased the strength of his forces in these cantonments by twenty-two thousand men and twelve cannon. Just before the war, their total strength was increased to forty four thousand men with one hundred cannon.

There were four battles, at Mudki, Ferozeshah, Aliwal and Sobraon. The last was fought on 10

February 1846. About this battle, R. Bosworthsmith wrote: "One old chief whose name should be recorded, Sham Singh, among the faithful, found clothed in white and devoting himself to death, like Oarius of old, called on those around him to strike for God and the Guru, and dealing with everywhere rushed manfully upon his own."

Mohammed Latif writes: "Sham Singh, dressed himself in a garment as white as his long snowy beard, galloped forward, cheering on his ardent followers and scorning death till the last, fell martyr to his country's freedom. His superb example was a beacon and a source of inspiration to the numerous freedom fighters who fought against the British from 1846 to 1947."

Sardar Sham Singh, also realising that 10 February was going to be the day of battle, rose early in the morning, dressed himself in white, and mounting his white mare proceeded to address the army. He extolled their glorious traditions of bravery and sacrifices in the past and implored them, as true sons of the soil, to die rather than turn their back on the enemy. Since he had himself dedicated his life to the cause, his words had an electric effect.

Gilbert's Division led the third charge on the centre. Mounting on one another's shoulders, the attackers gained a footing on the entrenchments and as they increased in number they rushed at the Sikh guns and captured them. Soon the news spread down the line that enemy troops had won their way through to Sikh positions. Sardar Sham Singh seeing his army facing defeat took the final fatal plunge. He spurred forward against the 50th of Foot, brandishing his sword and calling on his men to follow him. But soon he fell from his horse, his body pierced with bullets. Sardar Sham Singh had remained true to his vow to the last. The self sacrifice of Sardar Sham Singh, the hero of Sabraon, had an inspiring effect. His courage and determination had turned Sabraon into the 'Waterloo' of India as, according to Malleeson, "victory for the Punjab Army would have meant to the English the total loss of India".

Unfortunately, the British have described this war as war between Sikhs and the British, which is wholly misleading. Muslim soldiers with the arsenal under their command were fighting most valiantly to preserve the independence of the last Indian kingdom.

Indeed the 1845-46 war was a veritable watershed in the ideology of India's fighting forces.

Dr. Kirpal Singh Ph.D

READER'S RESPONSE

Jio,

In response to our review of Hew McLeod's *Historical Dictionary of Sikhism*, Anup Singh (Nishaan, IV-2007) recognises the many instances where we differ with McLeod's interpretations, yet bemoans that we have been too "kind" to him at other places.

In an interesting irony, many of McLeod's supporters are dismissive of our review because they see us too critical of McLeod. That puts us smack in the middle surrounded by McLeod's friends and foes. We can't think of a better place for reviewers to be but betwixt two opposing views. It seems to us that we must be saying something right, and hitting the appropriate chord. We recognise the difficulties in being dispassionate, but that is exactly what a modicum of objectivity demands.

The editorial comment about McLeod, "It is surprising that one who loses faith in his own religion or faith, should claim to understand, much less interpret, another faith..." is most unfortunate. This seems to suggest that there cannot be any honest converts. Remember that if we trace back far enough, all of the first Sikhs came to the House of Nanak as converts who had lost faith in their own tradition, in a process that still continues – just look at one of our co-authors as an example.

Many controversies have resulted from Hew McLeod's writings, but so have some good things. Among his other achievements, we laud his anthology on textual sources on Guru Nanak, his translation of a *Rahitnama*, and his clear-headed support of the Sikhs during hearings on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. We do believe that when Hew McLeod ventures into matters of faith, he is then in areas that lie entirely outside his domain as a historian and are best left to adherents of that faith.

It would be a very special book – rarer than a hen's teeth – that deserves either unqualified praise, or complete derision.

IJ Singh & Manjyot Kaur (formerly Laurie Bolger)

New York

Jio,

Some news from India that I recently read about made me feel like laughing and weeping at the same time. For the first time in 50 years, India's Hockey Team could not even qualify to compete in the Olympics!

There was a time when the Olympic Hockey Gold Medal was almost reserved for India. In those pre-partition years, 90 per cent of India's hockey team was composed of Sikhs and Punjabis.

I was at the Khalsa College, Amritsar (1951-53) and the Khalsa College Hockey Team was India's Number 1!

There was a tradition in Khalsa College of holding a 'Diwali Tournament'. In this tournament, top hockey teams from Khalsa High Schools used to compete. Khalsa College would host and conduct this grand tournament and bore all expenses. The object was to spot and select the best players and lure them to Khalsa College by offering scholarships. These players were also given special diet privileges in the hostels.

When I migrated to the USA in 1968, I learnt that here too, various universities scouted for good players and athletes and gave the scholarships. I really felt proud of my Alma Mater – the Khalsa College, - Amritsar in that they were so advanced in their thinking and attitudes.

For sometime after the Independence of India, Sikhs continued to dominate the game of hockey which always brought the Gold Medal for India, before deliberately and very sharply, the "nursery" of hockey was stifled.

Look where we have reached! The failure to qualify reminds me of a story some kathakars repeat. There was a person who did so much pooja that the goddess appeared and wanted to grant him a boon, with the condition that his neighbour would automatically benefit twice the boon.



Sikh youth show the way! Government Model Senior Secondary School, Ladowali (seen celebrating after scoring a goal) emerged champions at the recent under-17 hockey tournament.

He asked for a mansion, he got a mansion, but next door there were two mansions. He asked for a Gold Chariot. He got one and the neighbour got two. At this point, his wife nudged him aside and said, "You get aside and let me ask for boons". She asked for one big well in their courtyard. She got one but neighbours got two. Now she asked that all the members of her family should lose one eye each – become half blind. It happened, but the neighbours lost both eyes and became totally blind. Now you can imagine what happened to the totally blinded neighbours with two huge wells in their courtyard.

In their zeal to consistently eliminate Sikhs from hockey, India's hockey board have instead got India eliminated!

*Jasbir Singh Sethi
Houston*

Jio,

As a long time subscriber to the magazine *India Today* I am dismayed with Mr Ramesh Vinayak's slanted ESSAY: 'Khalistan: A Lost Cause'. Not only does he gloss over the massacre of innocents in Amritsar in June 1984, but fails to mention the carnage in India's capital in November of that year. Even Rajiv

Gandhi, campaigning for re-election in April 1989, publicly conceded: "The terrible blood bath of November 1984 was a carnage that shall forever haunt the conscience of all decent Indians"! Vinayak could benefit from the topical book: *A Solider Recalls*, by General SK Sinha (who has been Governor of J&K) wherein he deplores the "use of army in apolitically surcharged situation for periods beyond all dictates of reason".

The 1991 Report of UN Human Rights Committee deplores the fact that the infamous TADA "contained Provisions that derogated from human rights in Punjab, including the presumption of guilt, which were completely unacceptable."

I am sure you recall how, in an unprecedented Amendment of the Constitution – passed, signed and sealed in 24 hours – extended the President's Rule in Punjab for five years. That was when, in the name of terrorism, the CRPF, aided and abetted by criminal elements of the Punjab Police, indulged in indiscriminate killing and bizarre cremations of unclaimed bodies" on a horrendous scale.

*Dr. Saran Singh
The Sikh Review
Kolkata*