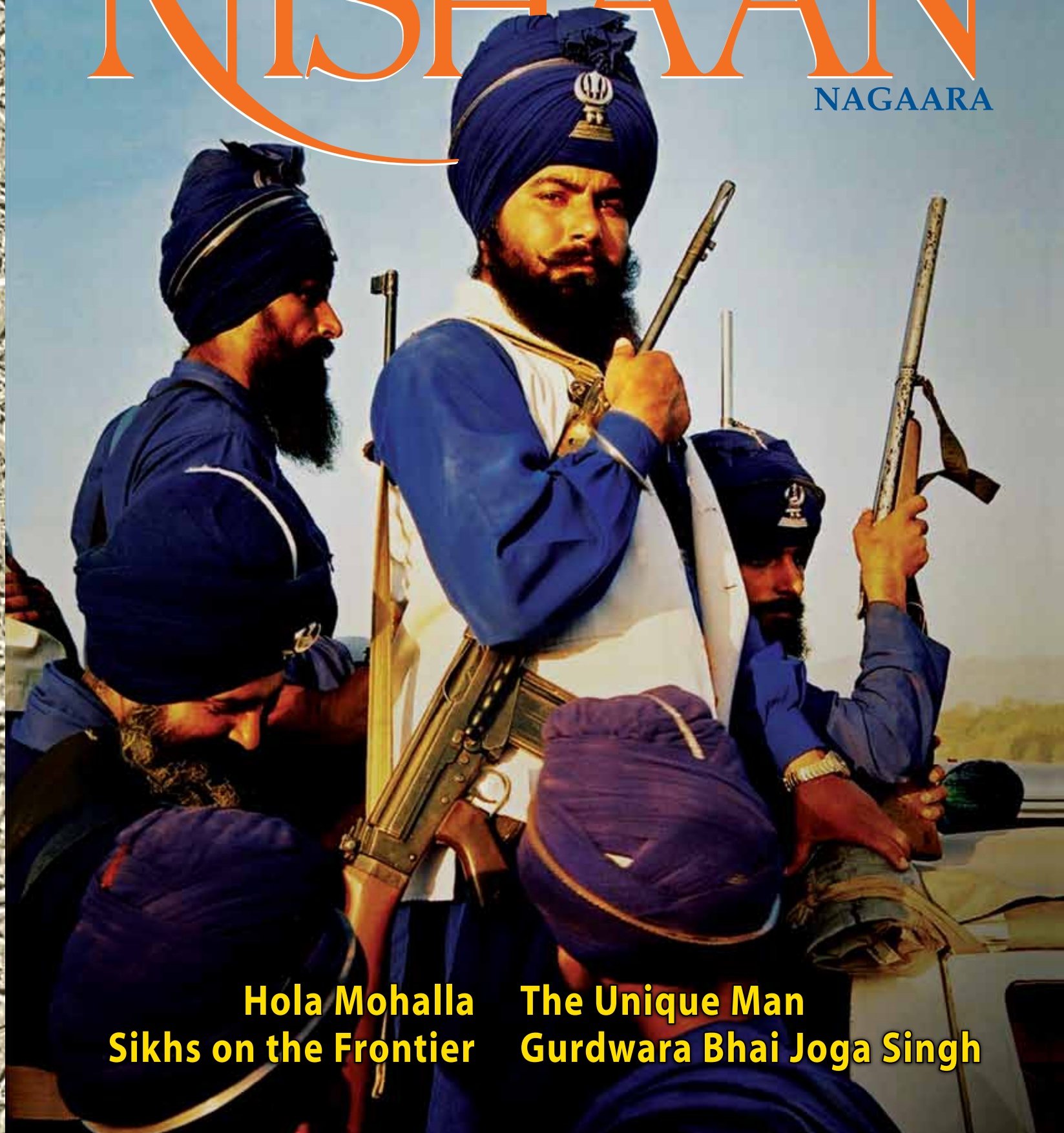


I/2010

NISHAAN

NAGAARA



**Hola Mohalla
Sikhs on the Frontier**

**The Unique Man
Gurdwara Bhai Joga Singh**

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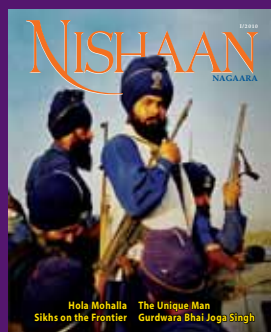


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Cover : Nihang Singhs at Anandpur Sahib
[Photograph by Malkiat Singh]

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Editorial

Hearing the Voice of God

God is self created, self existent. Before Creation, He was the One Absolute (ੴ).

He was not only Existence (ਸਤ), but also Essence (ਨਾਮ). Then, stirred by an inner urge, He unrolled His Creation. What was it that stirred within Him that made Him to create? Guru Nanak, in *Vār Asā* informs us of that divine stirring, when he says:

ਆਪੀਨੈ ਆਪੁ ਸਾਜਿਓ ਆਪੀਨੈ ॥
ਦੁਯੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਸਾਜੀਐ ਕਰਿ ਆਸਣੁ ਡਿਠੋ ਚਾਓ ॥
ਦਾਤਾ ਕਰਤਾ ਆਪਿ ਤੂੰ ਤੁਸਿ ਦੇਵਹਿ ਕਰਹਿ ਪਸਾਉ ॥

He Himself created Himself; and Himself assumed His *Nām*.

In the second place, He fashioned the Creation.

Seated within it. He beholds it with delight.

You Yourself are the Giver and the Creator;

In order to dole out Your Love, You created this vast Expanse. SGGS p.463

Thus, His intention to give out (His Love) became the cause for His Creation. It needs to be appreciated that being Love, it was as Love that He also became pervasive in His Creation. Guru Gobind Singh in *Jap Sahib* affirms this:

ਜੜ੍ਹ ਤੜ੍ਹ ਦਿਸਾ ਵਿਸਾ ਹੁਇ ਫੈਲਿਓ ਅਨੁਰਾਗ।

Here, there and everywhere He became pervasive as Love. verse 80

Then, it appears, in Him arose the need to establish personal relationship with His Creation. So, He became the Person - the Creator Person (ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖ). This personal God has since been conversing with His Creation. In what language does he converse? Guru Nanak tells us :

ਭਾਖਿਆ ਭਾਓ ਅਪਾਰ।

Infinite Love is His tongue. *Jap ji* verse 4

To experience the infinity of His Love alone is tantamount to receiving His message. Love is the sweetest language in which one can converse with another. And that is what exactly our God does:

ਮਿਠ ਬੋਲੜਾ ਜੀ ਹਰਿ ਸਜਣੁ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਮੋਰਾ ॥
ਹਉ ਸੰਮਲਿ ਖਕੀ ਜੀ ਓਹੁ ਕਦੇ ਨ ਬੋਲੈ ਕਉਰਾ ॥
ਕਉੜਾ ਬੋਲਿ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ਪੂਰਨ ਭਗਵਾਨੈ ਅਉਗਣੁ ਕੇ ਨ ਚਿਤਾਰੇ ॥
So sweetly speaks my Friendly Master.,

Ad lib have I tested Him; still, never would He speak harshly.

He even does not know any bitter words;
My Perfect Lord does not even notice my faults.

SGGS p. 784

Love makes the separate presence of 'another' impossible. In Love, personalities just dissolve into one another. Separation simply evaporates. When the Guru experienced his own dissolution in Divine Love, he and the Lord surely would have become one. God must have infiltrated into his being so fully that, inebriated with the thrill of that experience, the Guru must spontaneously have poured out his songs. These songs came out in the language of the people. Guru Nanak himself testifies that:

ਗੁਰ ਮਹਿ ਆਪੁ ਸਮੋਇ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ॥

You incorporated Yourself into the Guru's being; and through him doled out Your Word. SGGS p. 1279

This word (*bānī*) the Guru sang to eulogise His Fearless Lord. Then beckoned others to join him

ਜੈ ਘਰਿ ਕੀਰਤਿ ਆਖੀਐ ਕਰਤੋ ਕਾ ਹੋਇ ਬੀਚਾਰੋ ॥
ਤਿਤੁ ਘਰਿ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਸੋਹਿਲਾ ਸਿਵਰਿਹੁ ਸਿਰਜਣਹਾਰੋ ॥੧॥
ਤੁਮ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਕਾ ਸੋਹਿਲਾ ॥
ਹਉ ਵਾਰੀ ਜਿਤੁ ਸੋਹਿਲੈ ਸਦਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

In that house where the Praises of the Creator are chanted and contemplated upon.

In that house, sing the Songs of His Praise; and remember the Creator Lord.

Sing the Praise of my Fearless One.

May I be a sacrifice unto the Song of Praise that ushers eternal peace! SGGS p. 12

Thus was God's Word coded in common language. God seems to also have sanctioned the linguistic expression of the Guru's experience:

ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ ॥
As the Word of the Lord comes to me, so do I express it, O Lalo. SGGS p.722

The *Gurus' banī* is thus the voice of God
ਇਹ ਬਾਣੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਨਿਜ ਘੀਰ ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ।

This *Bani* is of the Supreme Being; it, takes one into the home of his inner being. SGGS p.935

This Word is living and active. It is an unsheathed double edged sword that pierces your very being if you

open your heart to it . It is double edged in the sense that it slays your usual self and also awakens you to a higher level of consciousness.

Listening to God

Our loving God does not merely talk to us. It is His desire that we also talk to Him. To hear our prayers, our *ardas*. Even our complaints and grudges; they please Him.

We may talk to Him, but seldom have patience to wait for hearing his response. Are we really desirous of hearing Him? Do we really stay awake after praying? Or do we tend to slip back into our mundane preoccupations immediately following our prayers?

Today's age, wedded to rationalism and cognitive analytical thought, mocks at one who claims that he hears God. But saints heard Him, the Gurus and *Bhaktas* heard Him. There are some, even now, who hear Him. Many among us hunger to Hear Him. Yet to most of us, He appears to be frustratingly silent.

Do you really want to hear Him? Then it is quite possible, you may be hearing Him already, or He is giving you the longing to hear Him. If so, tune to Him. Let it happen spontaneously. God does not talk to our heads - these are incredibly filled up with useless debris. He does not talk to our physical senses either. These are hungry for material pleasures. He does not want to talk to our hearts either. They are clogged with stupid feelings and hungry desires. He communicates with us through our spirit, our *atma*. We, however, do not know where our *atma* is. Nor do we know how to be led by it.

Be sure that God is forgiving and charitable. Do not be burdened under any guilt. If you have ever erred, howsoever seriously, you still can't outdo the generosity of His forgiveness. Bhakta Ravidas, addressing God, says rather cheekily, yet so truly:

ਜਉ ਪੈ ਹਮ ਨ ਪਾਪ ਕਰੰਤ ਅਹੇ ਅਨੰਤਾ।
ਪਤਿਤ ਪਾਵਨ ਨਾਮੁ ਕੈਸੇ ਹੁੰਤਾ।

Had we not committed any sins, O Infinite Lord, how would You have acquired the name: 'Redeemer of sinners'?

SGGS p. 93

So be assured of His limitless forgiveness. Yet, be humble. Real humility is being open to be guided by Him and to enjoy His Will for us. At first thought, God's Will appears to be alarmingly oppressive and restrictive. One is afraid that one might be commanded to do something embarrassing. Trust Him. No one knows you better than He does. None, other than Him, has your best interest at heart. Fearing God's will is irrational and stupid. He is warm and fascinatingly charming. Let us be prepared

to carry out His Will trusting that He loves us and that His Love is infinite.

Whoever experienced His Love also found Him awesome. God also speaks to us by awakening a great sense of awe. I am not talking only of the awe produced by His thunder and lightning, fire and wind, or cloudburst and volcano. Every particle of His creation awakens awe mingled with Love. So too with the human heart.

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨ ਮਨਿ ਭਉ ਤਿਨਾ ਮਨਿ ਭਾਉ ॥੨॥

O Nanak, those whose minds are filled with Awe, They alone have the love of God in their heart.

SGGS p.465

One morning, I was in the city's main park. I heard a very pleasant squeak from behind. There was a parakeet perched on a *champa* bush. I had never seen such a beautiful bird before. I was grateful that it had called me by that wonderful squeak. Perched by its side were two little black birds. They were gazing around silently but vigilantly. I was filled with amazing peace and incredible attraction to them. I found myself singing:

ਸਾਵਲ ਸੁੰਦਰ ਰਾਮਣਆ । ਮੇਰਾ ਮਨੁ ਲਾਗਾ ਤੋਹਿ ।

O my dark and beautiful Lord, my mind is simply attached to You. I could not stir. I was simply mindful of the global glory of God.

SGGS p. 335

ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਵਸਿਆ।
ਤੇਰਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਲਖਿਆ।

I am a sacrifice unto Your Creation in which You pervade. Your limits cannot be known.

SGGS p.469

Unfortunately, our agenda is always far shallower than God's. We only want a 5- minute session with Him, while He likes us to look for a life time of ever increasing intimacy with Him that should culminate in an eternity of incomprehensible closeness.

Hearing God requires sharpening our *spiritual hearing* so that we should be able to discern His voice. His voice can emerge also out of the holy congregation, for

... ਵਿਚਿ ਸੰਗਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਵਸੈ ਜੀਉ।

In the holy Congregation, the Lord Himself abides.

SGGS p.94

Let us be sure that God is always speaking to us. His awesome deeds and His breathtaking Love are ever in conversation with us. Only we have to learn to respond to Him. In case we want to hear him in the tongue with which we are familiar, we should turn to *gurbani* and to *sadh sangat*. To them also we should only respond through our spirit.

JSN

Pure Instrument of the Guru Harinder Singh ‘Mehboob’

My introduction to Professor Harinder Singh Mehboob’s work occurred in Kansas in September 1993. I found the opening paragraphs of *Rider of the Blue Steed* incredible: a fresh, endearing, and intelligent approach to the “life-movement” of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. I would meet him four years later on the Vaisakhi day of 1997 at his home in Panjab. As a contemporary personality, I was most impressed with his religious lyrical innocence, unbridled devotion to the Sikh heritage and its institutions, unparalleled evaluation of world literature, uncompromising intellectual honesty and a dervish humility and simplicity. My continuous journey through his works is best expressed as the gold standard for exploring aesthetics, history, philosophy, poetry, folk culture, metaphysics, and contemporary diction –and all at the same time.

In the Sikh world, he shall be held in highest esteem not solely as a literary figure, but as a Sikh who inspired *Surat* – state of consciousness – a way of existing among everything which surrounds us that most can only hope to glimpse during those sacred moments in life; the state in which “The Way of the Peaceful Warrior” continuously is ‘*Jo hai so hai.*’ Poetry came out of him infused with such genius and perfection as to belie human origin.

Prof. Mehboob was a pure instrument of the Guru – a *rabab* (rebeck) upon which Guru Nanak Sahib plays an exquisite *sabad* (infinite wisdom). In his vast outpouring of style, ideas, and images such as *Khalas-kudrat*, *Vismad-naksh*, and *Vijei-tark*, he not only captured the whole of the Sikh inspiration, but also transformed it into an exquisite illustration of the Sikh spirit. The most banal experiences were cast in



Photo courtesy: Panjab Digital Library.

the light of universal truths; the ordinary life of an individual – crowded, busy, and full of uncertainty – is shown to be an elegant and necessary step on one’s journey of the ineffable Absolute.

Though he was a professor of English, Prof. Mehboob wrote his major works in Panjabi – demonstrating the pinnacle importance of articulating in one’s mother tongue. He was a product of the Marxist intellectual movement (a norm among Panjabi intellectuals), but embraced the Sikh thought and lifestyle after graduate studies. The ideological leanings, the progressive journey, and personal limitations are all were quite visible in his everyday

life. After the 1984 genocidal killings of Sikhs in India he became particularly known for his Sikh activism. It is no secret that today's most celebrated Panjabi poets used to go seek his remarks and approvals before publishing their work.

Prof. Mehboob did not simply pen ordinary books, he wrote multiple anthologies that re-defined and re-invigorated the South Asian literary world. His essays, both in English and Panjabi, were bold and insightful. His contributions generated thought-provoking discussions and debates across Panjab's borders.

To appreciate *Jhana di Rat* fully, one must delve into it often for the rewards commensurate. The reader who returns to the words finds himself steeped in its beauty and in its depths of sentiment. I felt as if I was lost in the streets of Lahore; I re-lived the carefree moments and worryless sleep at Nankana Sahib. The love for Panjab and its co-religionists is gracefully articulated in the old glory of multicultural *des* (nation); a culture born through the Grace of the Guru, and able to live in 'Harmony in a World of Difference.' And lastly, lest we forget, the allegorical depiction of the 1984 *ghallughara* (genocide) in a poem '*Nind da katal ate shahid da ghazab*' is dreadfully powerful. In fact, it invited the wrath of the Indian state which actually targeted the Professor for "elimination."

In kind, I return to *Sahije Rachio Khalsa* again and again in order to properly absorb each nugget of information and insight. It is a work rich with Sikh traditions and feelings and with the author's often religiously powerful "mystic logic." Its poetic prose is exemplified by the believer's conviction. The elaborate explanations that Prof. Mehboob weaves in throughout are more than suffice to satisfy the elements challenging the Sikh traditions from within, as well as from well-planned external attacks. The vocabulary is large; frequently, the sentences are intellectually stimulating. I believe if this work were to be translated into English, it would establish the universalities of Sikh thought at a global level. It addresses the falsity, cleverness, and shortcomings of anti-Sikh theses, effortlessly constructs arguments against Sikhi which scholars studying Sikhs haven't yet thought of, and then demolishes them with the fine lyrical balance of Sikh sensibilities. He highlights the grandeur of the Guru.

For me, *Ilahi Nadar de Painde* works its influence at the level of the soul, filtering, like the cry of the

loon, through the subconscious. It is an unparalleled poetic rendition of life, love, and the Satigur. The epic is a spiritual flight that pierces through the heart and sends shivers throughout the body. It echoes the spirit and thought we encounter in the writings of the stalwarts like Bhai Vir Singh and Mahakavi Santokh Singh. I ought to delve even deeper into the first volume to feel the prophet-genius of Guru Nanak Sahib. I am saddened the second volume on Guru Gobind Singh didn't see its completion by Prof. Mehboob; nonetheless, I await its publication.

Prof. Mehboob's works were not the product of literary ambition, but rather should be viewed as acts of service. The religious and poetic traditions that produced Prof. Harinder Singh Mehboob, Bhai Vir Singh, and Prof. Puran Singh can be said to understand all of creation as providing the metaphors of Divine Qualities. Like the Sufi poets Abdur Rahman Jami and Jalaluddin Rumi, Mehboob's poetry inhabits many dimensions of life simultaneously. While most poetry leads us through carefully arranged sentiment, Prof. Mehboob wrote from somewhere beyond this common realm of thoughts and feelings, as we know and define them today. His poetry is not so much the search for the immanent truth and knowledge, or some discovery to be made in the outer world, but an elaboration of an instant *hereness*, the immediate inner song of experience that floods this world but is not of it. It is an ecstasy of wisdom that flows into words, sounds, and images. Prof. Mehboob's labour of love is the experience of the whole as well as the parts.

The magnificence of Prof. Mehboob's poetry heartened my faith, his magical words and transcending love arouses an unquenchable hunger in me. Within the folds of his words, I gain entrance to a hidden chamber; I hear whispers that are ancient, yet intimate; I behold an endless love story between an individual being and the *Satigur* (the perfection).

An eccentric resident of *bhutovara* has embarked on his journey to the world hereafter, but Prof. Mehboob's genius made its everlasting impression on this earth. I consider it my great fortune to have visited Prof. Mehboob at Garhdivala several times, listened to his lectures throughout the land of the five rivers, and enhanced my own outlook with the valuable perspectives of this great teacher.

Harinder Singh

Co-founder of the Sikh Research Institute, he addresses the Sikh and the Panjab issues throughout the world.

HOLA MOHALLA

A FESTIVAL OF

NIHANG SINGHS

For three days after Holi, the Nihang Singhs of the Punjab celebrate their own masculine version of the spring festival called the Hola Mohalla with scintillating displays of archery, swordsmanship, horse riding and community bonding at Anandpur Sahib, *writes Sandeep Goswami.*
photographs by Malkiat Singh





Classic portrait of Nihang with his bow stretched :Anandpur Sahib.

For three days following the Holi festival in March, the twin towns of Punjab, Anandpur Sahib and Kiratpur Sahib, resound to the battle cries of Nihang warriors. Situated on the banks of the shimmering blue Sutlej river that follows its tumultuous course from the mighty Himalayas, both Anandpur Sahib and Kiratpur Sahib are steeped in the equally tumultuous history of Sikhism's struggle against tyranny and injustice of the Mughal rulers and betrayal by the Hill chieftains. Upholding a tradition started by

The celebration of Hola Mohalla dates back to the early 1700s. Faced by the tyrannical Mughals who were responsible for the death of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh realised the importance of acquiring the capability to defend the Sikh community against oppression. There was a constant need to keep his forces in practice, fighting fit and in high spirits. The Khalsa Panth had already been created on the Baisakhi Day in 1699 and Anandpur Sahib was now both a fortress and a religious institution. In the open fields surrounding the Holgarh Fort near Anandpur Sahib, he initiated



At a Nihang dera during Hola Mohalla.

the Tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh ji, the Sikh community gathers in large numbers to watch the Nihangs put up a scintillating display of mock battles and warrior skills with traditional weapons. Swordsmanship, tent-pegging, saddle-less horse riding and a variety of martial skills are on show. The festivities of Hola Mohalla are symbolic of revelry upon subduing the aggressor. It is as much a celebration of victory over the enemy as it is a platform for displaying the combative prowess of the Guru's own army.

the tradition of mock battles between two groups of 'Nihangs', as his Khalsa warriors were known. These men were highly committed soldiers, willing to fight till their last breath, at their Guru's bidding. Called the *Guru Ki Laadli Fauj* (the Guru's beloved army), these elite 'warrior-saints' were in perpetual readiness for battle. It was with the idea of giving a masculine connotation to all that was associated with his fighting force, he altered the word 'Holi' to the more manly and combative 'Hola'. So it was with many other words in a warrior's lexicon,



With steely resolve : teenaged Nihang at Hola Mohalla.





with 'Barchi' (spear) becoming 'Barcha', the sword or 'Teg' became 'Tega' etc. Renowned for their sheer fearlessness, even in the face of sure death, a perpetual readiness for action and the utter indifference to worldly possessions, their self-discipline and an austere life-style bestowed them with importance beyond what could be due to their numbers or political clout. In time, their ascetic morality and detachment from material advantage brought them enough moral esteem to even admonish and chastise Maharaja Ranjit Singh himself.

Nestling in the foothills of the Shivaliks, with the glistening turquoise ribbon of the Sutlej river barely a few miles south west of it, Anandpur Sahib in March is dominated by deeper hues of blue and orange as the Nihangs, dressed in their colourful *chogaas* (traditional robes) and sporting fierce looking weapons, gravitate there from all over the nation for Hola Mohalla. Cries of 'Bole So Nihal - Sat Sri Akal'



Nihangs display their traditional horsemanship at full gallop.

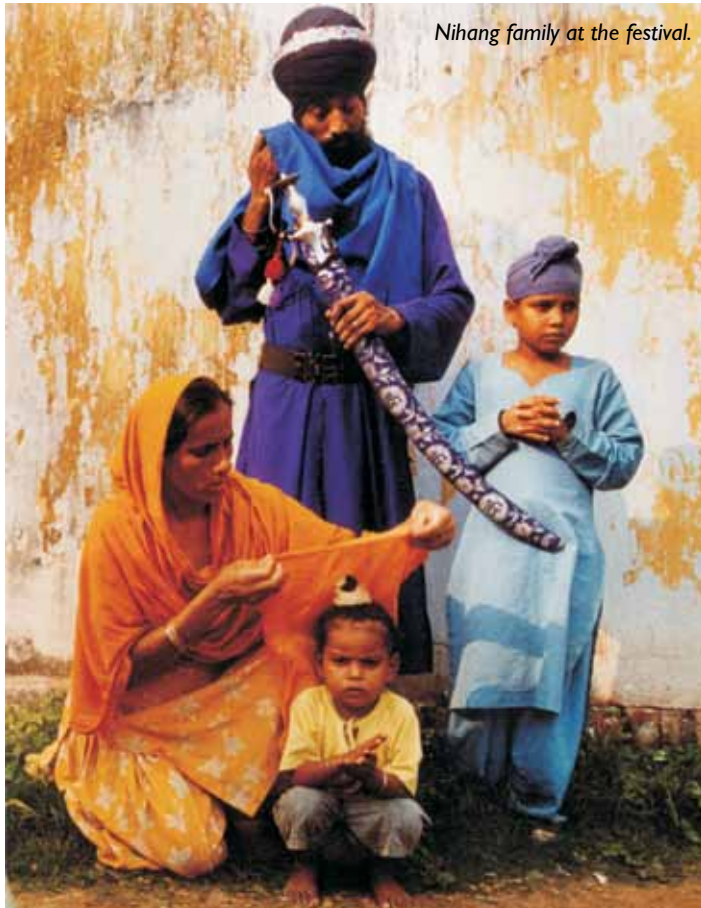




Learning the martial arts at three.



Spraying gulal colour during Hola Mohalla.



Nihang family at the festival.

resound all over even as puffs of guld momentarily colour the clear blue skies. The exuberantly tossed colours epitomise the typical Sikh high spirits. And the aggressive war cries portray their battle preparedness and willingness to take on the enemy, however powerful, to defend the good.

The camaraderie and oneness amongst the gathered Sikhs is underscored by the sincerity with which they perform community service (*sewa*), irrespective of their financial or social status. As part of the community service expected to be performed by any and every Sikh, voluntary community kitchens or '*langars*' are set up for the people visiting Anandpur Sahib. Food, especially the *Karah Parshada* is cooked and volunteers serve it with utmost courtesy and humbleness to all, irrespective of their caste or creed. The raw material and fuel for cooking comes as voluntary donations from all the surrounding villages for running the *langars*.



Nihang in his 'Maruta'.

Mard Agamrha

The Unique Man

The Sikhs have some remarkably different and contradictory ways of looking at their Gurus. Their religion says that God is free from the cycle of human birth, hence is never born nor dies. We also believe that God speaks to us through the Gurus and their teaching. What then of the divinity of the Gurus from Nanak to Gobind Singh? If Jesus was the son of God, how about Guru Nanak or Guru Gobind Singh? For that matter, how about you and I? When Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur were martyred, did they feel the pain? Did Guru Gobind Singh suffer the loneliness of war and desertion, and the anguish of every parent when he lost his sons in battle?

These and other questions were brought home to me two or three years back. I had been asked to formulate a series of questions based on a book on Guru Gobind Singh for a discussion group. One general question asked: "What kind of a man was he?" Some Sikhs who had a preview of the questionnaire took offence. Guru Gobind Singh, they insisted, should not be referred to as a man for he was divine. My words were blasphemy to them. I hid behind a verse of Bhai Nandlal, a poet who knew and traveled with Guru Gobind Singh and referred affectionately and reverently to the Guru as "A man — *nonpareil*."

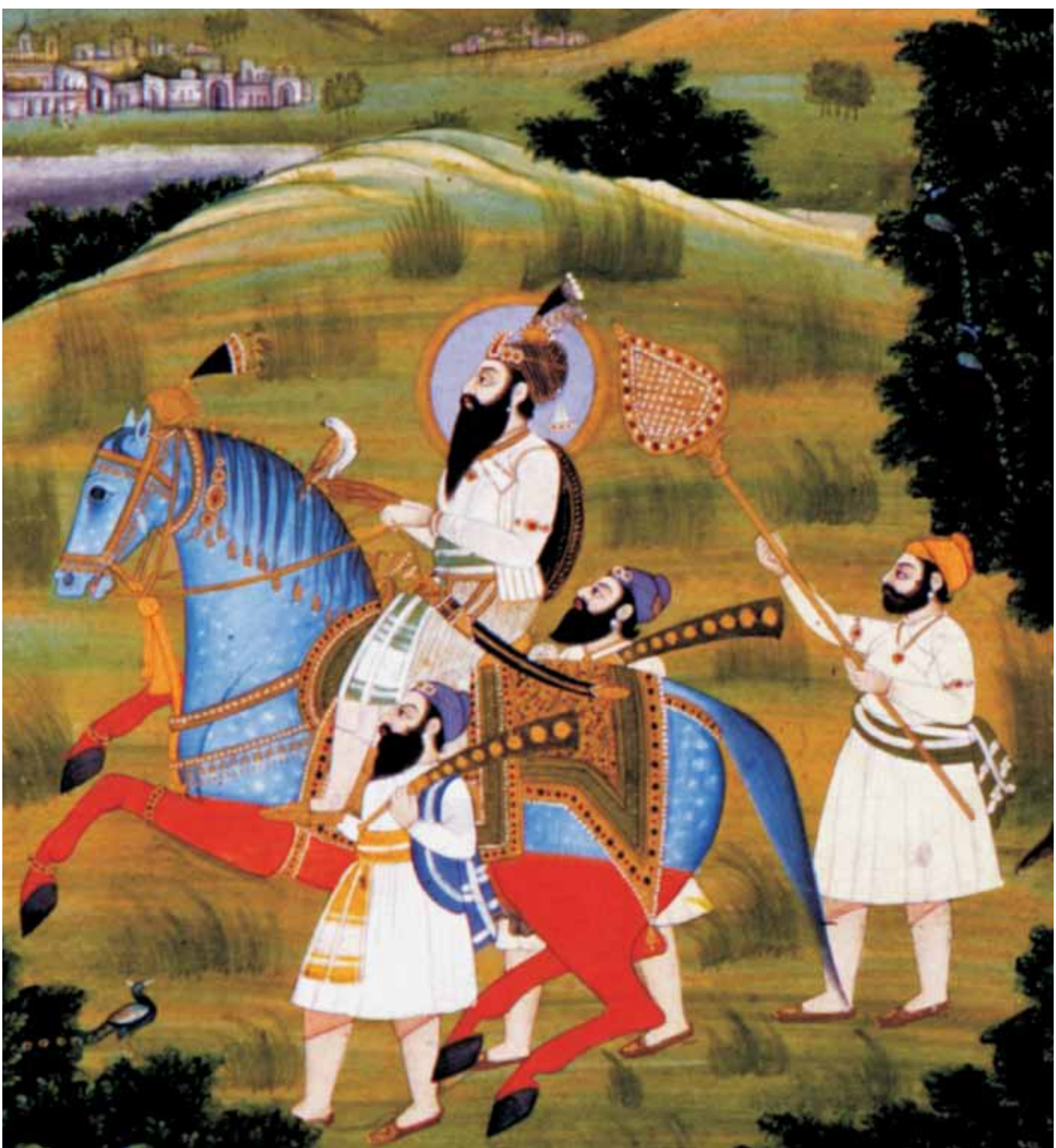
We recognise at a certain level of awareness that men like Jesus, Nanak, Gobind Singh were special — beyond human understanding — so much so that we unnecessarily free them of all human experiences, particularly those that are universally recognised as painful or noxious. The epitome of such reasoning is seen in Christianity, where in order to emphasise the uniqueness of Jesus, theologians have recast his birth and death in terms which deny him his humanity. To be virgin-born is not human, nor is it to be raised from the dead. The claim of virgin birth is not unique to Christianity; it is found much earlier in Egyptian mythology and in the life of Buddha as well. Similar reasoning is encountered when Christ is viewed as the only son of God, begotten not made like you or I. If God does not assume human forms, such claims cannot be taken literally. It seems to me that as sons or daughters of God you and I are no less, the difference

between Jesus and us may lie in the inadequacy of our lives and surely it is a quantum difference. In Guru Gobind Singh's words, God said to him: "I ordain you as my son. Go forth . . .". Such words in Christianity and in Sikhism need to be interpreted with some sensitivity and intelligence not transliterated. In very blunt language, Gobind Singh also directed his followers not to worship him as God.

Such claims as we make on behalf of our prophets and seers are merely indicative of our own very human inadequacies and insecurities. These claims are unnecessary, and to dismiss them would not diminish any great men of God. The uniqueness of Christ, Buddha, Nanak or Gobind Singh lies in how they lived and what they taught, not in how or where they were born or what happened to them after they died.

If at martyrdom Guru Arjan and Tegh Bahadur felt no pain then they did not suffer. If they did not suffer as we lesser mortals do, what can they tell us about human suffering? How can they show us the way? Christ was not without suffering when he wailed: "Father, why have thou forsaken me?" When Guru Arjan was tortured 1600 years later, he felt the pain though he did not lament his suffering. God the Father had not abandoned him. Instead, Guru Arjan essentially said: "Thy Will be done." His words at that time were of cheerful acceptance of the Will of God and the wish always to be imbued with the love of God. Guru Gobind Singh saw his two young teenaged sons go to war, never to return. He knew when his two younger sons were bricked up alive but did not recant their faith. His answer speaks of the man: "What if I have lost four sons, there are countless more." He was pointing to his followers then. Surely, he knew a father's pain. Certainly, the Gurus shared our human experience but were able to transcend it. Otherwise, they would have little to show us and nothing to teach us. If they felt no pain, what can they tell us about it? If they faced no temptation, they can hardly teach us how to manage ours.

On the other hand, I look at the political divisions and factions in our young Sikh community. I have come to see how difficult it is to knit our vibrant Sikhs into a unified group and lead them towards a common goal



Guru Gobind Singh on horseback with his attendants, gouache on paper, c. 1830, 18.5 x 15 cm (Kapany Collection).

in a single direction. The Gurus created a pride of lions, not a flock of sheep — a nation of individuals, fearless and not afraid to go alone. Yet, these same Sikhs who follow no man, willingly and freely followed their Gurus through pain, suffering, war and often to certain death; and now hundreds of years later, in the name of their Gurus, they still walk that road and the extra mile. I wonder if there can be a more vivid proof of the Gurus' divinity. I think in fruitless arguments about the humanity or divinity of the Gurus we miss or devalue the essential elements of their teaching.

The core of Sikh teaching — how to live and die with dignity — had to be taught by example. Mere words would lose relevance with time. The Gurus taught that salvation does not lie in renunciation but in a life of involvement as a householder. Marry, have a family, make an honest living, share the rewards of life with your fellow beings, and spend a life with your mind attuned to the infinite reality within. In a life devoted to truth, be prepared to lay your life on the line for honesty, integrity and honour. These are the essentials of a useful, productive life.

The Gurus taught that empowerment of a people occurs only when they have learned the essentials of a God-centered life where God is sought through a responsible, ethical life of honest self-effort and service to mankind. The inner life must be consistent with and effortlessly merged with the external reality of action in the society and this world. Worship no one but the infinite within, serve no master but truth, live a productive life within the community, taught the Gurus. Truth and truthful living were the first lessons of Sikhism that Guru Nanak gave. He taught the way to responsible, ethical, honest family life. By example and by teaching the Gurus rejected the caste system, elevated women to equal status, taught people to share, and so on.

The Gurus lived at a time and in a society where life and liberty of a non-Muslim were not safe. Practices such as the caste-system, female infanticide and *sati* dominated Hinduism. A multi-dimensional struggle for a just society was necessary. However, much as one does not entrust a bankbook to a child or a car to one who cannot drive, Nanak did not ask his followers to take up arms against tyranny and injustice. The followers had to develop the maturity, judgement and discipline for that. Before you pick up a weapon you must know what it is to die. Before you acquire power you must learn what it is to be powerless, lest you become a despot. To command one must learn to serve. Each Guru added a chapter to this book of lessons started by Nanak; each lesson added another dimension to the Sikh — the new man, a man for all seasons.

But it is one thing to preach and quite another to do. The Gurus therefore, lived what they taught. Now as long as Sikhs remember their history, they will retain the lessons.

The Gurus had shown what it is to lead a life of service. Guru Arjan and Tegh Bahadur had shown how to die with dignity for a principle. Guru Hargobind and Gobind Singh could now ask this new man — the mature Sikh — to maintain weapons but use them only if absolutely necessary for justice. By the time that the Sikh was given the power of a giant he had learned not to use it like one. Guru Gobind Singh's life was a demonstration-lesson on what it is to be completely human and a complete man in all of human dimensions — a man for all seasons.

Not so long ago when my hundredth research publication appeared in print, I felt proud as a peacock. To me and my friends it was quite a landmark. But what is the measure of a man? Guru Gobind Singh showed a different yardstick. He lived

the family life, married and had children. His children turned out well for none betrayed him but lived a life of rectitude, nobility, character and bravery. What more can a father ask? Guru Gobind Singh was an accomplished soldier and a General. He created a productive, fearless and honest nation out of powerless people at the fringes of society. He created leaders out of ordinary men and then subjected himself to the will of his followers. He created a nation and then credited his followers for all that he had accomplished. His door was open to the powerless as well as the elite of the day. What greater administrative skills and dedication to the public good can one have? He was a philosopher, a writer, a poet extraordinaire. To pen over a thousand pages of verse in a variety of languages is no mean achievement. To dictate the whole Guru Granth — all 1430 pages — from memory is no ordinary skill. A connoisseur of the arts, 52 poets and many musicians sought his patronage. Guru Gobind Singh's life illustrated all the dimensions of the human existence. And he lived for only 42 years — an age at which many of us are still finding ourselves. Where most of us once dead are soon forgotten, three hundred years after Guru Gobind Singh, people argue about whether he was divine. Now that is a yardstick for the measure of a man.

The concept of original sin is not found in Sikhism, nor the idea that woman is conceived any differently — from Adam's rib, for instance — or is any less. In the Sikh view human birth is special for in the human condition man can aspire to be divine. Sikhism is a religion of joy, not of sin. Human birth is not a fall from grace but not to fulfill its potential and its destiny would be. Knowledge is not sin, its abuse and misuse would be sinful. The sin is not in being human but in not becoming all we can be as humans.

"Man is a useless passion" Sartre claimed. Sikhism would passionately disagree. Sikhism holds for a state of impermeable equanimity like that achieved by a candle in a windless place, where one is in tune with the vibrations of divine music — suffused by bliss, undiminished by joy or sorrow, loss or gain, unaffected by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. The ultimate measure of one's divinity lies in one's humanity. To be completely human by developing all that is human and noble is to become divine. That is the only divinity, the only eternity, the only immortality open to man. To be more is not possible, to be any less is not to be fully human but to remain incomplete.

*Dr. IJ Singh
New York.*

A Breath of Fresh Air

Angad Singh and his Faith

He is at once captivating. Angad Singh stands tall: Given that he is 6 feet and a few inches and has accomplished more at 16 than most twice his age. Independent filmmaker, self-proclaimed peacemaker, confident orator, straight 'A' student, saxophone player... and we're still far from done.

However, more than his achievements, his personality is far more impressive. This American teen who "loves reaching out to people, especially youth" and does a formidably good job of it, (to quote a friend, "Every time you meet him, you like him more and more") is gifted with an inner fragrance and casual simplicity.

*I first met Angad in the fall of 2008, just a few days shy of his 15th birthday. His film **Roots and Wings** kick-started the **Spinning Wheel** festival in Toronto, Canada the previous day and the response had been tremendous. I was struck by his simplicity, sincerity and eloquence. Large eyes dominated a handsome face that would, every now and then break into a shy yet ready smile. In an age of smart packaging and almost glib confidence, Angad's quiet faith in himself and his ability to give life to the things he stands for are a breath of fresh air.*

Following are excerpts from our conversation in 2008:

How did the idea for 'Roots and Wings' come about?
I was invited to the Sikh Camp in West Virginia to teach filmmaking. The best way to teach something is to show someone how it's done, so I took along a cameraman and decided to make a documentary. I had an idea and wanted to see how far it would take



Basketball – his favourite sport.

me. I also wanted to interview the kids at camp, to see what their opinions were, to find out how similar or different their experiences were compared to mine; and how much it affected them.

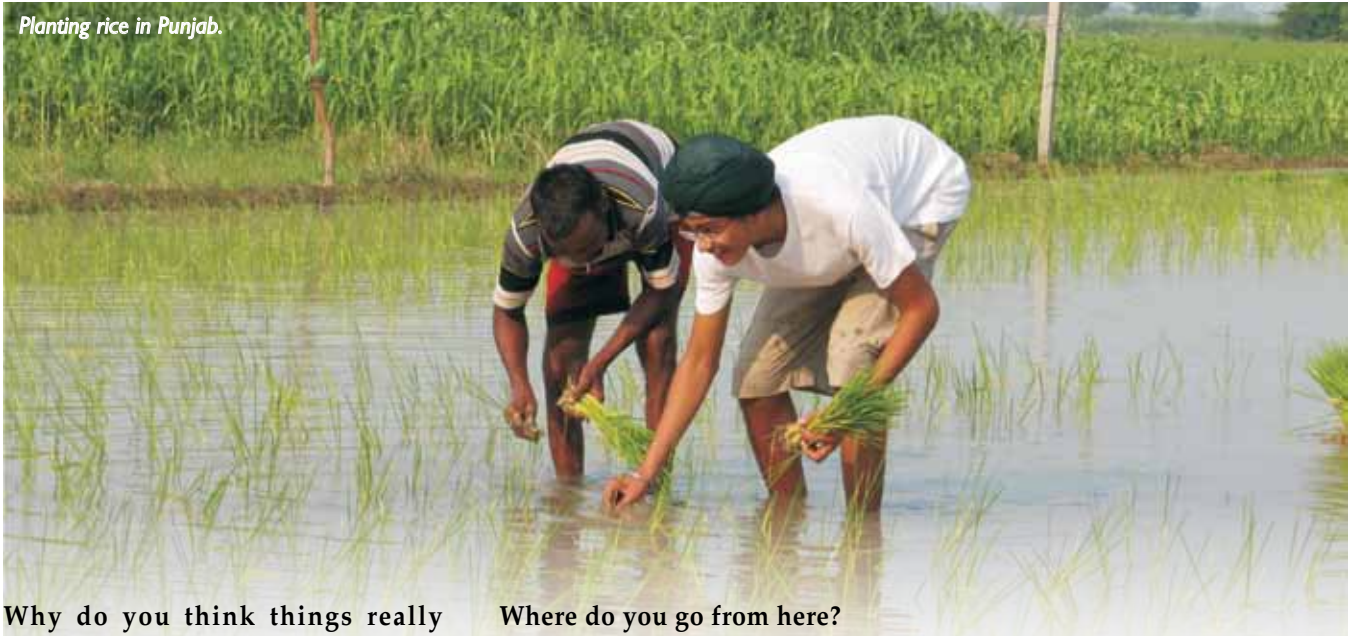
What made you realise the best way to teach is by example?

That's what the Gurus did. They taught us by example – Guru Nanakji taught us not to discriminate, Guru Amar Dasji set the standards for *seva* and *pangat*, Guru Gobind Singhji himself fought the battles — he didn't just send the Sikhs out there, he was there himself."

What kind of example are you?

I see myself as an American Sikh youth. I like playing basketball and love playing the sax in the school's marching band. I like the same music, the same food, same type of clothes (like other American kids)... it's just that sometimes I eat *roti-sabzi* at home. My turban is an additional responsibility but it also empowers me – I feel great when I get those around me to understand, to live with it. *So if I can do this, I can do a lot.*

Planting rice in Punjab.



Why do you think things really haven't changed much over the last generation?

Kids face problems all the time, but no one does anything about it because it's just not in their interest. And even though there's a lot of information out there on TV, it's often incomplete or biased. There's a lack of firsthand knowledge. Half knowledge is a dangerous thing. It is important to educate people to do away with the intolerance.

How much can one person change things?

I am inspired by our problems; why we have the problems we do and how can we change things? Change is tough but it must start with the average person. I see it as a pyramid with the average person making up the base. So, when we start at the bottom we lay a strong foundation for change. If we start at the peak (of the pyramid), society would probably topple over.

I am aiming at Diversity programmes in schools, educating people, talking to them. We can hold talks for middle-school kids, read out to (those in) kindergarten, show movies...spread the word.

Where do you go from here?

My film is still a work in progress. In the next installment (of *Roots and Wings*) I will be interviewing teachers and policy-makers. It is important to educate people on diversity, and when that education comes from a person of authority it makes all the more difference.

In the winter of 2006, Gurmeet, Angad's mother and volunteer organiser at the Gurmat Youth Camp invited Ish Kaur, Director of Punjabi film Kamdi Kalai. Ish motivated the kids to step out with their cameras and attempt short films for the then upcoming Sikhnet Youth Film Festival.

"One of them listened," Angad wrote in a personal recount on Sikhnet when 'One Light' celebrated over a year of accolades. "...you guessed it right. It was me. 'One Light's' seed was planted then because I listened to her (or was made to listen to her by my Mom)."



Working on his next film.



Catching up with homework.

A few months after the camp, Angad attended a three-week course on International Relations at Duke University: There he learnt that “The major source of conflict in this world is dwelling on differences, whether they are in religions, cultures or races,” followed by a “fear of the unknown.”

That got him thinking, and this is what he came up with: “What if we started acknowledging similarities between people and slowly learn about uniqueness each one has to offer. Then there will be no ignorance about each other and hence no fear and no conflict.”

With this in mind Angad picked up the camera to seek answers to six simple questions from his next-door neighbours, and began his filmmaking ‘career’ at age 13 in the summer of 2007.

Tell me what the film ‘One Light’ means to you?

I started out seeking to have a simple conversation with my neighbours. The film came to have a life on its own.

People discriminate when they fear. And one always fears the unknown. That is why it’s important that people get to know each other. Even with your own neighbours, you can live next to their homes for years but you don’t get the opportunity to ask questions like, ‘Why do you wear a turban?’ These questions need to be answered. Or else people interpret things in their own way; they find answers they are comfortable with rather than taking the time and trouble to get to the actual truth.

Have you ever been discriminated against?

(Shrugs) ...at times I have faced verbal abuse, been pushed around by kids asking why are you wearing a ball on your head? I do get tired of hearing the same things over and over again like, “lose that hat.” If I weren’t a Sikh, I wouldn’t have these problems. But then I would not question myself since I wouldn’t identify with the problems and think about them.

What questions are you asking yourself these days?

Can we do something to change the intolerance? Is there a way to change the thinking of a considerable majority of people? You can’t leave it to someone else to solve your problems. My hope as a Sikh is that we (as a public) do not generalise people on the basis of how they look.

Your films have been screened in festivals, schools and seminars. They have opened many opportunities for you. What’s has been your favourite part?

I love everything that I get to do after making the film. Talking and connecting with the kids and the workshops are by far my most favorite part. (After *Roots and Wings*), I’ve received letters from disabled kids simply because they identified with being singled out, being taunted...I really treasure those letters. It’s neat to know that you’ve changed someone’s life because you’ve changed the way they look at things.

*It was more than a year later at the end of 2009 that I met Angad again. A lot had happened in that year. His film **Roots and Wings** had taken him many paces forward. He became more visible in the Sikh community. He started a new film, had a sixteenth birthday and changed his style of turban, a “more formal style,” the full pagh.*

He had grown taller, also more serious, intense and quieter.

*His latest, “**Baby Step**,” and third documentary is a unique take on the French government’s ban on the display of religious symbols in schools as a consequence of which Sikh students are not allowed to wear turbans and karas to school.*

Recently, Angad and his mother Gurmeet played hosts to a French exchange student who may have been more than a little surprised to find himself in a different sort of American household.

Following are excerpts from a recent interview:

Connecting with his roots in the Punjab.



What have you been working on the past year?

Touring around the country with *Roots and Wings* - taking it to schools, film festivals and Sikh youth through local *Gurdwaras*. I am working to educate and empower the youth in playing a larger role towards diversity education in our schools.

I also travelled to the Punjab this past summer. It was the 25th anniversary of the 1984 Sikh Genocide and we (Mum and I) wanted to do something small but personal. We wandered into villages and talked to kids and families, went to Sikh schools and spoke with many children. We also visited a Drug Rehabilitation Centre. I wanted to learn as much as I could.

In Punjab I got to plant rice in a paddy field and bathe the buffalos. I visited several historical *Gurdwaras*. In short I connected with my spiritual homeland, the Punjab. And I also started to work on my third film.

Can you tell us something about your new film?

It has the same theme as *One Light* and *Roots and Wings* – the theme of peace, and of friendship. However, it takes the idea of inter-cultural understanding to a global level.

How the idea came about?

I study French at school. We have an Exchange programme where French kids visit and study with us for 2 weeks. I was curious as to what they perceive of America and decided to capture their American experience.

Where do you want to see this film go? What do you hope to achieve with it?

(I want it to go) to the young people in the world — particularly to the students in France. One of my goals is to have them understand the Sikh turban from a personal viewpoint, so that they can open their minds towards it. Another goal is to tell the world that

With youth of the Punjab.



Do you think the USA is more open to 'Roots and Wings' now? Under its new leadership do you see any change of attitudes?

We have a long ways to go. As many people love President Obama for his character, there is significant number of people that hate him for his colour and would love to see him fail.

How would you describe yourself?

Tall and awesome!

What are you favourite subjects in school?

World History because I get to learn about other cultures and peoples and I love playing the Sax. I plan to play it all the way through the school.

people are not what (picture) is painted by the governments and media.

Are you planning to go to France as an exchange student any time in the future?

I was in France this past summer on my way to India for two weeks. For one week I was there as an exchange student. I don't know if I will have another opportunity to travel before the school finishes. I may go there with my next film. I would love that.

When you attended school in France were you allowed to keep your turban?

Of course! We made sure of it upfront. I went in a *Dastaar* and gave a talk on *Sikhie* in the school. The kids were shocked about the law in France. This was a private Catholic school so they were more accepting (than French public schools).

How do you feel you've grown over the last year—as a filmmaker? As a person? What changes do you see in yourself?

I have grown taller. My (latest) film is a bit more professional; better camera, better editing and a more interesting story (line). My projects may be getting complex but the message remains simple. And I have a new turban style. I now wear a formal turban to school!

And what are your future academic plans?

I plan on going into International Relations.

What are you asking yourself these days?

How can I have more time to have fun?

When can I have my friends over?

What qualities do you admire?

Calmness in the face of turmoil; courage in the face of adversity; compassion when surrounded by hatred; and honesty in sea of corruption.



Relaxing with his great-grandmother in Delhi.



Being interviewed at a Film Festival.

coming up with a simple, effective solution through his chosen medium – film.

Through his films and with them he continues to mature creatively and spiritually. So far, each film has served as a stepping-stone leading him to his next venture.

During the course of our conversation, Gurmeet often refers to Angad as her 'blessing.' It is obvious that mother and son are close. Some of us inherit Sikhie, some of us are blessed with it. Angad is both. His "hero" Guru Nanak has blessed him with serenity and modesty, and the ability to follow his heart without getting waylaid by any accolades or setbacks that may fall on his path. Not surprising then that he stands tall.

Sanmeet Kaur

Who would you consider your mentors?

My hero is Guru Nanak. For he was able to inspire the oppressed to have confidence in themselves – to rise up against all sorts of exploitations and manipulations– religious, political, social, class and caste based and in the worst time and place in history.

I don't know if I have a mentor.

Undoubtedly one of Angad's strongest influences is his mother Gurmeet Kaur. He says, "It's hard to describe her in words. She is very passionate about the environment and Sikhi. She has given me all that I need to be successful; she inspires me to live a life of service to humanity and to always walk the path of Sikhie."

Gurmeet's poise, her unabashed passion for all that is close to her heart, the relentless drive with which she volunteers at youth camps and organising community events has provided Angad with a rock-solid religious and spiritual base and continues to do so.

It is this base that adds to Angad's uncanny ability to find a way through seemingly daunting situations,



Inspirational - signing his CD.

Seva

Neither a Shield, Nor a Sword



After the Tsunami, in South India.

I have noticed that the concept of *seva* – loosely translated as “selfless, voluntary service” – is nowadays increasingly wielded as a weapon and less as what it is meant to be.

The other day, when a community volunteer was asked why she repeatedly failed to do what she had undertaken to do, why she hadn’t met her obligations fully or in a timely fashion, I was flabbergasted by the response I overheard:

“I do *seva*, *bhenji*”, she protested. “I’m not getting paid for this. I spend so many hours here, while I could easily be doing something else. I don’t have to listen to this nonsense: if you don’t want me here, say so, and I’m gone!”

It was a deft use of the very essence of *seva*. As a shield – a shield from criticism and from accountability.

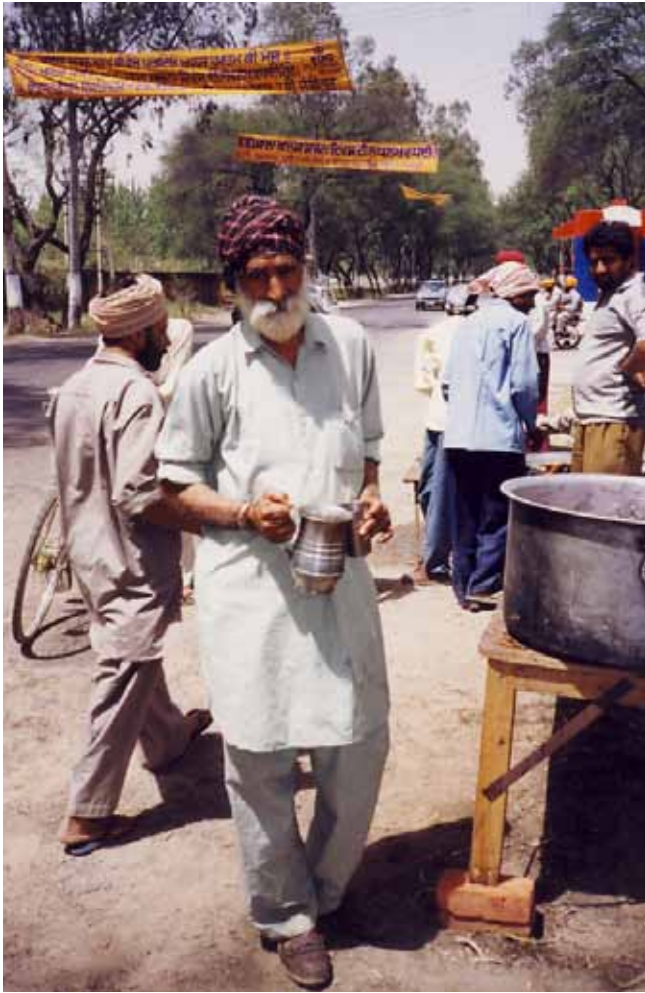
On another occasion, I heard a fellow wield the word somewhat differently, but equally effectively.

He was addressing members of a community group. “I’m the one who can run this organisation and ensure that it stays alive. I’ve done *seva* for three years – day and night, and weekends too. And haven’t taken a single cent for my time! How can you even think that another person should come over and run it. Others will simply run it to the ground. And, you know, I’m not going to let you do this. I’m not going to let you turn all my *seva* into nought!”

I felt, as I watched him through this performance, that he was wielding his *seva* quite deftly – as a weapon. A sword, actually. The parry and thrust was working: you could see it in the wounded look in the eyes of the audience.

Is this what *seva* is all about?

Am I wrong in thinking that the moment you use *seva* – yes, USE it – for any ulterior purpose, then it instantly ceases to be *seva*? If it loses its spiritual core, then all you’re left with is – a clumsy weapon.



Serving sharbat along the highway.

The concept of *seva*, I feel, is simple and uncomplicated in *Sikhi*.

The very idea of *seva* begins with a metaphor: that of the milk-pot or vessel. Nanak says:

First, wash the vessel,

Next, disinfect it with incense.

Then, and only then, is it ready to receive the milk.

[GGS, M1, 728:1]

True. What good is the milk once it has been poured into a soiled receptacle? The dirt of the vessel taints everything that is poured into it.

The mind, like the vessel, first needs to be cleansed if one is to prepare it for things spiritual. Otherwise, all effort goes to waste. And this cleansing of the mind, the preparation, is done with the “soap” of humility.

So far, all of this is esoteric and philosophical. But *Sikhi* brings the exercise down to earth by guiding us how to do it while going about our day-to-day, ordinary lives. In seeking humility, there’s no need to blindly wade through religious tomes. No penances, no fasting, no retreats, no masochism of any kind. No feeding of priests, no pilgrimages, no renunciations, no onerous abstentions.

There’s a simple, direct and effective way: *seva*.

No grandiose projects are necessary for this inner cleansing. We don’t have to build monuments, or



Making rotis at langar.



Kar Seva at Darbar Sahib (photograph by Malkiat Singh).

light bonfires on top of mountains, or even go on far-flung crusades fighting for world peace.

Just serving the basic needs of those who are in need puts us on the right path. At home, with the neighbour, around the corner, in the community we live in – the concentric circles can get as wide or remain as narrow as the situation demands.

Feed the hungry, clothe the destitute, shelter the homeless.

Or even more simple: just wash the dishes at the *langar*, or serve food, or look after the shoes of those who come to worship.

Anonymity helps. Not wearing a t-shirt or bandana, that proclaims the *Sevadar*, helps.

Doing it without fan-fare, without a *shabash* or pat on the back, is a definite plus. Doing things that others do not want to, or

cannot do, is good. Sweeping the floor, or cleaning the washrooms are therefore bound to be the most rewarding.

One of the most moving sights I have seen in my life is something I witnessed a couple of years ago in Espanola, New Mexico. Singh Sahib Harbhajan Singh Yogi had shed his mortal coil and crowds from around the globe had arrived to celebrate his life. By the thousands. The logistics required to cater to the needs of these visitors from far and wide were stupendous.

And one of them was the need for a platoon of portable toilets which were, I'm sure, leased for the occasion. It would've been terribly easy to have also bought the services of a handful of workers who could've maintained the facilities and kept them clean at all times.

What touched me deep inside was the vision of our hosts who saw it as an unprecedented opportunity to do *seva*. Any time of the day or night, if you walked into the facilities, you saw a couple of the Sikhs from the Espanola *sangat* cleaning the toilets and water basins, or down on their hands and knees, cleaning the floor. It was arguably the cleanest spot within the endless acreage roped in for the events of the week.

And, you know, there was not a sign anywhere proclaiming, e.g., "Seva provided by the *Sangat* of –"

Nothing. Not a word, not a beep.

That's *seva*.

It's for the sheer sake of *seva*. It has no other goal. Even the end result is not important. You don't need a smile or a nod, a pat on the shoulder, or the gratitude of another to validate it. You simply do it, and you do it to the best of your ability, and nothing else matters.

You don't go home and note it in your diary. Or tell your family and friends. Or have it published in a newsletter in the 'Acknowledgment' section.

And you don't wave it in the face if you are running for election the next time around.

Here's what I've been taught and what I try to emulate – though those who know me well could easily cite many a lapse:

Don't let the right hand know what the left hand does ...

It isn't *seva* if it is for the purpose of getting a tax-deductible receipt.

It isn't *seva* if your heart and soul aren't in it.

It isn't *seva* if it isn't done with honesty and integrity.

It isn't *seva* if you believe that mediocrity is all that is expected of you, and that you needn't do more.

It isn't *seva* if it's for building your resume.

It isn't *seva* if it is meant to be a stepping stone to bigger and better things.

It isn't *seva* if you need to tell others, now or later, that you did it.

It isn't *seva* if lack of appreciation by others, or their criticism, drives you away.

It isn't *seva* if you believe that it is your right to do it.

It isn't *seva* if you have to fight against others to do it.

It isn't *seva* if you snatch it away from another, to do it.

It isn't *seva* if you begin to believe you're the best one to do it.

And, it isn't *seva* if it distresses you that others take credit for what you've done.

Not too long ago, I was blessed with an opportunity to visit the Darbar Sahib in Amritsar, after an absence of more than three decades. There were so many things that added to the joy of being there.

Not the least of it was the timeless sight at all hours of the day or night, literally – even in the cold and dark hours before dawn – of men, women and children behind the counter, tending to the shoes of pilgrims.

Quiet faces, moving in the shadows. Ever-so-slight, barely discernible quivering of the lips, silently accompanying the *kirtan* playing from the speakers around them. No small-talk. No name-tags. No meeting of the eyes, no searching for acquaintances. Just simple, purposeful, swift, efficient movements – the queues were long.

There's always a hush around the shoe-stalls outside the main entrance, I've noticed. The only words you hear are "*satnam, satnam...*" and "*waheguru, waheguru...*" And a lot of "*ji...ji...jee-o...ji ...*"



Starting young: Seva at Paonta Sahib.

I don't know how they do it. But I see them taking each pair of foot-wear as if it is a house-warming gift. Lovingly, gently, softly – if you glance back for a split-second, as you turn away, you may even catch one in the shadows wiping the dirt off your shoes as they are placed on the shelves.

I tell you, it is there, standing on the cold wet marble, looking at this scene, that I experienced the first communion with what I had come searching for, after all these years, at the doors of the *Harmandar*.

It is the epitome of *seva*.

And, it is most magical when – and I borrow from the English Bard – it "is not strain'd"...

It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven

Upon the place beneath.

It is twice blest

It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.

May we all, each one of us, be blessed with this gift.

T. Sher Singh
Toronto

United Sikhs in Haiti

On the fateful Tuesday of 12 January 2010, a catastrophic earthquake struck Haiti in the Caribbean, having its epicentre near the town of Léogâne, approximately 25 km west of Port-au-Prince, Haiti's capital. Described as Haiti's worst earthquake in two centuries, by 24 January an estimated three million people were affected by the quake; the Haitian Government reported that an estimated 230,000 people had died, 300,000 had been injured and 1,000,000 made homeless.

In the nights following the earthquake, many of Haiti slept in the streets, on pavements, in their cars, or in makeshift shanty towns either because their houses had been destroyed, or they feared standing structures would not withstand aftershocks. The Haitians' flight from their ravaged city accelerated via boat, bus, car and truck in an uncertain quest for shelter, fresh water and stability in the countryside.



Survivors lined up in front of 'United Sikhs' trucks.



Sarvinder Singh distributing cooked food, a langar in being.

Many countries responded to appeals for humanitarian aid, pledging funds and dispatching rescue and medical teams, engineers and support personnel. Communication systems, air, land, and sea transport facilities, hospitals, and electrical networks had been damaged by the earthquake, which hampered rescue and aid efforts; confusion over who was in charge, air traffic congestion, and problems with prioritisation of flights further complicated early relief work. Countries of the world pledged some \$ 2.4 billion in aid, ranging from \$ 470 million from the United States, while India earmarked \$ 5 million.



Balwant Singh distributing hot meals.

At this juncture, volunteers from the New York-based United Sikhs organisation battled through the devastation and chaos of Haiti to facilitate relief work in the capital city of Port-au-Prince. Once established they built up resources to the point where they could distribute 5,000 hot meals each day as in their *langar* tradition, following a request from the mayor of Carrefour, Yvonne Gerome. "It was heartbreaking to see so many hungry children in line for the food," said Harcharan Singh, a volunteer from Toronto.

With a foothold in Port-au-Prince, United Sikhs then appealed for other volunteers, including doctors, to join them in their humanitarian rescue efforts. The charity's humanitarian director, retired Lt Col Gurbachan Singh and his colleagues flew into Santo Domingo airport in the Dominican Republic and drove into Haiti across the Jamini border.

The United Sikhs' first assessment of the situation showed immediate need for medical supplies, food, water, and shelter for survivors. Like other rescue workers, the team had to overcome serious obstacles and logistics challenges owing to a lack of infrastructure. The charity encountered countless survivors with serious injuries, especially crushed limbs needing emergency medical treatment. "Every building on the roadside was severely damaged with falling concrete roofs crushing people, household goods, and vehicles. There were dead bodies lying on the ground", recalled Lt Col Gurbachan Singh.

More doctors continued to join the Sikh Aid team from the US to establish a team comprising rehab doctors, primary care doctors and an occupational therapist.

Kuldip Singh, president of *United Sikhs, USA*, said that Haiti was in desperate need and called for generous support from the worldwide community to help sustain the organisation's commitment to survivors. The organisation has issued an appeal for doctors who could afford time and travel to volunteer for the relief effort, and donations of food, water, temporary shelters, medical services and emotional support to the people in need.

United Sikhs is a UN-affiliated, international non-profit, non-governmental, humanitarian relief, human development and advocacy organisation, aimed at



A child looks at Paramjit Singh in Haiti.



Indian Army Sikh troops with the United Nations, deployed in Haiti.

empowering those in need, especially disadvantaged and minority communities across the world. It was conceived in 1999, when a group of Sikhs from the New York metropolitan area banded together to assist in the socio-economic development of immigrant communities in Queens, New York. Today, United Sikhs is a grass-roots organisation with chapters in America, Asia and Europe that pursue projects for the spiritual, social and economic empowerment of underprivileged and minority communities.

“Divinity, Duality and Eco Sikhi”

Reflection of Canadian Sikhs

Sikhs of British Columbia’s Lower Mainland invited the Sikh Research Institute (SikhRI) to bring their programming to Canada to “educate, inspire and engage” the local community, from 26 to 28 March 2010.

The first day began with a stirring discussion on “The Harjinder Thind Show” on RedFM. Harinder Singh, SikhRI’s Chief Programming Officer, went on air to discuss the topic of “Punjab Today”. Listeners were moved to call the show and expressed views ranging from anger to helplessness to hope. That evening, Harinder appeared on BC’s only South Asian mainstream news broadcast station, Omni TV, allowing more viewers to tune in and comment on “Punjab Today”.

The second day’s schedule involved a day-long interactive workshop, “The Guru: Connecting with the Divine Light”, and was held in a lecture hall at Kwantlen Polytechnic University. The *sangat* of BC specifically requested the session, and it was made possible with sponsorship support from the Khalsa Credit Union. Facilitators guided the nearly 80 participants through three sessions: *What is Guru? Meaning, Role & Importance*, *The Prophet-Genius of the Ten Nanaks: Attributes, Lives & Contributions*, and *Guru Granth & Guru Panth: Origin, Development & Institution*.

The night’s events coincided with the globally recognised Earth Hour, which involves people turning off their lights for one hour to save resources. In marking the occasion among the Sikh community, Harinder Singh took the stage at Sukh Sagar Gurdwara in New Westminster to deliver a compelling speech titled, “Sikhi on Social Responsibility and the Environment”. He urged the *sangat* to reflect upon how our lives and actions, both as individuals and as a community, affect the environment and the socio-economic experiences of people around the world. He cited numerous references in Gurbani where the Gurus

have reminded Sikhs of the interconnectedness of the enviro-eco systems of the world.

“There is not much awareness of these issues from a Sikhi perspective and I believe people were very inspired to see that our responsibility to the environment is very central to the Gurus’ teachings,” said Baljinder Kaur, president of SikhRI Canada.

During his speeches at the Guru Nanak Sikh Society and Dasmesh Darbar Gurdwaras, in addition to environmentalism, Harinder Singh spoke on Bhagat Singh, commemorating the anniversary of his martyrdom. He highlighted the necessity of Sikhs and Punjabis to own Bhagat Singh’s struggle, heritage and martyrdom as a significant and inspirational part of history.

The weekend came to a close with a radio discussion on Sher-e-Punjab’s *Dilaan di Saanjh*, hosted by Kuldip Singh.

SikhRI also travelled to the east coast of Canada for two events at the University of Toronto Mississauga for a *saneha* on the topic of *Asa di Var: Transcending Duality*. The programme explored the structure and significance of *Asa di Var* as well as offering guidance for transcending duality in thought, conduct and society.

On Sunday, Harinder Singh spoke on the topic of “Celebration and Thankfulness” at Shiromani Sikh Sangat Gurdwara.

“As an individual and family invests intellectually, socially and financially to build academic qualifications towards a successful career, it requires relentless pursuit in developing a relationship with the Divine. What is needed is a disciplined and purposeful physical, mental, and financial commitment to be with the Force, the One Reality,” said Singh of the programme’s focus.

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“Health for all - with the help of all”



The surgeon, Dr. Devinder Pal Singh Toor, seen with his operating team (from left, front row Rajinder, Ms. Princy, Dr. Bandna Chatterjee, Ms. Ranjeeta Chauhan; at the back are Ramesh and Ms. Mani)

Dr. Devinder Pal Singh Toor is the former Medical Director and Consultant Surgeon at the Rural Medicare Centre at Saidulajaib which was founded by the Rural Medicare Society in 1976. Dr. Toor has been working at the Centre since 1993, which provides basic and appropriate health care to sections of society which cannot afford costly health care at private nursing homes and corporate hospitals.

Dr. Devinder Pal Singh is a member of the Association of Rural Surgeons of India and believes that specialised and expensive hospitals have their own part to play but the country cannot remain focused on tertiary care. Basic health care has to be provided to all!

Rural Medicare Centre is a 30-bed hospital with attending physicians, surgeons, eye specialists, ENT specialists, Paediatricians, Gynaecologists, Obstetricians, Orthopedic Surgeons, having ultrasound, X-ray laboratories and two operation

theatres. The centre is also involved with DNB (rural surgery) course of National Board of Examination, New Delhi for encouraging doctors to settle in rural areas. The centre runs an OPD Centre at the Karunamai Maa Ashram in Sohna, Gurgaon.



Dr. Devinder Pal Singh believes that success of such a centre depends on teamwork and dedicated people. He joined this centre 15 years ago after leaving the Mool Chand Hospital (where he worked for 10 years) with the belief that “Happiness is not in having more but in wanting less”.

Dr. Devinder Pal Singh encourages that the slogan ‘Health for all’, should be changed to “Health for all - with the help of all”!

Sikhs on the Frontier



The barbaric beheading of Jaspal Singh, who belonged to Peshawar, has once again brought the limelight on Pakistan's Sikh community, who live in exceedingly difficult times (see *Nishaan III/2009*). Sikhs are intertwined with history of the region and Peshawar in particular, which they call 'home' and yet they are regarded as aliens. Almost 80% of these Sikh families migrated to Peshawar primarily from the three tribal regions of Orakzai, Kurram and Khyber. It all began in the mid-1980s at the peak of the Afghan jihad. Back then, the region was the launchpad for thousands of US-backed anti-Soviet fighters, whose presence did not change traditional lifestyles and the Sikhs lived in harmony with their tribal neighbours. But when the area became a sanctuary for Taliban and al-Qaeda fugitives, the migration became a necessity.

The Taliban's rise to prominence made life unbearable for the minorities in the region. Moreover, ten gurdwaras which were under government control from the days of Partition, "were turned into schools and colleges and hired by non-Sikhs". Fear and strife gripped Swat after Pakistan launched an operation to oust the Taliban in April 2009. With the arrival of

Taliban fighters brandishing automatic weapons, it became impossible for Sikhs to stay on in these tribal areas. The Taliban reportedly gave three options to non Muslims: embrace Islam, pay protection money or vacate the area. The collection of protection money (*Jizya*) was priority for the Taliban as it helped them procure funds for arms and ammunition. Demolition of houses was ordered after Sikh families refused to pay up protection money. When roughly 35 Sikh families found themselves unable to raise the Rs 150 million required, they were forced to move from Feroze Khel to Merozai in Lower Orakzai Agency. The Taliban then occupied Sikh houses and took charge of their businesses. The irony is however the fact that even paying *Jizya* didn't guarantee security as has been proved by the gory 19 February incident when Tariq Afridi, a Taliban commander, abducted three Sikhs, including Jaspal from Khyber Agency and Jaspal paid the price. The others were eventually rescued by the Pakistan Army and returned to Peshawar.

As Behroz Khan wrote from Peshawar on 21 February, "an impenetrable fog of sorrow seems to have enveloped Mohala Jogan Shah, in the heart of

Peshawar's old city. It's here that Jaspal Singh lived, the 28-year-old Sikh beheaded by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the Tirah valley. It's here that his body was brought for the last rites, before it was taken for cremation on the banks of the Indus near Attock. Outside Jaspal's house are Sikhs and Muslims, all mourning the dead man, perplexed at the bloody turn of events in this land of the Pashtuns.

In a small room in the house sits Jaspal's father, Piyara Singh, his head bowed, hands clasping his knees. He meets everyone who walks in with an impassive glance, palpably shocked into stillness. In between the silence breaks. "I have no clue who killed my son...or even why. I am ruined," he keeps repeating. A cousin of Jaspal adds, "We can't say a word about this brutality. It's better to keep mum." He wouldn't reveal his name. The fear of further reprisals hangs heavy.

Among the crowd waiting outside are also Muslims, some of them neighbours, others whom the family have never met. For them, Jaspal's beheading has somehow come to symbolise the death of certain values they have grown up cherishing. Present here is also Nasir Khan Dawar, a senior journalist who fled North Waziristan (one of the seven autonomous tribal agencies that together constitute the Federally Administered Tribal Area, FATA) because of threats to his life. Dawar says warily, "We have all been living together for centuries, there's never been any discrimination. Those who came here under the protection of the Pashtuns (the foreign militants on the run from Afghanistan) have now become our masters. There's a continuous effort now to subsume our culture."

The tribal culture has indeed changed beyond recognition. In FATA, death is a vulture now soaring in the sky, waiting to swoop down on the innocent. On 16 January, Jaspal Singh had left Peshawar, along with Gurwindar Singh and Surjeet Singh, for the town of Bara, where he owned a grocery store (the other two were cloth merchants). Jaspal had recently shifted residence to Peshawar after the Khyber Agency had come under the sway of militants, preferring to commute to Bara, a mere 20 minutes drive away from his new home. From Bara, the trio travelled to the Tirah valley, also in Khyber Agency, for business purposes.

When the trio reached the Mathra area in the Tirah valley, the militants struck. The trio were abducted and soon the demands started for ransom money. Jaspal's father denies this, but sources in the Sikh community say a whopping Rs 30 million was demanded. Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the Taliban's Tariq Afridi group rang up newspapers to claim responsibility for the abduction. Sources say the trio were whisked



away to somewhere in Orakzai Agency, adjacent to the Khyber. Here they languished for 34 days before the militants beheaded Jaspal as his two friends watched. His headless body was dumped in Kasha, from where local tribesmen ferried it to Peshawar.

Jaspal's beheading, though, also reportedly sparked off tensions between two militant groups—the Lashkar-i-Islam headed by Mangal Bagh Afridi of Khyber Agency and the Tariq Afridi faction belonging to Dara Adamkhel in the frontier region of Kohat. Tariq moved his fighters to Orakzai Agency following military operations in the gun-manufacturing town of Dara Adamkhel; his men have now incurred the wrath of Mangal Bagh who perceives in the tragic drama an implicit challenge to his authority.

Of course, this isn't because Mangal is bound to any noble cause; the Sikhs were paying *jizya*, the medieval tax non-Muslims paid in lieu for protection and the right to follow their religion. *Jizya* came into vogue here in April 2009 when militants under the command of Hakimullah Mehsud (the murderous TTP chief who died of injuries after a US drone attack

in January) imposed a levy of Rs 12 million on the Sikhs. Incidentally, the community has been living peacefully in Orakzai Agency for decades. Though the 'imposition' was much criticised, the Orakzai tribesmen didn't intervene, fearing reprisals from Hakimullah. The tribal elders also had no authority over him as he belonged to the Mehsud tribe of South Waziristan. Since the Sikhs could raise only Rs 3.5 million, the TTP looted the Sikh businesses and houses and then auctioned them. The entire community was ordered out of Orakzai, most of them shifting to Peshawar, a few choosing Khyber as their new home.

In comparison to the TTP's levy, Mangal's demand on the 300 Sikh families living in Khyber was a mere Rs 1,000 per head per year. Since the Sikhs paid *jizya*, there are many in the area who are asking: why exactly was Jaspal kidnapped and beheaded? Will Mangal now retaliate against Tariq? Well, if he did, it wouldn't surprise anyone here.

Even today, some Sikh families continue to live in the Tirah valley, understanding their fate is no different from that of the ordinary Pashtuns here, for they do not have the firepower to combat the militants. Perhaps it's this that has inspired the Sikhs of Maidaan area of the Tirah valley to join the Ansar-ul-Islam which is now fighting Mangal's Lashkar-i-Islam (incidentally, the latter has moved away from the TTP ever since the army launched operations here). "We have nothing to do with the sectarian differences among the Muslim groups, but we have to defend our land...where we were born and where we will live in the future as well," says one Sikh elder.

But there's no denying these are hard days for the Sikhs of FATA. Says Arbab Muhammad Tahir Khan, an influential Awami National Party leader, "Our forefathers would always educate us about being gentle towards the vulnerable segments of society. These minorities are very much part and parcel of our life. We cannot discriminate against them. It's the responsibility of the state to provide justice and protect the lives and property of every citizen, irrespective of their religion." Sadly, the state is largely missing from Pakistan's tribal belt.

The beheading of Jaspal Singh by Taliban militants caused shockwaves in most of India and Pakistan. External Affairs Minister SM Krishna strongly commented that such "barbaric acts" will take "us back to the medieval times" and sought facts from Pakistan on the killings. Describing the incident as an "outrage against humanity", Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal asked the government of India to put the

issue as a priority item on proposed India-Pakistan talks. President of the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Avtar Singh Makkar and Jathedar of the Akal Takhat, Giani Gurbachan Singh severely condemned the incident. Sharing their concerns about the safety of the Sikh community in Pakistan, they urged the Centre to use diplomatic channels to resolve the issue and ensure justice for the victim families.

The Delhi BJP too protested the inhuman act by staging a demonstration near the Pakistan High Commission and submitted a memorandum at the High Commission demanding that the Pakistan Government take immediate steps to provide security to the minority community.

Pakistani president Asif Ali Zardari too denounced the murder and directed that effective measures be taken to stop the recurrence of such incidents. Pakistan's Federal Minister for Human Rights, Syed Mumtaz Alam Gillani felt that militants did not differentiate between Muslims or non-Muslims, civilians or security personnel and were out to get everyone's life.

But for his blue turban and flowing beard there's nothing to distinguish Charanjit Singh, 78, from other residents of this northwestern Pakistani city. Dressed in a Pathan suit, he speaks fluent Pashto. He might be the stereotypical Pathan. Except that he is a Sikh. He is the patriarch of a large Sikh family in nondescript Mohallah Jogan Shah, which made headlines when the Taliban beheaded a local, Jaspal Singh. An estimated 380 Sikh families live in Mohallah Jogan Shah.

About 90% of Pakistan's 20,000 Sikhs live in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and tribal areas. There are about 600 Sikh families living in Peshawar alone. The Sikh community is a well-respected business community in the NWFP and thousands of Sikh *yatris* come every year to Nankana Sahib to pay homage to the birthplace of Guru Nanak. Life indeed has come a full circle for these Sikhs in Peshawar who ironically migrated to Peshawar in the 17th century to escape the persecution unleashed by the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. The region was always known to have rigid Islamist views but the tribals were hospitable. What helped matters was the fact that the Sikhs displayed "the ability to integrate into the local culture." Their security is definitely the need of the hour!

Extracted from articles by Behroz Khan in Peshawar, Omer Farooq Khan and others.

Gurduwara Bhai Joga Singh,



This Gurduwara is situated in Jogan Shah locality of Namakmandi of Peshawar City where Sangat of Peshawar is held in the mornings and evenings and Prakash of Granth Sahib takes place.

Joga was the son of Bhai Gurmukh Singh of Peshawar who was converted to Sikhism by taking Amrit from Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Sahib took Bhai Joga as his godson and always kept him in his presence. At the request of Bhai Gurmukh, Guru

Peshawar



Gobind Singh allowed him to go to Peshawar for his marriage but to test his devotion, Guru Gobind Singh ordered another disciple to follow him. Guru Gobind Singh gave him a proclamation which was to be delivered to Joga after the *lawan*. "Once you see



this note, proceed to Anandpur at once." The courier did accordingly and delivered the note while he was performing *Lawan*. Joga Singh abruptly left without even completing his *Lawan*. The marriage rites were completed by giving the remaining *Lawan* to his belt! On the way this thought entered his mind that there could hardly be any other being who would submit before the will of Guru Gobind Singh like he did! But when he reached Hoshiarpur he was overwhelmed with lust when he saw the beauty of a prostitute and reached her pleasure hall. Kalghidhar disguised himself as a mace-bearer and started guarding the house of the prostitute to save his devotee from this





Photographs kind courtesy Dr. Humayun Khan, Peshawar.

disgrace. Joga Singh tried to enter the house four times during the night but had to turn back as he ran into the mace-bearer every time. He then set out for Anandpur and sought forgiveness for his folly when reached the court of the Guru.

The Gurdwara at Peshawar is constructed as a beautiful 3-storeyed building. Prakash of Guru Granth Sahib takes place and local and foreign sangats meet daily. There is a Punjabi school for Sikh children, which imparts secular ideals alongwith religious education.

A Sub-Continental Scenario



Painting of the entrance to Peshawar Fort.

The Pakistan Taliban operating in the tribal area bordering Afghanistan captured three Sikhs, compelled them to convert to Islam, and on their refusal, beheaded one of them. After that they added salt to wound by sending the severed head to the Joga Singh Gurdwara in Peshawar. By doing this the Pakistan Taliban might just have made the costliest error in its bloodstained history. It might just have taken the one step that could pose greater danger to its existence than anything that might have been attempted thus far by the US or NATO.

The Pakistan Taliban consists of Pashtuns settled for generations in the Punjab. They were formerly led by the Mehsuds. There are other Afghan outfits that subscribe to the al Qaeda ideology, such as the Haqqani outfits, also based in Pakistan's FATA territory. The long term aims of the Afghanistan Taliban led by Mullah Omar

and the Pakistan Taliban do not necessarily coincide. The Pakistan Taliban's atrocity against the Sikhs might just recoil fatally against it. Here is why.

Even a cursory acquaintance with Sikh history and character would reveal that the Sikhs have embedded deep within them a fanatical dogged streak that if aroused becomes almost impossible to extinguish. Sending the severed head of the martyr committed to his faith to the Gurdwara is precisely the kind of action that could ignite that streak. The rage that will inevitably spread across the Sikh community in rural Punjab could alter dramatically the power alignments within the terrorist fold. To appreciate this, a few facts not commonly recognised need to be recalled.

For decades it was commonly stated that fifty or so families of the Punjab ruled Pakistan. What was not stated was that about 40 percent of these ruling families



of the rural Punjab province of Pakistan were Jat Sikhs who voluntarily converted to Islam in order to retain their land holdings. These converted Jat Sikhs had no trouble gaining acceptance from their Muslim Jat cousins, farmers all. The converts are Muslims in name. What their commitment to any religion might be only time will reveal. Their commitment to land, wealth and power has been confirmed beyond doubt. They could now constitute a potential fifth column in Pakistan. It would be not a fifth column that could serve the Indian government. It would be the fifth column serving the Sikh Diaspora that contains several terrorist outfits with a presence in Europe, Canada and the US.

Now recall the aborted Khalistan demand. Before Khalistan was formally announced by Jagjit

Singh Chauhan he sought my opinion. I told him it was worthless because it made no sense. I further said that the demand for a united Punjab cutting across India and Pakistan made greater sense given the norms of nationhood. I said that would create 'United States of Asia'. A little after my interaction with him I recounted our dialogue and my views in the weekly column that I wrote then for the *Sunday Observer* published in Bombay. Predictably, the Khalistan demand floundered. But the Sikhs continue to remain dissatisfied, though not disruptive.

Sikh grievances were heightened after the creation of Haryana state carved out of the Punjab. The manner in which Indira Gandhi reneged on solemn assurances given to Punjab regarding the sharing of waters and the future status of Chandigarh was not surprisingly viewed by Sikhs as evidence of Hindu communalism.

Added to the assurance given by Pandit Nehru at the time of Independence that the Sikhs would be made "to feel the glow of freedom", Sikh frustration inevitably grew.

The partition of the Punjab during Independence left the Sikhs most orphaned among the state's three main communities. The loss of identity among the Muslims in Punjab was compensated partially by the creation of Pakistan, of the Hindus by the creation of Bharat. The Sikhs felt that they got little or nothing.

After the subsequent mishandling by the union government, Sikh separatism was bound to erupt. The Khalistan movement further depleted the community. Today Punjab is the sufferer. Witness the very large number of youth in Punjab who seek migration to make a future abroad. Is it not symptomatic?

It is in this context that the unfolding drama across the border may revive the Khalistan demand in a new avatar. Current reports suggest that ISI is reviving the Khalistan insurgency. Good! This might become the agency's biggest ever goof up. Because now all the Sikh militants who are given sanctuary by ISI in Pakistan could eventually switch loyalties. Egged on by Sikhs in India and their NRI financial backers abroad they could turn against ISI and Taliban. Defying New Delhi, India's Sikh militants could infiltrate into Pakistan not to seek sanctuary but to create disruption. There could develop for Pakistan a Kashmir syndrome in reverse. Might not Sikhs eventually seek common ground with the Pashtuns who share greater affinity with Afghanistan than with Pakistan? Might not the Afghan Taliban, which does not share as much the long-term goals of the al Qaeda as does the Pakistan Taliban, dump the ISI?

If such developments do occur the Khalistan demand might revive for a region encompassing as much of Pakistan – ruled Punjab as the Indian Punjab. Along with Pashtunistan and Baluchistan, Khalistan too could become Pakistan's headache. Islamabad and New Delhi, caught in the pincer move of Sikhs and the Pashtuns, could be compelled to fundamentally alter the present sub-continental arrangement.

Does this sound like a wildly improbable scenario? Perhaps. But do wait for at least one year before arriving at a final judgment.

Rajinder Puri
New Delhi

Sikhs' ordeal in Orakzai



This picture depicts Sikhs from Kabul.

The Pakistan government has said that the Sikhs living in a tribal area in its troubled north-western region are of no concern to India since they are Pakistani citizens. This statement came after India's official communication of concern was communicated to the Pakistan government and also public expression of anxiety at reports of hardships that a small group of Sikhs living in the Orakzai tribal area had to face at the hands of Taliban militants.

The verdant and lush valley of Orakzai began to change in early 2008, when Tehrik-e-Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud's men unleashed a reign of terror. His deputy established an 'Islamic emirate', forcing some Sikh families into migrating to Peshawar. According to reports, 60-65 Sikh families from the Ferozkhel area left their homes after the Taliban forcibly began occupying their shops and houses. A television channel reported that the militants then auctioned off the properties.

The Orakzai Taliban wanted the Sikhs to pay a *jazia* (a religious tax imposed on non-Muslims living under Islamic rule which virtually amounts to protection money) of Rs 12 million, brought down from the earlier figure of Rs 40 million, or convert to Islam. In medieval times, those who paid *jazia* could follow their religion. Since Muslims paid *zakat* or alms for the poor to the state, which was spent on welfare, non-Muslims had to contribute their share through *jazia*. Being extremely unpopular, this was removed by Emperor Akbar while Aurangzeb re-imposed it – perhaps inspiring the Taliban in contemporary times.

The Sikhs, who are virtually in the custody of Taliban, then held a *jirga* to decide on whether to pay the tax but the community was divided over the issue. A report claimed that the community offered to pay half the amount, an offer that was rejected by the Taliban.

Raising the ransom amount is indeed an onerous task for the Sikhs as they constitute a very miniscule percentage in the NWFP, approximating to about 10,000. They are mostly cloth merchants or cosmetic traders; a few are medical professionals. The imposition of *jazia* has also disrupted the camaraderie between the Sikh and Orakzai tribals, who maintain a stoic silence, fearing reprisal from the Pakistan Taliban. Those who defy the Taliban are labelled as infidels and murdered in cold blood. Even women are not spared.

Islamic scholars and tribal leaders from all over have condemned the imposition of *jazia*. They advocate the belief that no one has the right to create a state within the state and collect ransom in the guise of religion as *jazia* can be collected only when there is a proper Islamic welfare state. A tribal elder from Khyber agency and president of the Peshawar High Court Bar said that the *jazia* incident will not only give a bad name to the Pashtuns but also provoke a worldwide reaction. Terrorism and discrimination against minorities "can prove fatal for the nation."

Ironically, the Foreign Ministry when asked to comment on India's verbal demarche with Pakistan in Islamabad and New Delhi about Sikh families in Orakzai agency, said that India was told that "Sikhs living in Orakzai agency were Pakistani citizens and hence of no concern to India. The government of Pakistan was fully cognisant of the situation and looked after the welfare of all its citizens, particularly the minority community".

Some Sikh families living in Ferozkhel have shifted to the Shia neighbourhood of Kalaya in Orakzai. Small numbers of Sikhs are still present in areas around Orakzai agency – in Hangu and Kohat districts to its south, Khyber tribal agency to the north and Kurram agency to the west.

The drama unfolding in Orakzai is not just about the Sikhs. The Pashtuns, with whom the Sikhs have lived for centuries are too cowed down by the Taliban to protest, thereby severing age-old ties of community bonding.

Extracted from articles by Nirupama Subramanian and Behroz Khan

Principles for Mankind

Sikh spiritual model of counseling

In accordance with the holistic principles of modern medicine, this paper presents the Sikh religious and spiritual view of mental health. With the continuing migration of a large number of South Asians, especially the Sikhs, to Western countries, mental health professionals should be aware of their clients' world-view and cultural/religious specific models of counseling. Use of Sikh spirituality can reduce stress; help in treating psychosomatic disorders and improve mental health of the individual and of the community. This paper concludes that as the Sikh religion is a universal religion, everyone can use Sikh spirituality for the benefit of mankind.



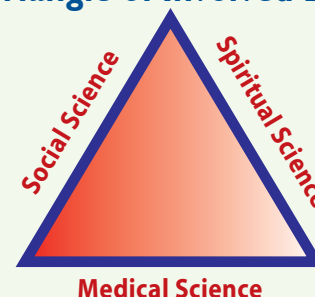
When South Asian clients are given Western-style counseling, they inevitably terminate counseling after their first interview. This is because Western counselors do not understand the client's world-view which results in clients being stereotyped as inappropriate for talking therapies. So there is a need to respect cultural/religious specific beliefs as offering an equally valid, though different perspective. Appropriate cultural and/or religious interventions can be developed by utilising and

respecting the uniqueness of culture specific belief systems, traditional healing resources, practices and helping styles. The culturally-able competent counselor is able to (a) be aware of his/her own assumptions, values and biases; (b) understand the worldview of the culturally different client; and (c) develop appropriate intervention strategies and techniques. One should be aware of the differences in the cultural values and beliefs among the members of a specific cultural/religious group. Clients should therefore be encouraged to guide the therapist regarding their value system.

Definition of health

According to the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO), 'health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. All these aspects - emotional, physical and social - must function together to achieve overall health. Spirituality is essential in emotional and mental well-being. These aspects can be explained in an equilateral triangle in which all three sides and angles are equal, where medical science, spiritual science and social science are equally important to achieve perfect health. I will discuss in this paper how it can be achieved through Sikh Spirituality and because this model has come from Sikh Spirituality, it is necessary to start with an overview of the Sikh religion.

Health Triangle of Involved Disciplines



Sikhism

Sikh means disciple and the ten Prophets are the Gurus, which means Teacher. The first Guru, Nanak Dev, founded Sikhism in 1469 AD. He endeavored to create a casteless society from the existing four castes of Hindus (the most practiced religion in India at that time), priests, 'Brahmin'; warriors, 'Khatris'; merchants, 'Vaishias'; and menial workers, 'Shudras'. Muslim rulers were exploiting Hindus and high-caste Hindus were exploiting low-caste Hindus. Guru Nanak's first sermon delivered in 1499 AD stated: 'No one is Hindu or Muslim. All are the children of God, so they are equal.' It is your deeds which make you great, not your religion or caste.

Thus Guru Nanak Dev laid the foundation of 'Human Rights for All' in 1499 AD. He endeavoured to create a casteless society in which there will be mutual coexistence and cooperation with the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind. The 10 consecutive Gurus contributed in different ways to the spiritual, social and idealised formation of the Sikh. Work started by Guru Nanak Dev was continued by the second Guru, Angad Dev, who propounded the concept of voluntary service, *sewa*. The third Guru, Amar Das, started community kitchens, *langar*, where everyone, rich and poor, of all castes and creed, sits together and partakes food prepared in the common kitchen, which brings humility and equality. The fifth Guru, Arjun Dev, emphasised the concept of tolerance and martyrdom. To check the overwhelming popularity of Sikhism, the Mughul Emperor Jahangir, tortured the Guru who ultimately achieved martyrdom in the river Ravi. The sixth Guru, Hargobind, assumed two swords, one for the temporal and the other spiritual, *Miri* and *Piri*, to protect the oppressed from the oppressor. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, sacrificed his life to save the Hindu religion from extinction at the hands of Aurangzeb, the Mughal Emperor of the time. The Guru imbibed in the Sikhs that they should be prepared to help the needy even at the cost of their own lives. The tenth and the last Guru, Gobind Singh, completed the task started by Guru Nanak Dev baptising the Sikhs on 30 March 1699 AD, to create the Khalsa, the 'Pure Ones'. He called them Saint-Soldiers, the Soldiers of God. Guru Gobind Singh was then baptised Himself by the baptised Sikhs, and so joined the Sikh brotherhood. He said: 'Now you are my Guru and I have become your disciple, your *Chela*'. This form of humility is unique to Sikhism only. All the Sikhs belong to the same brotherhood and not to any caste, thus completing

the work started by Guru Nanak. After baptism all men take the surname Singh, which means lion; and women take the surname Kaur, which means princess. All baptised Sikhs should carry the five articles of faith: the first is *kes*, or unshorn hair; *kanga* a wooden comb to keep one's hair tidy; *karha* an iron bracelet, worn on the right wrist, a symbol of the endless entity; *kach* is a short dagger, symbolic of the Sikh's state of preparedness and *kirpan* is a sword to protect the oppressed.

The Sikh's outward appearance, i.e. the wearing of these five symbols, is of no importance unless they are accompanied by truly sincere devotion and ethics. It took the contribution of 10 Gurus and 239 years for the spiritual, social and idealised behaviour formation of the Sikh, the disciple.

The teachings of the Gurus are preserved in the holy book, Guru Granth Sahib. The fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, compiled the first version of Guru Granth Sahib in 1604 AD. It contained the hymns of the first five Gurus, and 30 Hindu and Muslim saints. The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, compiled the final version in 1706 AD, by including hymns of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur. Guru Gobind Singh declared that he would be the last human Guru. He then bestowed the status of the Guru upon the Guru Granth Sahib.

Universality of Sikhism

The Guru Granth Sahib is the holy scripture of the Sikhs, but its appeal is for all mankind. It serves as a remedial manual for the ills of mankind.

- The Guru Granth Sahib is the Holy Book, which contains teachings from the Sikh Gurus, Hindu and Muslim saints.
- The Sikh religion is strictly monotheistic, believing in One Supreme God who is Absolute, All-pervading, the Eternal, the Creator, the Cause of Causes, without enemy and hate, both imminent in His creation and beyond it. He is not the God of one sect or nation but the God of Grace. Because there is only one God for all humanity, no one religion can claim a franchise on Him.
- Guru Nanak Dev's first sermon, which decreed that all are the children of God and are equal, laid the foundation of Human Rights for All – back in 1499 AD.
- Sikhism believes in mutual coexistence and cooperation because of the universal Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind.

- The Gurus visualised a welfare state with no economic exploitation, political repression, social injustice, and freedom for all.
- Conflicts should be resolved through dialogue instead of war.
- Sikhs respect all religions. It is not the religion, but deeds, which make you great.
- The foundation stone of Harimandir Sahib (the Golden Temple), holy of holies of the Sikhs, was laid by Mian Mir, a Muslim saint.

Principles of Sikhism

In Sikhism, life emanates from a Pure Source. The True One abides in it. Sikh philosophy, history and character flow from this.

Sikhs reject the caste system, idol worship, rituals, superstitions, man-conceived gods and goddesses, karma and reincarnation.

Sacrifices, austere living or gifts of money cannot manipulate God.

Sikhism does not accept the ideology of pessimism. It advocates optimism and hope.

Gender equality

A majority of world religions (including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism) have placed women in a secondary position to men. As an integral part of the religio-cultural heritage of many nations, this definition of sex roles has been a major cause of conflict, frustration, stress and mental disorder among women.

Guru Nanak Dev conferred dignity on women and raised their status in society. It was owed to Him that womanhood gained social equality and religious freedom.

Marriage and morality

Marriage is considered to be a holy union of two souls. The Gurus laid great emphasis on moral character and wanted both man and woman to rise above 'animal-like' lives, as they are spiritual beings as well.

Sikhism and medicine

Sikhism does not believe that mental illnesses are caused by spirit possession or violation of some religious principles and healing done through supernatural powers or rituals. In fact the third Guru opened hospitals to treat the sick, the fifth Guru treated lepers and the eighth Guru treated smallpox patients.

Sikhism and science

The principles of Sikhism are supported by science. Gurus demonstrated concepts rather than giving only philosophical arguments. For example, according to the Sikh view, creation is manifested through God's Word.

In the pre-cosmic state there was a deep void and complete darkness. Then God through His Word created air and through air created water and then His whole creation (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 19).

There are millions upon millions of suns and other planets like ours. His creation is unlimited and infinite (Guru Granth Sahib, 1993, p. 5).

Some people at one time believed that the Earth was supported by the horns of a bull and that earthquakes came when the bull changed a horn. Guru Nanak Dev said that if this is so, then there must be another Earth to support that bull and then who is supporting that Earth? He said all these planets including our Earth and Sun are moving under the Order of God.

The Gurus prohibited the smoking of tobacco, the use of intoxicants and adultery. Now most people know that smoking causes cancer and adultery sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV AIDS. Intoxicants affect mental and physical health.

Sikhism and democracy

The sixth Guru created the high seat of temporal affairs, Akal Takht, in the same complex as Hari Mandir, the Golden Temple, signifying that religious, spiritual and political affairs go together in Sikhism. Guru Gobind Singh created a democratic system with an executive council and general assembly. The executive council, which also has judicial powers, consists of *panj pyaras* (five chosen ones). The general assembly is composed of *sadh sangat* (congregation of Sikhs) and has the final word in deciding socio-religious affairs. Thus the Guru sowed the seed of democracy, socialism, secularism and collective leadership in India back in 1708 AD.

The concept of saint-soldier

If a weapon is given into the hands of a saint, that weapon will not be used to torture and kill indiscriminately, for money or power. The saint will use weapons to protect the oppressed from the oppressor, and not for oppression. Thus,

- War should be waged as the last resort.
- Territory should not be annexed. Looting and booty are forbidden as war has been waged to deliver justice and not to punish the perpetrators.

- Only a minimum of force should be used. When the objectives have been achieved, the fighting should cease and attempts made to establish peace.
- Women of the defeated party should not be violated.

Psychology based on Sikhism

Maya is the term used for the temporal world and human attachment to it, or 'worldly attachment'. The Sikhs believe that *maya* is the universe created by God for human beings to enjoy and is real. However, too much attachment to *maya* is not good. Humans can make choices and if one falls victim to *maya*, one cannot blame God. While living in this world of *maya*, we encounter five evils which are *Kam*, *Krodh*, *Lobh*, *Moh* and *Ahankar*, i.e. Lust, Anger, Greediness, Attachment and Pride. One has to keep these evils under control and one does not have to be a Sikh to accept that these five are evils in fact.

The Guru says that one should live in the world of *maya* like lotus flowers do in a pond. The lotus lives and takes its nutrition from the pond, but does not get wet and dirty with mud from the pond.

Haumai, or pride, is the term the Gurus use to account for the flaw in human personality. Ego is the interpretation of the word. The Guru says that *haumai* is a great disease.

Acceptance of humility and rejection of pride and ego are the main principles of Sikhism. Ego affects positive relations with others affects the working, social and family life of the individual. Ego-bound individuals get stressed and have mental health problems. Learning to control one's ego by accepting humility as prescribed in Sikhism can directly improve mental health of the individual. True humility is the recognition of one's imperfections. The material conception of life enables us to find faults in others by ignoring our own. According to Gurbani, humility is a formidable weapon. It can be used to free us from ostentatious, assuming, arrogant, scornful, stubborn and self-justifying behaviour.

Persons possessing true humility (*Gurmukhs*) are full of inner joy. In contrast, proud, ego-oriented people (*Manmukh*) do not even seem to laugh. If *Manmukhs* do laugh, their laughter is phony, shallow and contemptuous. They have anything but inner joy and peace. Thus, true humility is becoming *Naam* or God-immersed, content, attaining intuitive understanding, being free of arrogant pride and ego,

enjoying inner peace and joy, abiding in the truth, performing pious deeds, being liberated, satisfied, fulfilled, kind, merciful, modest, full of inner beauty and free of sinful mistakes, untouched by sorrows and the pains of material life.

Humility does not mean that one should not assert one's rights. Being a true devotee does not mean to give up rights. Being a humble servant of God does not mean that you let others walk all over you. Humility teaches equality, not manipulation. This is the reason that a *Gurmukh*, a truly humble person is equated to a saint as well as a soldier (*Sant-Sipaah*). Thus, without true humility, there can only be manipulation, anxiety and hurt. Most world conflicts could be resolved if world leaders could relinquish ego, *haumai*, and accept humility to improve the mental health of the populace.

Application of Sikhism in practice

By practicing the following five virtues, one can improve and maintain one's mental health:

Truth: Truth occupies first place in the virtues recommended by the Sikh Guru. In Sikhism, "greater than truth is truthful living."

Contentment: A contented mind is free from envy, greed and jealousy. Without contentment it is impossible to acquire peace of mind.

Patience: Patience gives courage to bravely put up with all the slings and arrows of an outraged future.

Perfect Faith: Perfect faith in God, considering the Guru's teachings as infallible and following these in daily life.

Compassion: Compassion implies considering another's difficulty or sorrow as one's own, and helping to relieve it as far as possible. Forbearance, particularly when one is in a position to punish one's opponent, is a great asset.

Meditation

Sikhs believe that the prime cause of diseases is rooted in the mind. The mind by nature is a non-stop thinker and creates a continuous stream of thought patterns, some evil and some pious. These thought patterns are the cause of the disease. Ordinarily the mind functions on two planes, the conscious and the unconscious. But, there is another level, called the 'super conscious', where one becomes a different person after meditation.

Studies of transcendental meditation have shown that the electroencephalograph has an increase in

alpha-wave activity indicating greater tranquility of mind, decrease in the heart rate, 20% decrease in oxygen consumption, diminished effects of epinephrine and other stress-related hormones and increased skin resistance.

With meditation, clients and psychotherapists have recorded improvements in anxiety, depression and the development of insight.

In Sikhism, meditation is not only to gain control over involuntary vital body functions as shown in the study of transcendental meditation by Wallace and Benson, but also to gain peace of mind. This can be achieved by combining meditation with spirituality, called spiritual meditation. Spiritual meditation is done on the *Naam* of the Supreme Teacher, *Waheguru*, to achieve a super-conscious and blissful state in which one finds oneself close to or one with God in addition to relaxation of body and mind.

One can meditate at any time, but the best time according to the Guru is in the early ambrosial hours of the morning before sunrise (*amrit vela*), after a bath. Personal hygiene has been given great importance by the Gurus.

Naam Simran (loving remembrance of God) is the universal religion because the practice does not require any ritual. It requires a person simply to stabilise his or her mind in the remembrance of the Supreme Soul. *Simran* does not differentiate between persons on the basis of religion or nationality. *Naam Simran* is a way of life that is based on correct conduct and moral values and ensures peace of mind in all circumstances. It is spiritual science and moral hygiene that cures the mind of tensions and worries. It rids the soul of the dross and dirt and clears the conscience of evil influences (vices).

Those people who go beyond meditation into the realm of spirituality report that they sense closeness to God while meditating. Such people have better health and more rapid recoveries.

Prayer

Praying in the congregation with full conviction and faith (*Ardas*) is said to be better than praying alone. A Sikh in prayer does not ask for the betterment of him or herself, but for entire humanity, with human rights for all.

Socio-economic concept of Sikhism

As per the Guru's teachings, one is required not only to earn honestly but also to share one's earnings with the helpless and poor people according to the concepts of:

- * *KiratKarna*: Honest Living.
- * *Wand Chakna*: Sharing with others.
- * *Naam Japna*: Meditating on the *Naam* of God.

Sikh view of mental illness

Though Sikhs are religiously a separate entity, they share many beliefs and practices with the broader South Asian community. Many South Asians believe that mental illness is caused by the evil eye (*jado-tuna*), possession of demons and evil spirits (*bhuta- preta*). Many believe that it is God's punishment for their sins in a previous life and it is their *karma*. Rituals to please gods by reciting the Holy Scripture, visiting temples, taking a bath in holy rivers, ponds (*sarowars*) and exorcism are practiced. The mental health professional is contacted only after all these rituals fail. There is a stigma attached to mental illness. Sufferers hide it from the community and even from relatives. They do not talk openly about their problems with the doctor, so they tend to somatise the symptoms, making it difficult to diagnose the condition.

Sikhs, like other South Asians, do not believe in talk therapy. However, the number of clients seeking counseling has shown a manifold increase since the author started using Sikh religion and spirituality as the basis for counseling.

Spirituality in everyday life

Spirituality is not worship or rituals to please God, but deeds and a positive attitude towards the self and others to make life joyful. Happiness does not come from external sources but from within. Being rich does not bring happiness, nor does being poor bring unhappiness. It is the attitude towards money that makes one happy or unhappy. In the same way one's attitude towards illness brings unhappiness. If one changes one's attitude towards one's illness, one will feel happy even while being sick.

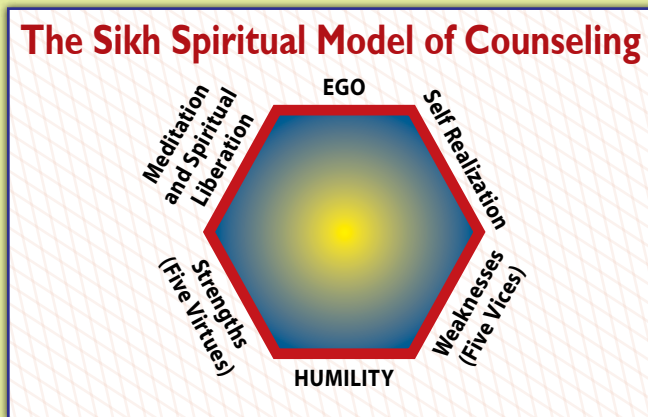
Research has shown that religion and spirituality are important in the recovery process for many who have mental illness. The emotional support spirituality provides is through the comfort it gives, feelings of being cared for, and feelings that one is not alone.

Spiritual liberation

Spiritual liberation in Sikhism is to liberate oneself from *haumai*, ego. In Sikh terminology, one should be *gurmukh*, God – centered, and not *manmukh* or self-centered. This can only be achieved through human effort. This can be used in counseling clients who have lost all hope that one has to try, and should be optimistic. Sikhism teaches that human effort gets optimism to prevail over pessimism.

The Guru's concern is with humankind and its destiny. He taught that several distinctive and unique features set it apart from the rest of His creations and characterise humanity.

- We have the power to discriminate between good and bad. We can make choices.
- We have the ability to choose between different forms of action, i.e. we can use our earnings to help the needy, improve our homes or indeed, gamble.
- We have the opportunity to enter a conscious unity with God through choices that we make. The spirit of the human being is raised with a belief that one is not a helpless creature, but a responsible being with a will of one's own, which can shape one's destiny.



According to the hexagon model shown it may be achieved in six steps.

- * Ego. To understand what *haumai*, (ego) is, and how it affects us.
- * Self-realisation. To realise that my current problem is because of my ego, and that I have to get rid of this.
- * Five Vices (Weaknesses). To realise that, for my current problem, among five vices, which one is hurting me most? One has to learn how to keep these vices under control.
- * Humility. To counter ego, one has to accept humility.
- * Five Virtues (Strengths). While learning how to control five vices, one has to develop five virtues.
- * Meditation and Spiritual Liberation. Once these five steps are completed, and true humility has been achieved, one is spiritually liberated. Meditation

combined with spirituality gives peace of mind in all circumstances.

This model can be explained better through the following two case vignettes.

Case I

Mr X, a non-practicing Sikh, lost C\$47,000 on the stock market in three days. He became depressed, started drinking heavily and attempted suicide by ingesting Tylenol tablets. His family physician started him on Paxil (an antidepressant). After four months of treatment he was still depressed and talking of suicide. He was then referred to me. I discussed with him my hexagon model. He agreed to work with me on this model. I helped him to realise that his 'ego' has been hurt following the loss of his life savings. I then discussed with him the five vices and he realised that it was his anger (*krodh*) and greediness (*lobh*) that were affecting him most. He was angry with himself because he had lost his life savings and wanted to punish himself. During further discussions he understood that the best way to get over his hurt was to accept humility, and accept that he is poorer now and that he has to strengthen five virtues. I explained that he has to have perfect faith in God. We discussed that whatever God does is for our betterment. It is our perception that is wrong. It is difficult to understand how losing your life savings is good for you, but one day you will say that God saved me that day from a bigger loss, which is your life. You can earn money again. You should be content with what you have now, that is your life and your family who love you much, rather than crying for what you do not have. You should live a truthful life and work hard. Do not try to get rich overnight. Do not get attached to *maya*. *Maya* should not control us; we should control *maya*. Life and death are in the hands of God, so we should not try to end it. We should be optimistic in life and not pessimistic.

After six sessions he continued with appointments as and when necessary. He started regular meditation and stopped drinking. After two months he stopped Paxil on the advice of his family physician and started regular work. I saw him after six months and again after a further six months. He was drinking alcohol socially, never had any symptoms of depression, and was doing regular meditation and encouraging others to follow this model even to keep mentally healthy.

Case 2

Mr Y, a conservative Sikh, was referred to me with a history of spousal abuse. I greeted him in the Sikh traditional way, with folded hands. His history revealed that before immigrating to Canada, he was the sole earner in the family and his wife was looking after the household chores. She was a full-time housewife and never worked outside the house. There was no spousal abuse at that time. Since moving to Canada, his wife had also obtained gainful employment outside the house and started asserting her rights. She demanded that he share the household chores, which he refused. That led to conflict and resultant spousal abuse. I explained to him that I would work with him on my hexagon model and the Western model of anger management. I discussed with him the change in roles with both husband and wife working outside the house. Because the wife was also earning and was asking him to share work in the house, he felt that his traditional role as provider in the house was threatened, as was his ego (*haume*). I explained to him that Gurus have given equal status to women and so does modern society. If she can work outside the house you can also very well work in the house. After discussing five vices we recognised that anger (*krodh*) and pride (*ahnkar*) were affecting him. He decided to work on them. He was given an anger management course based on the Western model. He learnt that anger can also be controlled if he accepts the changed situation in his family and adopts humility. Among five virtues, he learnt that he has to lead a truthful life by giving his wife due respect, being content, and having patience and compassion even if he feels that his wife is demanding too much from him. Both husband and wife also had this model explained to them together and how to work on their differences and control their egos (*haume*). I also explained to his wife how her ego was affecting her. She was demanding that he should do household chores because she was also earning now. This demand was damaging to her husband's ego. It is better to negotiate than to be demanding. It is better to be humble than have an ego. It was also explained to them that the best way to control stress is regular meditation. Both of them worked on this model. Spousal abuse stopped and they started living their life as they had lived in India.

Now I shall add a few lines regarding improving the mental health of the community and of mankind. Civil unrest in nations, terrorist threats and wars

with their accompanying mental health problems can be avoided by utilising the following Sikh principles:

- Everyone adopting the principles of *miri-piri* and the saint-soldier.
- Decision-makers making a collective decision after giving up ego, in complete humility as stated by the Sikh Gurus.
- Considering all of humanity as equal and the children of God in the true sense of the Sikh Brotherhood (Sikh Panth).
- War to be waged as a last resort only after all other methods have failed. War should be waged according to the concept of the saint-soldier.

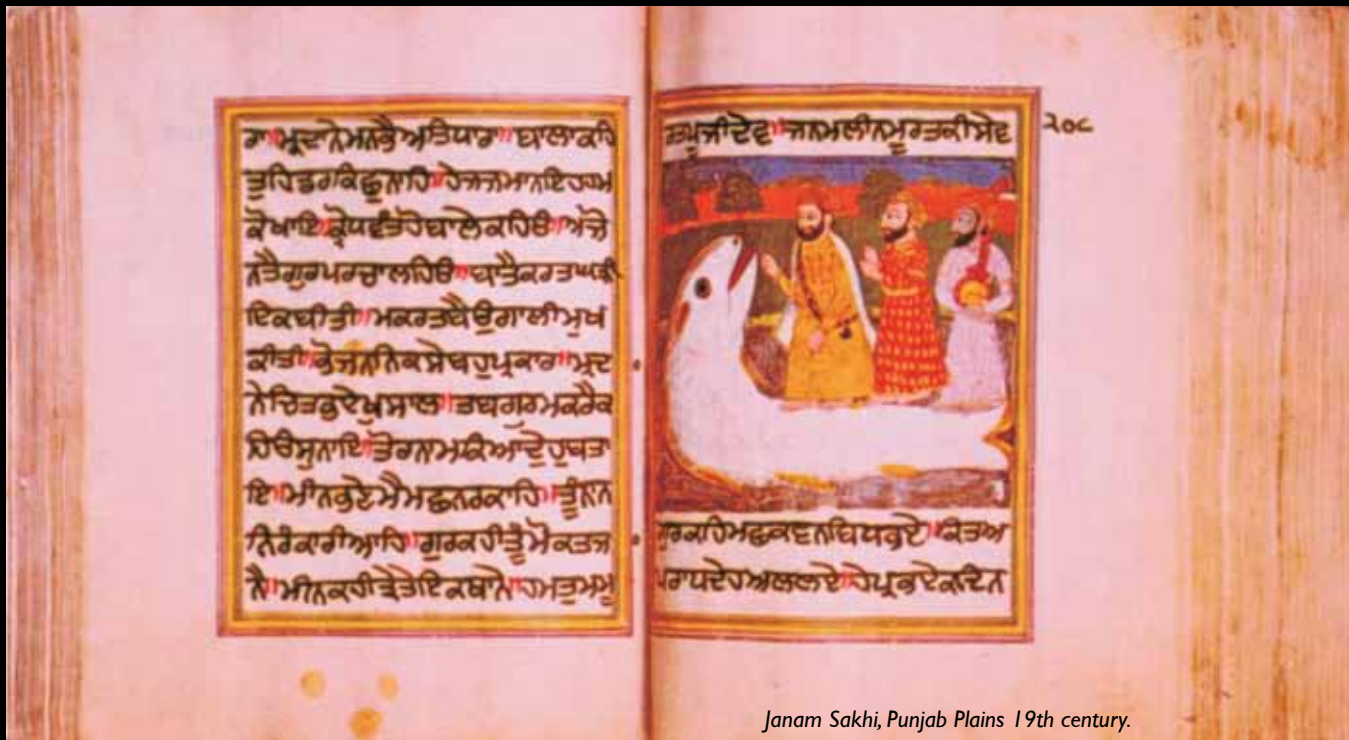
Various studies have shown that those clients receiving religious psychotherapy showed significantly more rapid improvement in anxiety symptoms than those who received supportive psychotherapy and drugs only. The integration of spirituality can play a key role in mental health programmes as comprehensive, empowerment focused and culturally attuned approaches to recovery from mental illness become more widely adopted. Taking this into consideration mental health professionals should use cultural/religious specific models of counseling. As the Sikh religion is a universal religion, this model can be used in conjunction with Western counseling for everyone.

There is great scope for the use of Sikhism in the preventive, promotive and curative aspects of mental health. With all these qualities, the Khalsa (baptised Sikh) is the ideal future international hope for humanity. The need of the day is to have these principles reach mankind, all over the world.

Kala Singh
Vancouver, Canada.

Extracted from the paper presented at a conference in Vancouver "The Sikh Spiritual Model of Counseling" at the 4th International Multidisciplinary Conference on Spirituality and Health: Interweaving Science, Wisdom and Compassion by Interprofessional Continuing Education, UBC from 9-11 November 2006 at the Westin Bayshore Hotel, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Some Glimpses of Sikh Art



Janam Sakhi, Punjab Plains | 19th century.

The Kapany Collection

These are some glimpses of the spectacular works of Sikh Art from the Kapany Collection, mainly in California, USA. The genesis of this collection lies in the legacy that Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany inherited from his family. One of his ancestors who served as the head of the Patna Sahib Takhat and commissioned a Janam Sakhi of Guru Nanak. The inheritance of this single piece of history instilled in him a deep love and pride for his Sikh heritage. And over his lifetime, with the full support of his wife, Satinder, this has developed into this magnificent collection, with over 300 artworks ranging from paintings, manuscripts, textiles, armour, coins, etc. Looking at these works of art, there is much that can be told of times past and present. One can also get good understanding of the varied circumstances that shaped different phases of Sikh history leading to the development of its traditions and arts.

I start with what may be the earliest known image of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, which was

Painted more than 200 years after he lived. Here we see a pious man reading from a small book. Judging by his headgear he might be a Muslim. But we are reminded of the fact that for Guru Nanak, is known for wearing a mix of Muslim and Hindu garb and dress did not mean anything, any more than did religious rituals and dogma.

Moving to another painting of Guru Nanak, this time from a 19th century edition of the Janam Sakhis, the stories from Guru Nanak's life, we still cannot see a man whom we would today recognise as a Sikh, but this time more like a Hindu. Sikhism had still to build its separate and visually distinct identity.

The most famous Sikh artist of the 20th century, Sobha Singh, yet again, portrays Guru Nanak differently. Except for the halo, which signifies divinity, Guru Nanak looks like a fatherly Sikh of the 20th century.

Now having looked at the paintings of the first Guru over 3 centuries, we believe that they are not of



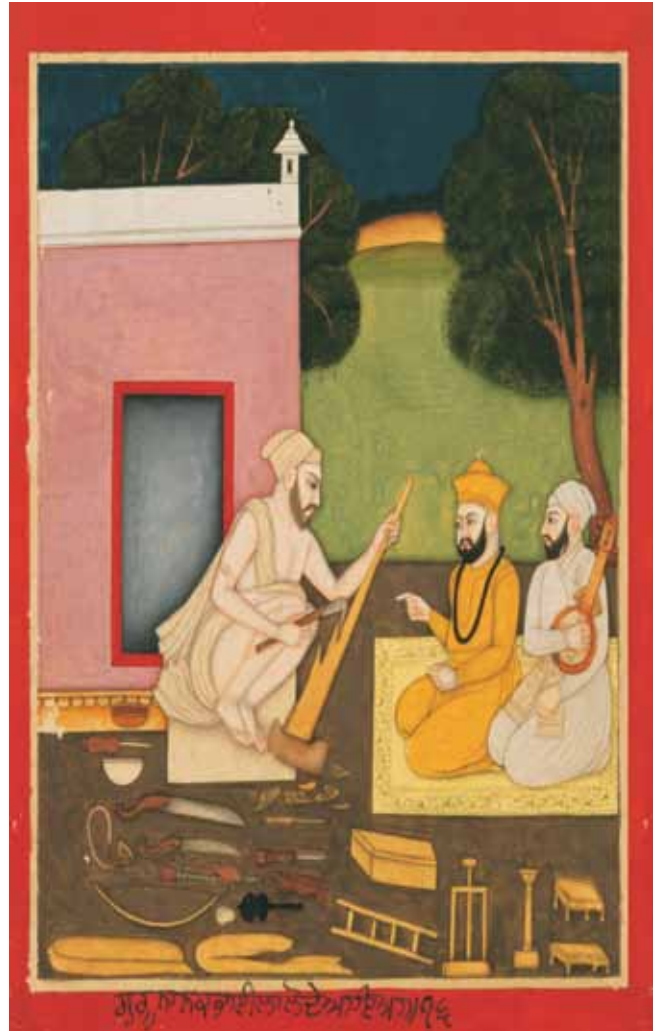
Guru Nanak, Lucknow or Faizabad, c. 1770, pigment on paper, 41.5 x 33.5 cm (Kapany Collection).

the historic Guru Nanak, but of a man of the time, or more precisely, of Sikhism of the time.

The Mughal influence on Sikh Art came significantly through Ram Rai, the disowned son of Guru Har Rai, the 7th Guru, who before he migrated to Dehra Dun and set up his own Udasi Ram Raiya sect, had been for some years at the Mughal court of emperor Aurangzeb. In a painting from around 1750, we see Guru Hargobind, as imagined by the artist, in a courtly dress and setting of the Mughals.

We have come a long way from the holy man's attire and setting. The Guru's move into worldly power was formally expressed as the doctrine of *miri* and *piri* (temporal and spiritual).

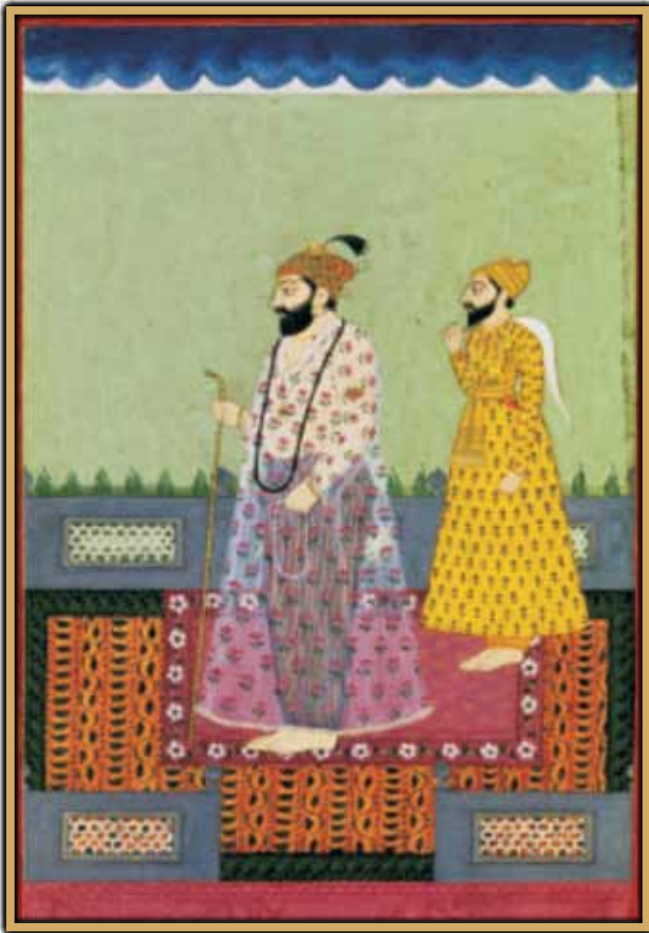
This is perhaps the only rare painting of a Guru done during his lifetime, that of the Ninth Guru,



Guru Nanak visits Bhai Lallo
Janam Sakhi, unbound set, late 19th century (Kapany Collection).



Guru Nanak by Sobha Singh, 1969, oil on canvas, 71 x 56 cm (Kapany Collection).



Guru Hargobind ji on terrace with Attendant
Punjab Plains, 1750, gouache on paper, 26.5 x 18.5 cm
(Kapany Collection).



Guru Tegh Bahadur
Mughal school, c. 1670, gouache on paper, 22x16.5 cm
(Kapany Collection).

Guru Tegh Bahadur. The quiet heroism of Guru Tegh Bahadur, who spent much of his life as a poet recluse, is captured in this painting. Dressed in Mughal attire, in almost iridescent orange, the Guru stands like a beacon in a broad-brushed and radiantly moody background that is characteristic of the 17th century Mughal School of painting. He holds a hawk, associated most often with the warrior Gurus, Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh. But the hawk is an apposite symbol for the Ninth Guru; 5 years after the date of this painting, by sacrificing his life for the religious freedom of all mankind, Guru Tegh Bahadur was to imprint on his son – and through him, the Sikh people – the ideal of fearlessness in the face of injustice. This second of Sikh martyrs sealed the warrior spirit into the Sikh psyche, and reached its zenith in Guru Gobind Singh.

The pride and nobility of this face of Sikhism finds striking expression in a painting dated 1830 of the Tenth Guru astride his blue stallion with his hawk

and sword. The perspective of this setting, probably western influenced, throws into relief the more traditionally rendered figures.

The blue stallion was made legendary in many folk songs and artworks. We do not really know the roots of the legend – possibly the Guru owned a stallion so gleaming black that it looked blue or perhaps has a Hindu association of blueness with divine beauty.

Whatever the reason, here in this handsome equestrian is the inner nobility that was the imprimatur of Guru Gobind Singh and has become so integral to the Sikh character.

Apart from the paintings of the Gurus, there are also a number of paintings of all the Ten Masters together, highlighting the themes for which they are most known. One of the finest and fullest depictions in the 19th century painting which along with the 10 Gurus, also includes the two famous



The Ten Gurus : early 19th century, gouache on paper, 52 x 41 cm (Kapany Collection).

disciples of Guru Nanak – Bala , a Hindu and Mardana, a Muslim – and the four young sons of Guru Gobind Singh. By this time, the Sikh following had increased and formalised its structures and, and in keeping with this development, the Gurus are portrayed with more formalised settings and iconography. All the Gurus have a halo. Guru Nanak also has his hallmark rosary, and the *rabab* that Mardana is playing reminds us, as did the book of verses in the earlier painting, of the centrality of music, in particular the Gurus hymns in Sikh tradition. In contrast to Guru Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, the 10th and the last Guru appears in the same painting, with his motif of sword, hawk and horse.

The Patronage of Maharaja Ranjit Singh

The majesty stamped onto the Sikh spirit by Guru Gobind Singh became the currency of the Khalsa Raj (the Sikh Kingdoms) of the 18th and 19th centuries, nowhere more so than in the court of Maharaja Ranjit Singh who reigned over the Punjab and the neighboring regions of north India for the first half of the century. Ranjit Singh was a patron of the arts – painting, carving, armour, brassware, jewellery, textiles and architecture. One-eyed and scarred by childhood smallpox, he could command with his mere presence. The visiting Europeans speak of the different personae that the ‘Lion of the Punjab’ was able to project through sheer force of personality and what can

best be described as his sense of ‘showmanship’.

Military discipline and pride were fully integrated into the Sikh tradition by the Maharaja, as



Turban Helmet
Punjab, c. 1820-40, steel overlaid with gold
(Kapany Collection).



Maharaja Ranjit Singh
Painted on ivory, mid 19th century, 2" x 2.5"
(Kapany Collection).

perfectly evoked in the exquisite artistry of a 19th century steel helmet damascened with gold. Designed to accommodate a Sikh turban or topknot, it is inlaid with an intricate floral and geometric frieze. The copper and steel links are woven in the *ganga-jumna* pattern forming two waves of chain mail like the mixing of water currents where these two sacred rivers meet.

European Artists

The work of numerous accomplished artists from Europe have left a fine example of Victorian art that falls into our definition of Sikh art that is by, for and about Sikhs. This portrait is part of an unbound set of prints from original drawings by Emily Eden, a gifted amateur artist and well-known British observer of India in the 1800s. These prints are intriguing documents of colonial life in that century and comprise a wide range of subjects, including portraits of members of Ranjit Singh's court. Emily Eden, who sketched this likeness of Sher Singh, the future maharaja, wrote that he appeared for his sitting "all over with diamonds and emeralds." British visitors who had the opportunity to meet Sher Singh found him "captivating", not least because he lived up to their image of a colourful and extravagant royal person.

Whereas Emily Eden's lithographs are tinged with a calm and delicate appreciation of the characters and architecture, the lithographs of the Russian prince Alexis Soltykoff, who visited the Lahore court, are wildly and

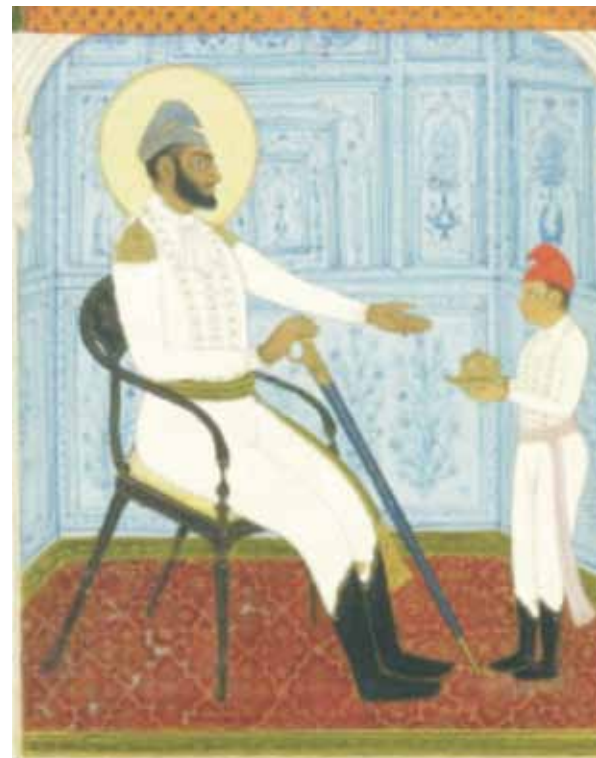


Sikh Chieftains, Prince Alexis Soltykoff, 1858, Indian Scenes and Characters (Kapany Collection).



*Maharaja Shere Singh
Emily Eden, from Portraits of the Princes & People of India.*

wonderfully romantic—full of tall impressive Sikh warriors dressed in silks and glittering with jewels, riding horses decorated with enormous rubies, emeralds and pearls.



*Raja Karam Singh of Patiala
Punjab Plains, c. 1840, gouache on paper, 23 x 44.5 cm.*





The saint, Bhai Vir Singh
Lahore, c1850, pigment on paper, 54.9 x 37 cm.

Maharani Jind Kaur—popularly known as Rani Jindan (1817–1863)—was a legendary beauty known for her strong character. In 1860 her son Maharaja Dalip Singh brought her to England where the artist George Richmond painted this evocative portrait of the Rani wearing a blue and gold dress adorned with her fabulous Indian jewels. At the time of this portrait the Rani was almost blind and plagued with ill health. She died a year later at the young age of 46.

By the time of this painting, the late 19th century, the Sikh Raj had ended and Sikh artists were now serving new patrons, the British and the East India Company. The tourist-minded Britons wished to take back with them scenes of the curious and exotic East spawning a new genre called 'Company Art' which although done by Indian artists, took its stylistic cues from the representation art of the British Victorians.

Company art stepped outside of the courts and into the daily life of Punjab. This painting shows the saint Bhai Vir Singh at his riverside encampment. As we examine the details of this masterpiece, we see an entire world of Sikh and Indian activity. Men and women of all types and religions, are making offerings and paying their respects to the holy man, a new bride has been brought to seek his blessings. Food is being



A detail.



The Golden Temple of Amritsar
Kapur Singh, 1886, oil on canvas (Kapany Collection).

cooked and Guru Ka Langar served to all people, including people with various physical afflictions, who have probably traveled here on hearing of the saint's arrival. Others prepare *sukha* and *bhang* in this melee of devotion and activity.

Kapur Singh of Amritsar is arguably the most famous Sikh artist of the 19th century, who made the transition to oil paintings in the western style with great accomplishment. His works concentrated on depicting general life in the Punjab.

This painting of the Harmandir Sahib, the latest acquisition in the Kapany Collection, depicts the gurudwara reflected in the *sarovar* - the 'pool of nectar.' A number of worshippers including an Akali, with his distinctive headgear, stand at the edge of the *sarovar* and birds fly above. In many ways Kapur Singh took the challenge of meeting western art modes on his own terms. Some of his studies were inscribed in English, as in this painting on the lower left hand corner are the initials KS with the inscription.

Apart from two other paintings, no other oil painting by a named 19th century Sikh artist are known

The Phulkian Maharajas

Unlike Ranjit Singh's kingdom, which after his death turned into a bloodbath of warring Sikh factions that made it easy prey for the British, the Phulkian kingdoms of Patiala, Nabha, Faridkot, Jind and those of Kapurthala, did not finally fall to the British but signed treaties which enabled them to keep their own courts and armies until India's independence in 1947. Business boomed for portraiture and courtly and military scene painting. So we see Ranjit Singh's contemporary Maharaja Karam Singh of Patiala and his son Narinder Singh in full European military dress, the Maharaja with a halo.

Twentieth Century

The political and social reforms of the 20th century and internationalisation of the Sikh community all brought changes to Sikh Art. Gone were grandeur and patronage of royal courts, but Sikh art continued to flourish and indeed expand in its subject matter, styles and schools of influence.

Along with paintings of the Gurus such as that by Sobha Singh, we have Guru Gobind Singh in a 1950's Dunlop-sponsored poster image that takes its cues

from the fantasies of popular love. It shows the Guru standing on the ramparts of his Fort with a cannon in the background.

But perhaps the most significant development are in the artists themselves, not only are we now seeing the distinctive work of renowned artists but increasingly women artists.

To the artist Arpana Caur "Sohni was a very brave and strong woman and her story is indeed inspiring. She defied social norms and swam across the river to be with the one she loved. She swam while others slept." For Arpana, the figure of Sohni carries social and political significance for all Indian women,



Sohni and Mahiwal
Arpana Caur, 2000, oil on canvas (Kapany Collection).



Sazaa (punishment)
oil on canvas (Kapany Collection).



'Monty' Panesar, bowling for England.



Tying his turban.

By Sukhpreet Singh

whom she connects through time in this painting by representing a series of pitchers. Although the broken pitcher symbolises Sohni's tragic life, the intact pitchers symbolise the potential of and possibilities for Indian women today.

The portraits and scenes of rural Punjab dominate the works of Sukhpreet Singh, an upcoming young artist. His painting titled

'Sazaa' is a journey down memory lane for those who are old enough to remember such childhood experiences, when children were punished as a matter of routine by their teachers, sometimes even upon the encouragement of parents.

These and other creative endeavors are reminders to Sikhs and to the entire world that there is more to Sikh culture than turbans and swords, more than agricultural, professional and entrepreneurial success and literary works; there are the artistic achievements that are the mark of a healthy, thriving, thinking and evolving community. Art has the power to educate and inform.

Sonia Dhami, The Sikh Foundation

The Global Sikh

Ajay Singh Banga President, Master Card

The MasterCard Board of Directors has named Ajay Singh Banga as President and Chief Executive Officer of MasterCard Worldwide, effective 1 July 2010. In addition, he has been appointed to the board of directors which is effective immediately.



Ajay Singh Banga.

Banga is currently President and Chief Operating Officer of MasterCard Worldwide. He is responsible for the company's relationships with customers around the world, as well as products and services; marketing; technology and operations. Banga is also a member of MasterCard's executive committee.

Prior to joining MasterCard, Ajay Singh spent 13 years at the Citigroup from 1996, and held a variety of senior management roles in the United States and Europe, Middle East, Africa regions before becoming Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Citi's international global consumer group in 2005. He was also responsible for Citi's brand and marketing work across the entire company. Most recently, he was Chief Executive Officer of Citi Asia Pacific, responsible for all the company's business lines in the region, including institutional banking, alternative investments, wealth management, consumer banking and credit cards. He was also a member of Citi's senior leadership and executive committees.

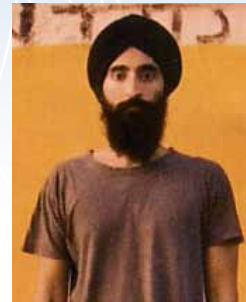
Beginning his business career with Nestle in 1981, Banga spent the next 13 years in a variety of assignments spanning sales, marketing, and general management. He later joined Pepsico and was instrumental in the launch of its international fast food franchises in India as the economy liberalised.

Ajay Singh Banga serves on the board of Kraft Foods Inc. In addition, he is on the board of trustees of the Asia Society, and was Vice Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the New York Hall of Science and a board member of the National Urban League. He was formerly a business sponsor of Citi's African heritage network – NYC. Banga has keen interest in social development issues, and over the period from 2005 to mid-2009, he spearheaded Citi's strategy in the microfinance sector across the world. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and The Economic Club of New York, and is a fellow of the Foreign Policy Association.

Ajay Singh Banga graduated with a B.A. in Economics Honours from Delhi University and is an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad.

The charismatic Waris Singh

As though frozen in mid-flight, the graceful birds created by Waris Singh Ahluwalia have come to roost at Colette. Their "nests" on the walls of the trendy Parisian concept store are clear cases that reveal the delicacy of their shapes, the purity or rich complexity of their plumage. The charismatic designer, smiling serenely through his luxuriant beard, recounts his story.



It all started shortly after 11 September 2001, when this Punjabi-born New Yorker got the idea for an unusual ring: a horizontal bar punctuated with forty diamonds, like an ultra-upscale set of brass knuckles. Maxfield, the famous Los Angeles boutique, grabbed it. His next turning point came in 2004, when he began working in cinema, filming *The Life Aquatic* by Wes Anderson (with Cate Blanchett, Angelica Huston, etc.) in Rome, where he discovered the legendary Italian jewellery makers. After founding the House of Waris, he returned to film with *Inside Man* by Spike Lee (with Jodie Foster and Clive Owen) and *The Darjeeling Limited* (Adrian Brody et al.), again directed by Anderson. Ultimately, he decided to open his workshop in Rajasthan. "Indians have an inborn love of gold," he says. "Everyone here wears jewels."

And that was when, inspired by a bathroom tile motif at the Hotel Raphael in Paris, he hatched the idea for his precious parakeets, swallows and sparrows, hand crafted, encrusted with diamonds, in enamelled gold for high-flying refinement, in oxidized silver like a feather-light shadow, or emblazoned with his motto "*Omnia Vincit Amor*" as on his rings. The pieces have classic names like Raphael, Virgil, Roma, Liberte... a field trip to Colette is in order to admire his flock. And a trip to the movie theatres to see Waris in his turban in the latest opus by Luca Guadagnino, *Io Sono l'Amore* with Tilda Swinton.

Tejdeep Singh joins US Army

When 31 year-old Tejdeep Singh Rattan graduated into the US Army from Fort Sam Houston at San Antonio, Texas he did something that no member of his community had done in nearly three decades. He became the first Sikh in a generation who had continued with a traditional turban and beard and yet joined the United States military, not achieved since 1981.

On graduation day, surrounded by a gaggle of other members of the Sikh community and media, a beaming Captain Rattan said to reporters, "I'm feeling very humbled. I'm a soldier. This has been my dream."



In 1981, the US Army banned "conspicuous" religious articles of faith for its service members. This included a ban on Sikh turbans and unshorn hair. Captain Rattan was initially enrolled in a dentistry course and signed up for training for the army back in 2006 through a Health Professionals. At the time he was told he would be able to enter the army wearing the traditional Sikh turban. However by the time he was near graduation, in 2008, he was informed that that decision had been revoked. It was at this point that *The Sikh Coalition* got involved.

The Sikh Coalition along with legal counsel supported Captain Rattan in putting in an application for an exemption from the US Army. After a process that was drawn out over nearly six months, they finally got news that the application had succeeded. A press release by *The Sikh Coalition* said that contrary to the concerns of some, Captain Rattan was able to meet all the requirements of a soldier during basic training. He wore a helmet over a *patka* during field exercises. During gas mask exercises, he was able to successfully create a seal with his gas mask.

Captain Rattan said he did not encounter any trouble from fellow soldiers during training. "The Army is all about what you have to offer... if you're up there running with them, you have good scores, you run neck-and-neck with them, they love you," he said, adding, "I made a lot of friends."

Jaspal Singh Bindra Group ED at StanChart

India-born Jaspal Singh Bindra has been elevated to one of the top posts in global banking major the Standard Chartered Bank. Bindra, Chief Executive Officer, Asia, was appointed as Group Executive Director keeping his responsibilities for growth and governance in Asia.



Jaspal Singh who joined Standard Chartered in 1998, is a director of Standard Chartered and has held his current position since 2007. He has wide-ranging international experience including previous roles as global head of client relationships and chief executive officer, India. His elevation has come at a time when the bank is mulling over launching IDRs (Indian depository receipts) in Indian markets.

As John Peace, Chairman of Standard Chartered, said, "We are adding significant financial and banking experience to the board as well as increasing its diversity to include members with special insight from our key Asian markets. We have an independent, challenging and engaged board that has steered the Company well through the demanding environment in which we operate. I look forward to welcoming new members to the board."

Amritsar and the Heritage Status

Amritsar houses 10.03 lakh people (2001 census), but the city was denied heritage status by the Indian government on grounds that its population was “less than one million”, the cut off for classifying a city as such. The government steered clear of BJP member Navjot Singh Sidhu’s persistent and emotional appeals to grant heritage city status to Amritsar. Calling the attention of the government to the urgent need to grant “heritage city status” to Amritsar and classify it as Category C under Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), Sidhu recounted the pride of place which Harmandir Sahib enjoyed in the world, with top international leaders making time to offer prayers there.

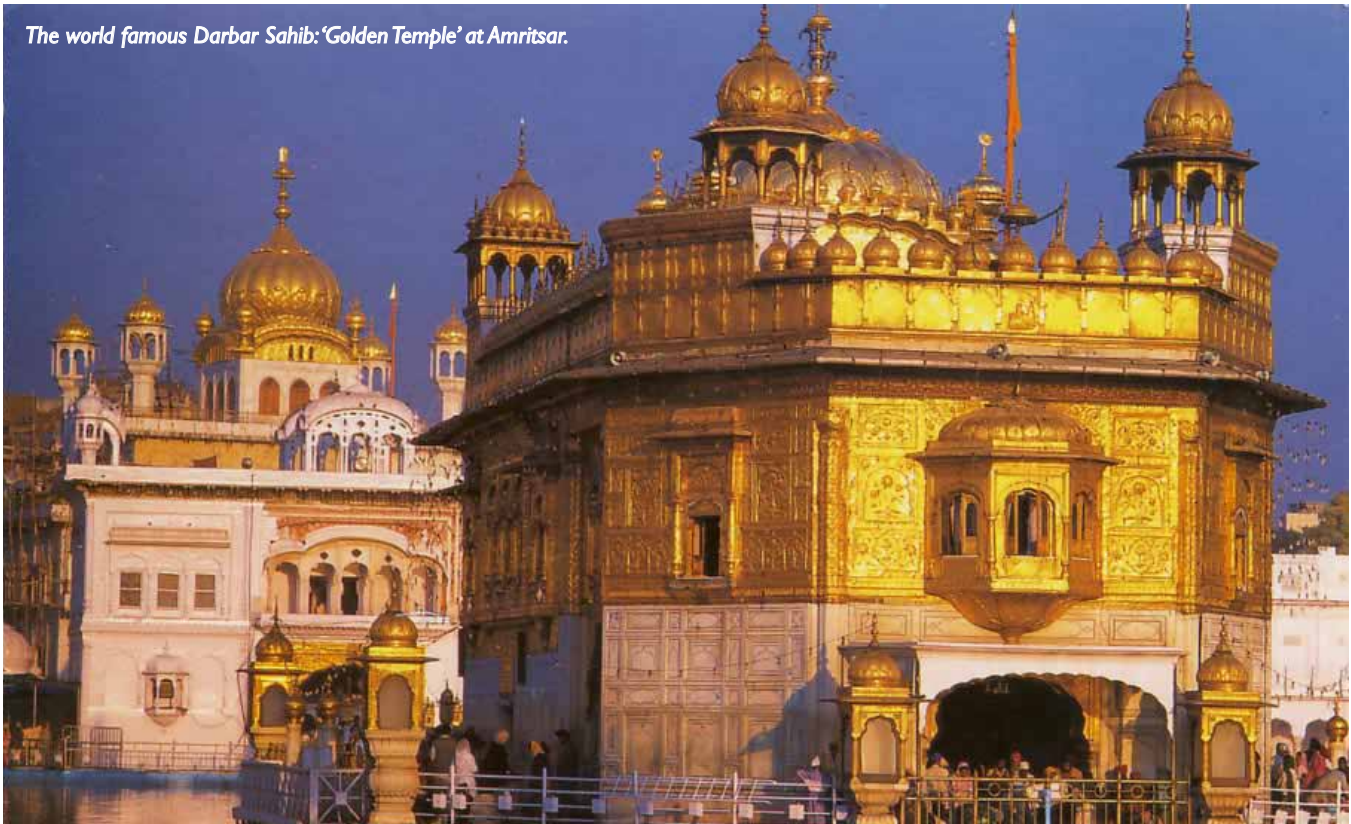
Sidhu remarked, “The SGPC says two lakh people daily offer prayers at the Golden Temple. Can we negotiate the history of Amritsar, the fact that it houses the temporal seat of Sikh religion; it is a birthplace of Luv and Kush; it is a historical treasure?” He rued the fact that while “twin city” Lahore is a world heritage site, Amritsar is struggling for a heritage tag in India!

The city also has many other historical gurdwaras. Just outside the Golden Temple, Gurdwara Baba

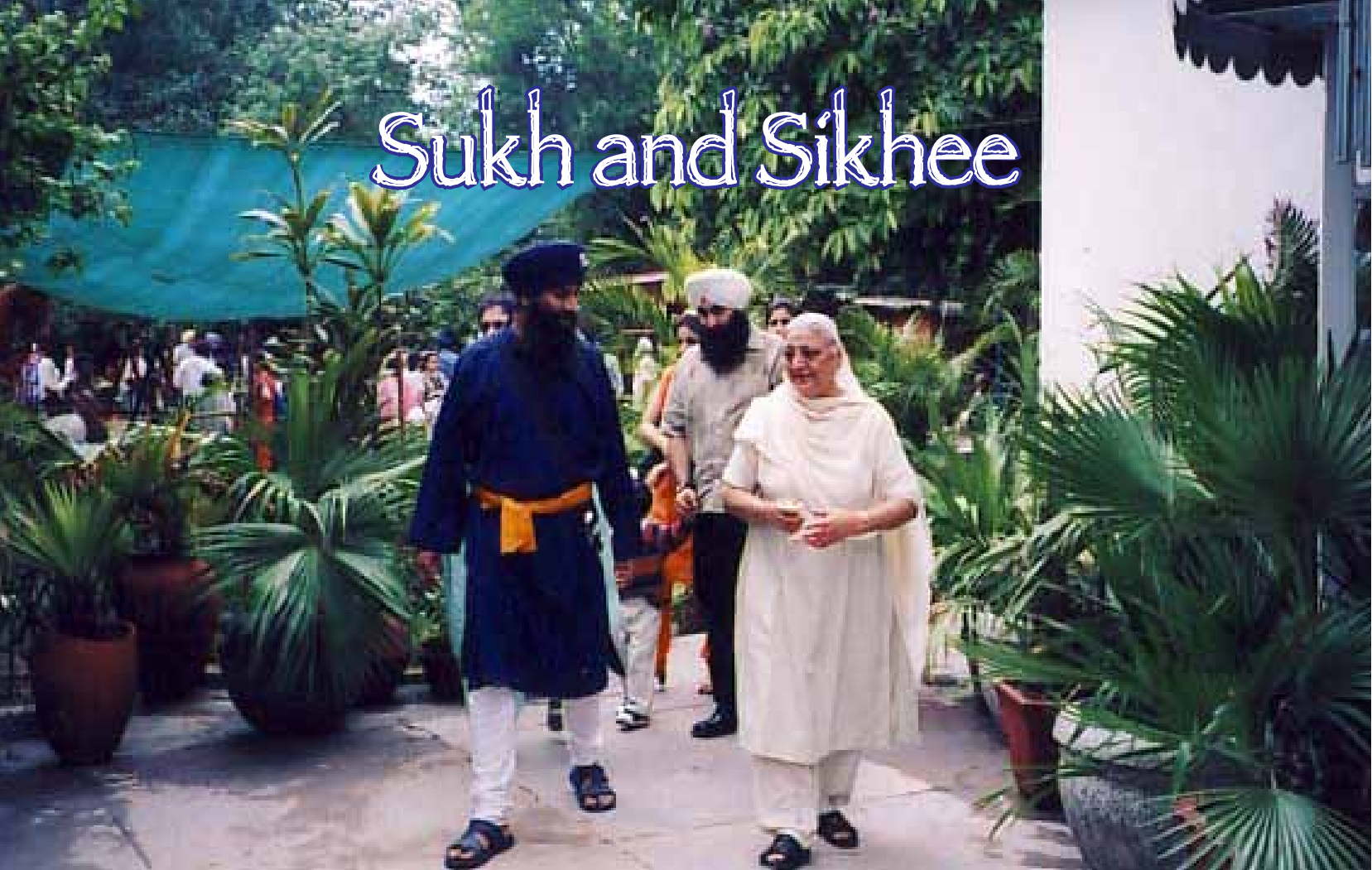
Atal Sahib, an octagonal tower over 45 m high, commemorates the 9-year-old Baba Atal, son of Guru Hargobind. One day Baba Atal’s friends died and the young boy brought him back to life. Reprimanded by his father for performing miracles, Baba Atal gave away his own life for that of his friend. The Gurdwara’s foundation was laid in 1770 and the first three storeys were completed by 1784. The doors on the ground floor, where the Guru Granth Sahib is seated, are adorned with impressive designs on silver and brass sheets. The interior of the Gurdwara is quite plain, but there are some beautiful murals on the walls of the second and third floors.

The beautiful Gurdwara Manji Sahib is where Guru Arjan is said to have composed the *Barah Mah*, in raga manjh; and Gurdwara Ramsar, near Chativind Gate, is where Guru Arjan worked on the compilation of the Adi Granth and composed his masterpiece, Sukhmani Sahib, the Psalm of Peace. In the basement is the only printing press authorised to print and disburse the Guru Granth Sahib. Shahidganj Baba Deep Singh Gurdwara is also near by.

The world famous Darbar Sahib: ‘Golden Temple’ at Amritsar.



Sukh and Sikhee



*S*ukh is the *summum bonum* of all the laws of nature, which include in it all the mundane and spiritual yearnings of human beings. All living creatures yearn for *Sukh*. According to the dictionary, *Sukh* means comfort, pleasure, happiness, facility, amenity, delight, welfare and well-being. *Sukh* in *Gurmat* not only includes all the above-mentioned meanings but also adds to it grace of the Almighty.

Sikhee has been defined as discipleship and studentship. A follower of *Sikhee* is a life-long learner of *Sikh Dharm*. The Great Guru grants life-long prosperity and sound health to the Sikh. If a Sikh is unhappy, depressed, suffering from diseases and poor then he/she has not understood and followed the Sikh way of life. A Sikh helps others and gets help from others in his/her endeavours. A Sikh showers love and affection on others and this is reciprocated.

One is blessed with the Happiness: We think of the welfare of others.

ਸੁਖ ਤਿਹ ਕੇ ਖੁਪਤ ਭਯੋ ਚਿਤਵਨ ਗਈ ਪਰਾਇ ॥ ਦਯਮ ਗਰੰਥ
D.G 892-2

Profession and occupation always bring prosperity and cheerfulness to a Sikh. Being conscious about health, belief in hard labour and having a progressive outlook on life, protects a Sikh from the ailments of this life. A Sikh is always happy, and if not so then he/she has gone astray from the path of *Sikhee*.

Many a person does not get *Sukh* because they search for it in the material world. *Sukh* is a state of mind. As John Milton says in 'Paradise Lost',

"The mind is its own place and in itself, can make a heaven of hell, a hell of heaven."

The giver of peace shall abide in thy mind.

ਸੁਖ ਦਾਤਾ ਤੇਰੈ ਮਨ ॥

ਸੁਖ ਮਨ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸਹਿਜ ॥

SGGS, 998

Sukh cannot be obtained from material things alone and one has to adapt oneself to an inner, contemplative life.

There is no peace in earning much wealth.

There is no peace in beholding dance and drama.

There is no blessing in conquering many countries.

All the pleasure are obtained by singing the Lord's Praise.

ਸੁਖ ਨਾਹੀ ਬਹੁਤੈ ਧਨਿ ਖਾਟੇ ॥ ਸੁਖ ਨਾਹੀ ਪੇਖੇ ਨਿਰਤਿ ਨਾਟੇ ॥
 ਸੁਖੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਬਹੁ ਦੇਸ ਕਮਾਏ ॥ ਸਰਬ ਸੁਖਾ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਣ ਗਾਏ ॥
 SGGS 1147, M.5

One must follow the Gurmat way of life which has been lived by the Gurus and their devotees. The three cardinal virtues – *Kirat Karna* (honest labour), *Naam Japna* (devotion to God), *Wand Chhakana* (sharing with the needy) of Guru Nanak Dev Ji are the established way of living for *Sukh*. Balanced worldly living as well as spiritual life ultimately results in *Sukh*. This is not a hypothesis but living reality demonstrated by Gurus by living a life according to these principles, and it is within the reach of all humans.

*Home, mansion and enjoyments are there,
 Where Thou art heartily remembered.
 But worldly grandeurs are all like evil.*

ਘਰ ਮੰਦਰ ਖੁਸੀਆ ਤਹੀ ਜਹ ਤੂ ਆਵਹਿ ਚਿਤਿ ॥
 ਦੁਨੀਆ ਕਾ ਵਡਿਆਈਆ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਭਿ ਕੁਮਿਤਿ ॥ SGGS, p. 319.

When one enjoys *Sukh* at home, then one will surely enjoy *Sukh* through the world. So as to spread *Sukh* one should not become obstructive to the *Sukh* of others.

The Sikh *Dharam* was conceived as a dynamically evolving faith. The same spirit energised the ten Gurus who contributed to its evolution. Guru Gobind Singh consecrated the Khalsa Panth and gave it the responsibility to carry on that evolution. The Gurus infused in the Khalsa Panth an intense love for freedom, political, social, intellectual and spiritual. Sikh *Dharam* created the outstanding landmarks of spiritual advancement. The Sikh ideal of spiritual life is not only of a saint-at-peace but also to be the Guru's knight-at-arms. *Guru Granth Sahib* encompasses five centuries of India's spiritual treasure, and mankind has found peace, liberation and answers to its ultimate destiny, which is *Sukh*.

Those who delve deep into study of *Guru Granth Sahib* have awakened to an amazing life, full of mystique and grace, the *Parm Sukh* from *Guru Granth Sahib* outlining realisation of *Sukh*.

Following are some selected *shabads*

In Thine service, Thou hast placed eternal peace.
 ਸੁਖ ਸੇਵਾ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਰਖਿਐ ॥ SGGS. P. 72/10

The Service is performed, happiness is obtained
 ਸੁਖ ਹੋਵੈ ਸੇਵ ਕਮਾਣੀਆ ॥ SGGS, p. 25/19

An ocean of peace is the Name of God
 ਸੁਖ ਸਾਗਰੁ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਹੈ ॥ SGGS, p. 29/2,

The dispenser of peace is the one Lord alone.
 ਸੁਖ ਦਾਤਾ ਹਰਿ ਏਕੁ ਹ ॥ SGGS, p. 1132/6

Joy has welled up and the bugles of joy play incessantly.
 ਸੁਖ ਉਪਜੇ ਬਾਜੇ ਅਨਹਦ ॥ SGGS, p. 806/6

I am blessed with comfort, peace and celestial bliss.
 ਸੁਖ ਸਾਂਤਿ ਸਹਜ ਆਨਦ ॥ SGGS, p. 819/19



I met the True Guru and have obtained Peace and wealth.

ਸੁਖ ਸੰਪਤਿ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮ ॥ SGGS, p. 402/7

Thy Creator, who is the Embodiment of mercy, confers all comforts.

ਸੁਖ ਸਮੂਹ ਕਰੁਣਾ ਮੈ ਕਰਤਾ ॥ SGGS, p. 1218/13

The Name is the treasure of peace.

ਸੁਖ ਕਾ ਨਾਮ ਨਿਧਾਨੁ ॥ SGGS, P. 398/15

ਸੁਖ ਦੁਖ ਤੇਰੀ ਆਗਿਆ ॥ SGGS, p.. 432/3

There is no peace without the Name's meditation. happiness and woe are in Thy will.

ਸੁਖੁ ਨਾ ਹੀ ਬਿਨ ਨਾਮ ॥ SGGS, p. 1145/5

By God's slave's favour, peace is obtained.

ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਆ ਜਨ ਪਰਸਾਦਿ ॥ SGGS, p. 397/18

Understanding the above *shabads*, it becomes clear that the quintessences of *Sukh* are *Seva*, *Simran* and the Grace of the Guru.

Sadhu Singh Deol