

II/2012

NISHAAN

NAGAARA

The Universe and Sikh Thought
The Satguru's Way
Sikhs and the Third Millenium
The Power of Synthesis

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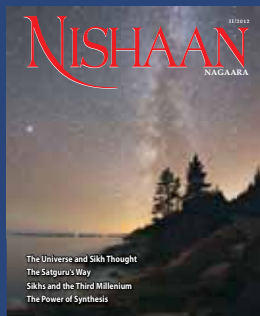
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Cover: The Milky Way
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Editorial



As so wonderfully enunciated in his editorial 'The Sands of Time' by Dr IJ Singh, our *Editor for the Americas*, "The Nishaan has from the very beginning been endowed with the beauty to catch the eye and the charm to hold it."

And so, as we continue to celebrate publication of the first 50 Issues of this 'Illustrated Journal of the Sikhs', we reach back over the years to present contemporary readers with select themes. These reflect the Nagaara Trust's deep sense of faith to preserve, project and propagate the uniqueness and glories of the Khalsa Panth.

Nishaan's Editorial Director, Dr Jaswant Singh Neki, arguably the most respected Sikh scholar of our times, is also described as a "significant neo-metaphysical Punjabi language poet." His early education was at the Khalsa High School in Quetta (Baluchistan) and later at the Forman Christian College in Lahore. After partition, he taught at the Aligarh Muslim University and later at Mysore University where he qualified as a psychiatrist and with double distinctions. His opus magnum is his autobiography in verse and he also writes powerful, inspiring prose as evidenced by the score of his books. *The Ardas-Darshan, Roop te Abhias* has been evaluated as an "all-time classic."

Reproduced from one of Dr Jaswant Singh Neki's lectures is an obeisance to the Jap(u)ji Sahib, the very first composition enshrined in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib and embodying essentials of the Sikh faith: "it is customary for Sikhs to recite Jap(u)ji every morning."

'The Universe and Sikh Thought' is by Sirdar Kapur Singh, regarded as one of the greatest scholars of Sikhism and an intellectual of high calibre and makes for introspective thinking. The main doctrines of Sikh theology are grounded in this view of the Ultimate Reality and its nature. "From One the Many emanate and finally into the One the Many submerge."

A prolific writer, Sirdar Kapur Singh's classic on Sikh philosophy is the timeless *Parasarprasna*. As a Sikh ideologue, he was moving spirit behind the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973 which has become a crucial enunciation of modern Sikh political formula and policy.

Bhayee Ardaman Singh, Bhayee Sahib of Bagrian articulates on 'The Satguru's Way', mission of the

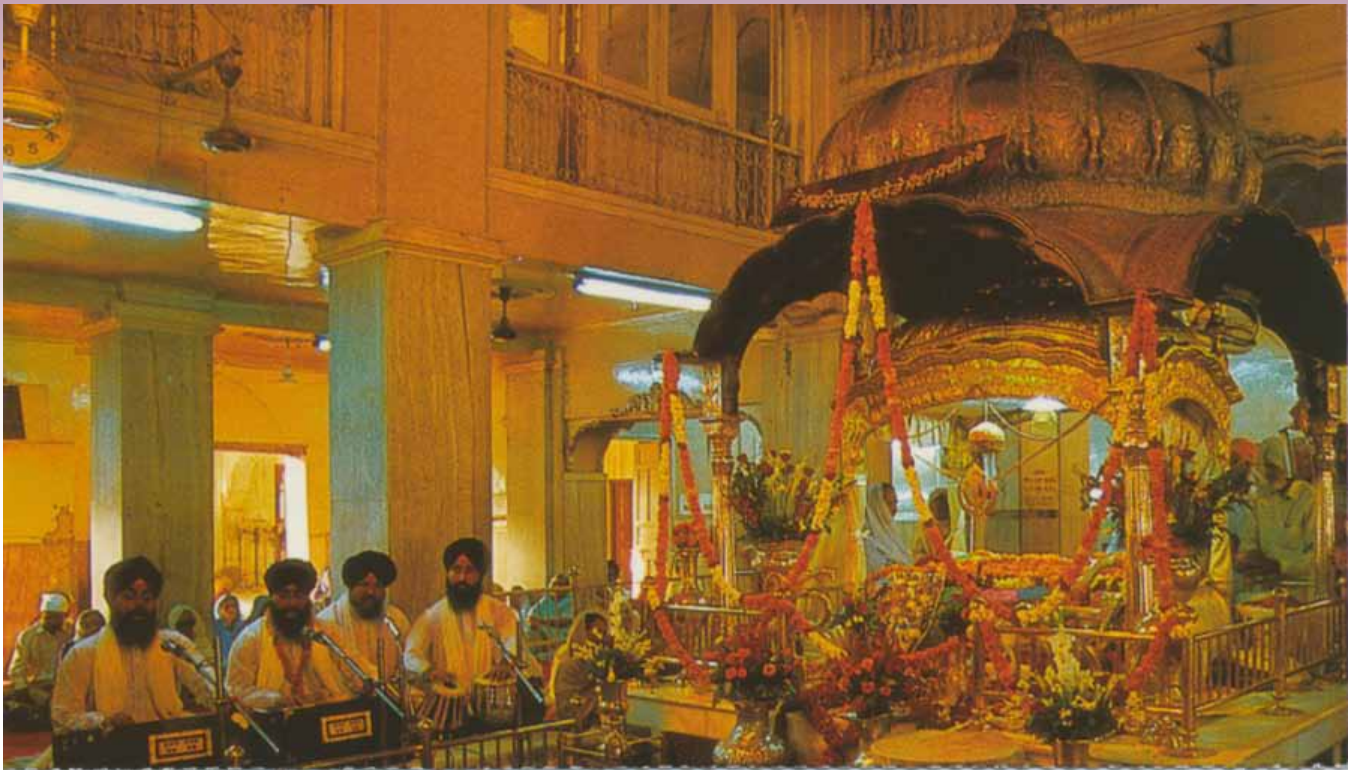
Gurus and merger of the Guru with the Khalsa "to create overwhelming energy, daring courage, bravery and readiness always to help the needy and the oppressed". Bhayee Sahib was of pious lineage, the family tracing their descent from Bhai Rup Chand, a devout Sikh of the time of Guru Hargobind and for several generations, have been a leading religious family among the Sikhs. His youngest son Bhayee Sikandar Singh is Joint Editor of the *Nishaan*.

Dr Kharak Singh, who founded the Institute of Sikh Studies in Chandigarh in 1989, wrote about 'Sikhs and the Third Millennium' at a time when it was necessary to recall message of the Gurus, and in the planning for our future. "Although religious division has often led to conflicts, it can also play an important role in averting catastrophe, if its real spirit is invoked. So, as to put an end to clashes between religions, some well-wishers of humanity would like a common universal religion or a global civilisation to emerge".

Prof. Dr Harnam Singh 'Shan' (literally a light that shines uniquely) had mastered seven languages, including Persian, Arabic and Braj Bhasha. In his treatise on Sikhism, the Professor has shown it as "an original, distinct, revealed and complete religion". The Sikh faith is the youngest and most modern of the world's religions, born just over five centuries back and growing gloriously through an eventful period of the modern world, in full gaze of contemporary history.

Besides, this is a prophetic religion; as Macauliffe said in 1910, "the Sikh religion presents no mysteries and embraces an ethical system such as has never been excelled, if indeed it has ever been equalled. It offers fewer points of attack than any other theological system and if patronised and cherished, as its religious and political importance deserves, by a powerful government, it might become one of the First religions on this planet."

Here, it is appropriate to quote Nobel Laureate Pearl S. Buck, on English translation of the Guru Granth Sahib: "I have studied the scriptures of the great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length and are a revelation of the concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body."



There is something strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzled me until I learned that they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 16th century when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe upon which we all live is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to a person of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind.

The hymns in Guru Granth are an expression of man's loneliness, his aspirations, his longings, his cry to God and his hunger for communication with that being. It speaks to me of life and death; of time and eternity; of temporal human body and its needs; of the mystic human soul and its longing to be fulfilled; of God and the indissoluble bond between them."

Further, as one of the prominent historians in the 20th Century, Arnold Toynbee has written :

"Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before, in the days of increasing communications between all parts of the world and branches of human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scriptures, the Guru Granth will have something special of value to say to the rest of the world".

In this Issue are also reproduced 'Images of a Heritage', as compiled by Tejinder Singh, which are a fascinating collection of paintings depicting the Sikhs and their realms from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

Articulating on 'The Power of Synthesis', Fakir Syed Aijazuddin, whose illustrious forefathers served with the 'Sarkar-e-Khalsa', the significance of secular approach in the Punjab of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is recalled with awe, at a time when there are multiple challenges facing this land of the five rivers, on both sides of the imposed divide.

Jyoti M Rai is certainly one of the world's foremost experts on the unique and distinct coinage of the Sikhs, which "reflect the theme of divinity and valour, and are hallmark of the nation". 'Divine Coinage of the Sikhs' gives further insight into the rich cultural backdrop of this very vibrant and dynamic people.

In reviewing Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh's book on 'The feminine principle in the Sikh vision of the Transcendent', the *Nishaan* rejoiced presence of the feminine as in Sikh conception and perception of the Transcendent Reality.

As the Great Guru said,

Of woman are all born : without woman none should exist.

The Editors

SIKHISM



An original, distinct, revealed and complete religion

The word 'Sikh', as we know, is the 'Punjabised' form of the Sanskrit word *shishya*, meaning a disciple or a learner, especially "a seeker of truth." It came to be used for the disciples of Guru Nanak Dev and his nine spiritual successors who graced humanity from 1469 to 1708 AD. Thus, their religion, called Sikhism, literally means the path of discipleship and the new way of life.

Their faith is the youngest and most modern of the world's religions. It originated in the Punjab, the land of Five Rivers, some five centuries ago, during the Muslim rule of Lodhis followed soon after by that of the Mughals in India.

Soon after the passing away, in 1708, of the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh, the Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah, issued an imperial ordinance on the 10th of December 1710 from Delhi to "kill and finish them (the Sikhs) wherever they were found," ordering thus their wholesale destruction. That royal proclamation, outlawing the Sikhs and seeking their complete annihilation, was repeated by Emperor Farrukh Siyar, and it remained in force for three long years in all parts of the Mughal Empire. "According to it, every Sikh or Nanakpanthi, wherever seen, was to be immediately arrested. He was to be offered only one alternative, either Islam or the sword. He was to be executed there and then without

any hesitation or loss of time. A schedule of valuable rewards was proclaimed. For every Sikh head Rs.25 were to be given, and for a Sikh captive, a sum of Rs.100 was to be awarded. Their pretty girls were to be reduced to concubines, and others were to be made maid-servants. When a Muslim died, his grave was to be dug by the Sikhs or their Hindu sympathisers. For *begar* (unpaid labour), in place of cobblers, Sikhs were to be employed. The Emperor's orders were strictly obeyed. The Governors of Sirhind, Lahore and Jammu tried to surpass one another in persecution of the Sikhs in order to win the goodwill of Farrukh Siyar." Later, in 1746, according to Syed Mohammad Latif, "The Governor (of Punjab) Yahya Khan, issued a proclamation for a general massacre of all Sikhs, wherever they could be found. Death was to be the punishment of all persons who invoked the name of Guru Gobind (Singh), and a reward was offered for the heads of Sikhs. Thousands were put to death daily, and their heads brought before the Subedar of Lahore for reward." It was reported, on three occasions, to the authorities that the Sikhs had been exterminated, root-and-branch. The Afghan invader, Ahmad Shah Abdali, during his invasion of India in 1762 and his continued campaign against the Sikhs and killed about twenty five thousand of them in a single day's battle. Besides, he ransacked their capital (Amritsar), blew up their Harimandar (the Temple of God, better known as Golden Temple), and desecrated its Sudhasar (sacred pool) with blood, bones and entrails of cows, etc., and had it filled up with debris.

With the establishment, of the British rule in Punjab, in 1849, Dr Ernest Trumpp, a German missionary, appointed by Her Majesty's Government to translate the sacred Sikh scriptures, asserted in 1877 that "Sikhism is a waning religion that will soon belong to history." Joginder Nath Bhattacharya rather prophesied in 1896 that "Under British rule, Sikhism is fast losing its vitality and is drifting towards amalgamation with the Hindu faith. In the course of a few more generations, Sikhism is likely to be superseded by one of those forms of Vaishnavism which alone have the best chance of success among a subject nation in times of profound and undisturbable peace." Max Arthur Macauliffe also apprehended such a danger of amalgamation or absorption, when he observed, first in his essays and papers (1881-1906), and later in his magnum opus (1909): "The strength and vitality of Hinduism is like the boa constrictor of the Indian forests. When a petty enemy appears to worry it, it winds round its opponent, crushes it in its folds, and finally causes it to disappear in its capacious interior. In this way, many centuries

ago, Hinduism on its own ground disposed of Buddhism which was largely a Hindu reformation; in this way, in a prehistoric period, it absorbed the religion of the Scythian invaders of Northern India; in this way, it is disposing of the reformed and once hopeful religion of Baba Nanak. Hinduism has embraced Sikhism in its folds; the still comparatively young religion is making a vigorous struggle for life, but its ultimate destruction is, it is apprehended, inevitable without state support."

Gokul Chand Narang posing a self-prophetising question and answering it himself in a self-righteous manner, stated in 1912, "What is their (the Sikhs) future? It is anything but dark. However, it is apparent that the best days of the Khalsa are altogether behind."

During the all-out crusade of extermination against its adherents (who are easily recognisable by their strikingly distinctive appearance sporting unshorn hair and colourful headgear) immediately before and after the partition of India and the creation of Pakistan on 15 August 1947, thousands of them (the Sikhs) were killed at sight. The rest were uprooted, en masse, from their homes, lands and historic shrines and were deprived of all other belongings in an unprecedented way.

That horrendous holocaust reduced nearly half of their thriving community to a homeless, landless and seething refugee population. So much so that of all other persons, one of its own followers, Khushwant Singh, while prefacing his first book about them and their faith, observed in 1953 : "The chief reason for my writing an account of my people is the melancholy thought that contemporary with my labours are being written the last chapters of the story of the Sikhs. By the end of the century, the Sikhs themselves will have passed into oblivion. Before that happens, it is proper that some estimate of their religion, history, traditions and political and cultural achievements should be made by someone identified with them by faith and association." Gokul Chand Narang, a staunch Arya Samajist, came out in 1960 with another self-fulfilling statement asserting that the "Sikhs have no political future as an independent community." Fourteen years later, another highly learned Sikh, Kapur Singh, stated while concluding his speech on 7 October 1974 at Vancouver: "While as Canadian citizens, the Sikhs may look forward to a hopeful and bright future, in India, their historic homeland, they now face the basic problems of their identity and existence, since the control of their own history has been snatched out of their own hands and their historical potential has been

submerged and throttled. But I add that the Sikhs want to live, as all living things do not want to die."

Only ten years after that last pronouncement, the Sikhs had to face still another holocaust in 1984, only thirty-seven years after the independence of India for the attainment of which their sufferings, sacrifices and contribution far exceeded their numerical strength in their motherland. This too involved not only a multi-pronged attack on their historic shrines and institutions, but also a genocidal campaign to slaughter thousands of innocent Sikhs, disgracing their women and burning their properties all over India—not accounted for till this date.

But in spite of such recurrent persecution and treacherous onslaughts perpetrated on this religion by the rulers and the foreign invaders as well as the ongoing challenges and intimidating prophecies about its absorption, assimilation or disappearance, Sikhism has stood its ground and withstood all the tests of time. All nefarious efforts made from time-to-time to suppress, subjugate or exterminate it have gone up in smoke. All prophets of doom who predicted its extinction have had to bite their tongue and their prophecies have proven totally absurd. Even "the boa constrictor has failed to swallow it"! The fact remains that Sikhism has not only survived, but is very much here to grow. Its followers are flourishing now in even larger numbers, not only in Punjab, its homeland, and in all other parts of India, but also in many parts of the world. Despite various limitations, such as their 'stateless status', the Sikhs have achieved far greater success in all walks of life, contributing much to the progress of the communities they live in and wielding "an influence much in excess of their numerical strength" everywhere in the world. So much so that according to the renowned historian Arnold Toynbee, "they are the burliest men on the face of the planet, tough and capable, if slightly grim. If human life survives the present chapter of man's history, the Sikhs for sure, will still be on the map."

This is so and shall remain thus: because the Sikhs, in spite of being about 2% of the population of India, their country of origin, profess one of the 'higher religions' of the World which is not only an original, distinct and independent faith, but is also an autonomous, complete and dynamic religion, born of a direct and definitive revelation like other major religions of the world.

It is primary in its source and pure in its contents.

The authenticity of its dogmas, simplicity of its beliefs, exalted moral code, internal vigour, tenacity

of purpose and sustained heroism together with the religious zeal, spiritual energy, unshakable faith and indomitable spirit as well as the enterprising and self-sacrificing nature of its followers have kept it intact and firm on its ground in many such crises during its 500 plus year-old history, raising it up again with greater strength and better prospects after every attempt to annihilate it.

Those who have not been able to study Sikhism properly or objectively, or have been unable to understand rightly its nature, origin, essence, psyche and spirit, have often described it wrongly or misleadingly.

Some of them, like Estlin Carpenter, have considered it not an original and distinct, but an eclectic and 'composed' religion, maintaining that "the movement of Nanak which culminated in the formation of a kind of church nation, was fed from two sources and attempted to establish a religion combining the higher elements of Hinduism and Islam alike." According to Rev. F. Heiler, it is "a pure and elevated religion in which the best of Hinduism and the best of Islam unite. ...many elements of the religion... come near the central truths of Christianity, though these glimpses of revelation are indeed bluffed by the strong influence of Vedantic pantheism and Islamic fatalism. Above all, the element which robs the teaching of the Granth (its sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib) of any creative power is its eclecticism, its continued oscillation between theism and pantheism." In the words of Khushwant Singh, "Sikhism was born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam." It is "a synthesis of these two faiths."

According to Bhattacharya, it may be described briefly as a Hinduised form of Muhammadanism or a Muhammadanised form of Hinduism, is a mixture of Hinduism and Muhammadanism minus circumcision and cow-killing, and plus faith in the Sikh Gurus. Even in outward appearance, a Sikh with his short trousers, flowing beard, forehead free from paint and neck without beads, looks more like a Muhamedan than a Hindu. The only visible sign by which he may be distinguished is the iron ring which he wears on the wrist." *Time* magazine has recently described the Sikh as "a member of a casteless religion that combines elements of Hinduism and Islam, but scorns the caste system of the Hindus and the historical expansionism of the Muslims."

Some others, like Frederic Pincott, have also tried to identify Sikhism with Muhammadanism. According to him, "the religion of Nanak was really intended as a compromise between Hinduism and Muhammadanism,

if it may not even be spoken of as the religion of a Mohammanadan." Concluding his article on Sikhism, included in the Dictionary of Islam, he observed, "It is enough for the purpose of this article to have established the fact that Sikhism, in its inception, was intimately associated with Muhammadanism and that it was intended as a means of bridging the gulf which separated the Hindus from the believers in the Prophet." Tara Chand has even gone to the extent of asserting that "Nanak took the Prophet of Islam as his model and his teaching was naturally deeply coloured by this fact."

Sri Rajagopalachari has described the Sikhs as "no better than uncircumcised Mussalmans." Ascribing the theistic character of Sikhism to the influence of Islam, Monier Williams has stated, "Nanak was partially Islamised, to the extent at least of denouncing idolatry." G.T. Battany has also mentioned this religion "having been largely influenced by the growing Mohammanadanism." But the Muslim writers, like Maulvi Insha Ulla Khan, Maulvi Muhammad Ali, Khawaja Hasan Nizami, and Shaikh Muhammad Yasuf, have gone a step further even by claiming Guru Nanak as a great Muslim Fakir who, according to them, taught a religion which in itself was a form of Muhammadanism.

On the other hand, according to Ernest Trumpp, "Sikhism has only an accidental relationship with Muhammadanism. It is a mistake if Nanak is represented as having endeavoured to unite the Hindu and Muhammadan idea about God. Nanak remained a thorough Hindu according to all his views." "Although precipitated by Islam," asserts Gokul Chand Narang, "Sikhism owes nothing to that religion. It is, on the other hand, a phase of Hindu religious revival, and has in consequence retained all essential features of real Hinduism." Mahatma Gandhi has even claimed that the "Sikhs are a part of the Hindu community. The Granth Sahib is filled with the Hindu spirit and the Hindu legends, and millions of Hindus believe in Guru Nanak." Gandhi, records Archer, "acknowledged that he had met some Sikhs who held themselves distinct from Hindus, but intimated "that he would be pleased to find

that the separate tendency is confined to only a very few Sikhs and that the general body regard themselves as Hindus," thus paving the way for Sikhism to be labelled as an off-shoot of Hinduism!

There are still others who, like Muhammad Akbar, have even denied the distinct identity and separate entity of Sikhism by asserting that "Guru Nanak did not enunciate any new religion, but only wanted to reform Hinduism." According to Guru Dati also, it is difficult to say whether Sikhs have any separate or distinct religion of their own. The faith they profess is the basis of the present-day Arya-Samaj. Nirad C. Chaudhuri has, also identified Sikhism with Hinduism and has described it as one of its different forms.

According to some others, like Marian Smith, Sikhism is a religious synthesis. She "finds a similarity between the reforms of Guru Nanak and those of Martin Luther. She calls Sikhism a religious synthesis, pointing out that Guru Nanak offered a doctrinal synthesis which answered the challenge of Islam, and aimed at the foundations of the top-heavy Brahminical social structure."

But those who have studied Sikhism and have understood its origin, growth and gospel have proclaimed, in the words of Duncan Greenlees, the celebrated author of the World Gospel Series, that "Sikhism is no disguised Hindu sect, but an independent revelation of the Truth of all sects; it is no variant of Muslim teaching..... too is a distinct religion like the other great religions of the

world..... the Sikh is not a Hindu nor a Muslim; he is the disciple of the one Eternal Guru." According to Edward Bittencourt,

M.A. Macauliffe, who devoted thirty long years to the study and research on Sikhism and produced a six-volume monumental work about its prophets, scripture and tradition, had already stated, while introducing to the West this religion and its founder as follows: "Guru Nanak was not a priest either by birth or education, but a man who soared to the loftiest heights of divine emotionalism, and exalted his mental vision to an ethical ideal beyond the conception of Hindu or Muhammadan.

"Sikhism is a wholly new, original and genuinely monotheistic religion. It is an independent religion, which naturally may be said to have a background of Hinduism and Islam, much as Christianity has a background of Judaism, and Judaism has a background of Akhnatonism and Zoroastrianism and previous Semitic Paganism."

The illustrious author of *Vie de Jesus* asks whether great originality will arise again, or the world be content to follow the path opened by the daring creators of ancient ages. Presented here is a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of the unity of God, it rejected Hindu formulations and adopted an independent ethical system, ritual, and standards, which were totally opposed to theological beliefs in Guru Nanak's age and country." Hence, he asserted, "It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system." According to R.C. Majumdar too, the founder of this new and distinct religion, "cut himself adrift from all associations with prevailing sectarian religions."

It even fell away from allegiance to their respective codes and developed its own, as observed by Sir Lepel Griffin in 1870 : "The Sikhs had abandoned the Hindu faith, and with it the system of law which is the basis of the faith and which was inseparable from it. For a hundred and fifty years they had been governed, as far as chiefships were concerned, by another code altogether, and it was as reasonable for them to refer to Manu and the Shastras as the source of legal authority, as it would have been for Muhammadans who had embraced Sikhism to appeal to the shariat." So much so, that, in the words of Prof. Indubhushan Banerjee, it "forged its own weapon, hedged itself behind newer forms and customs, in short, developed individuality of its own."

And this is what Guru Arjan Dev, the holy compiler of its sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, has himself stated in unambiguous terms in 1604 AD.:

*"I observe neither fasting (like a Hindu),
Nor the month of austerity (like a Muslim).
For I serve God alone,
Who saves all at the last.
Gosain of the Hindus and Allah of the Muslims are one to me.
I have broken free from Hindus as from Muslims. Neither I go to Mecca to perform Hajj (like Muslims), Nor I perform worship at pilgrim places of Hindus.
I serve only the sole Lord (i.e., God) and no other.
I neither perform the Hindu worship,
Nor say the Muslim prayer.
I bow to the One Formless Lord in my heart. We are neither Hindus nor Musalmans,
Our body and soul belong to the One Supreme Being, Who alone is both Ram and Allah for us."*

A contemporary historian, Mobid Zulfiqar Ardistani (popularly known as Shaikh Mohsin Fani), who happened to stay with his son and successor, Guru Hargobind, at Kiratpur Saliib, and who had been the first non-Sikh writer to record an account of the Sikhs and Sikhism of those days, and that too based on first-hand information, has recorded his statement in his famous work on comparative study of religions, entitled *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, compiled in 1654. Opening his chapter on the subject, Mohsin Fani observes: "the Nanak Panthis who are known as the Sikhs of the Gurus, have no faith in idols and temples of idols." Proceeding further, he states "They do not read the *mantras* of the Hindus. They do not venerate their temples or idols, nor do they esteem their *avtars*. They have no regard for the Sanskrit language, which, according to the Hindus, is the speech of the angels." Indicating Guru Nanak's own attitude towards *avtars* and divinities, he tells that Guru Nanak did not believe in divinities and incarnations. "Just as he praised the Mohammadans, so has he praised the incarnations and the gods and goddesses of the Hindus. But, he considered them all to be the created (*makhluq*) and not the Creator (*khaliq*). He denied the doctrines of *Halool* (i.e. direct descent from or incarnation of God), and *Ittihad* (i.e., direct union of the All-pervading God with any particular body)."

Bhai Gurdas, the amanuensis who compiled the Holy Granth at the dictation of Guru Arjan, was himself a great scholar and writer and his ballads and couplets are regarded as the 'key' to understanding of the Sikh scriptures, tenets, practices, etc., has categorically stated: The Guru's *Panth* is distinct. And cannot be mixed with others.

Basing his conclusion on numerous references and statements contained therein, Owen Cole has, therefore, observed, "Hinduism at all levels is rejected and replaced by the practices which have come to be the essential part of Sikh ceremonial use of the Adi Granth and celebration of the anniversaries of the Gurus (*gurpurbs*)."

Qazi Nur Muhammad who came to India from Baluchistan in the invader's train to record the events of the seventh (dt. 1764) invasion of Ahmad Shah Abdali, and who completed his "invaluable" *Jang Namah* in 1765, has also expressed similar views which are based upon his personal observations and close contacts. Speaking of the religion of the Sikhs against whom the said expedition had been organised, Nur Muhammad tells us that religiously they were absolutely separate from Hindus:

"The Sikhs are the disciples of the Guru, and that august Guru lived at Chak (Amritsar). The ways and manners of these people received their impetus from Nanak who showed those Sikhs a 'separate path (i.e., taught them a distinct religion). He was succeeded by Gobind Singh from whom they received the title of 'Singh.' They are not from amongst the Hindus, and have a separate religion of their own."

J.D. Cunningham (1812-1851), who happened to be the first-ever Westerner to write and publish (in 1849) the first full-fledged history of Sikhism after years of fierce and decisive battles, therefore, observed in 1849 : "The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty, although fitful, longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Gobind saw what was yet vital, and he relumed it with Promethean fire." The result of the miracle that the Tenth Master wrought, records Cunningham, is that,

The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh Chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look which marks the fervours of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity." Asserting that the people marked by such high spirits and changed features belonged to a distinct faith, altogether different even from that of their other countrymen, Cunningham added: "Notwithstanding these changes, it has been usual to regard the Sikhs as essentially Hindus, and they doubtless are so in language and everyday customs, for Gobind (Singh) did not fetter his disciples with political systems or codes of municipal laws; yet in religious faith and worldly aspirations they are wholly different from other Indians, and they are bound together by a community of inward sentiment and outward object unknown elsewhere. But the misapprehension need not surprise the public nor condemn our scholars, when it is remembered that the learned Greeks and Romans misunderstood the spirit of those humble men who obtained a new life by baptism. Tacitus and Suetonius

regarded the early Christians as a mere Jewish sect, they failed to perceive the fundamental difference and to appreciate the latent energy and real excellence of that doctrine which has added dignity and purity to the modern civilisation." Sir Charles Elliot acclaimed it, therefore, as "a religion of special interest (to mankind), since it has created not only a political society, but also customs so distinctive that those who profess it, rank in common esteem as a separate race." Guru Gobind Singh's "ordinances", he added, "were successful in creating a nation."

Recognising and acclaiming this amazing fact of history, the Sage-Scholar of Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo, has similarly observed: "A more striking instance was the founding of the Sikh religion, its long line of Gurus and the novel direction and form given to it by Guru Gobind Singh in the democratic institution of Khalsa." Explaining it earlier, he stated: "The Sikh Khalsa was

an astonishingly original and novel creation, and its face was turned not to the past but to the future." Nirmal Kumar Jain has likewise asserted that those who consider this religion as an off-shoot of Islam "are as mistaken as those who think Sikhism to be an off-shoot of Hinduism. Like every original religion, it is born of a direct revelation. It is not based on any scripture. As it does not derive from any established creed, it does not fight any preceding religion." In the same vein, maintains Ishwari Prasad that "Guru Nanak declared that there was no Hindu or Mussalman. He set aside the Vedas and the Quran, and asked his followers to repeat the name

of God." Hence, said Dorothy Field, "Pure Sikhism is far above dependence on Hindu ritual. A reading of the Granth strongly suggests that Sikhism should be regarded as a new and separate world religion, rather than a reformed sect of the Hindus."

Sikhism is similarly not a sect or a form of Muhammadanism. It is neither a mixture of both nor a compilation of good points selected from the Hindu and Muslim faiths. It has not been formed, as alleged above, by combining some rational and acceptable rituals, beliefs and dogmas of the Hindus and Muslims. "The teachings of Guru Nanak have," says Geoffrey Parrinder, the eminent author of the World Religions, "commonly been represented

*"A living spirit possesses
the whole Sikh people,
and the impress of (Guru)
Gobind (Singh) has not
only elevated and altered
the constitution of their
minds, but has also
operated materially and
given amplitude to their
physical frames."*

as a syncretic blend of Hindu tradition and Muslim belief. This is a gross simplification, and when expressed in terms of a mixture of Hinduism and Islam, it must be totally rejected. The teachings of Guru Nanak do indeed represent a synthesis, but the elements which constitute the synthesis can never be defined, however loosely, as Hinduism and Islam." Thus, Sikhism can, in no way, be termed as an eclectic religion, composed of selections made from various systems, doctrines, sources, etc.

the way of the Aryans, represented by Hinduism and its heterodox forms, Buddhism and Jainism; and the Semitic Way of Life, represented primarily by the Christians and the Mussulmans. That such was the unambiguous claim made for his new order of the Khalsa by the Guru (Gobind Singh) himself, cannot be in doubt, as the Guru's own assertions on this point amply support the testimony of the contemporary non-Sikh historians and writers."

This is also quite clear from the proclamation he made in the great gathering of the Sikhs at Anandpur Sahib soon after initiating the first five members of the Order of the Khalsa, knighting them as Singhs and calling them his Beloved Ones, on that historic Vaisakhi day of 30th March 1699. According to the Persian historian Ghulam Muhi-ud-Din, the newswriter of the period, sent to the Emperor (Aurangzeb) a copy of the Guru's address (which) is dated the first of Vaisakh Samvat 1756 (A.D. 1699), and is as follows:

"I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, rising above all differences of the religions as now practised. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules laid down for them in the Shastras, abandon them altogether, and adopting the way of mutual help and co-operation, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganga and other places of pilgrimage which are considered to be holy in the Hindu religion, or worship the Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga; but all should cherish faith in the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism (of the double-edged Sword). Eat of the same vessel, and feel no aloofness from or contempt for one another."

*The order of the Khalsa
from its very birth has
claimed the status of a new
Way of Life, the Third
Panth, a separate community,
and distinct people from the
two Ways of Life, already
known and largely practised
by the peoples of East and
West and the inhabitants of
India"*

The newswriter of the Mughal Court who was present there on the occasion, when forwarding this proclamation to his master, submitted his own report: "When the Guru had thus addressed the crowd, several Brahmins and Khatris stood up, and said that they accepted the religion of Guru Nanak and of the other Gurus. Others, on the contrary, said that they would never accept any religion which was opposed to the teachings of the Vedas and the Shastras, and that they would not renounce at the bidding of a boy, the ancient faith which had descended to them from their ancestors. Thus, though several refused to accept the Guru's religion, about twenty

thousand men stood up and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission."

"About eighty thousand men, say Ahmad Shah Batalia and Bute Shah," received the Baptism of the double-edged Sword and joined the Order of the Khalsa during the first few days. Their names were changed, and they were given one family name 'Singh' for thenceforth their father was Gobind Singh (so renamed after his own baptism), their mother Sahib Devan, and their place of birth Anandpur. The baptism symbolised a rebirth, by which the initiated renounced their previous occupations (*krit nash*) for that of working for God; severed their family ties (*kul nash*) to become the family of Gobind; rejected their earlier creeds (*dharma nash*) for the creed of the Khalsa; gave up all rituals (*karam nash*) save that sanctioned by the Sikh faith; and stopped believing in superstition (*bharam nash*) for belief in One God."

Five emblems were prescribed for the Khalsa. They were to wear their hair and beard unshorn (*kesh*); they were to carry a comb (*kangha*) in the hair to keep it tidy; they were always to wear a knee-length pair of breeches (*kach*), worn by soldiers of the times; they were to carry a steel bangle (*kara*) on their right wrist; and they were to be ever armed with a sabre (*kirpan*). In addition to these five emblems, the converts were to observe four rules of conduct (*rahit*): not to cut any hair on any part of their body; not to smoke or chew tobacco; not to eat an animal which had been slaughtered by being bled to death, as was customary with the Muslims, but eat only *jhatka* meat, where the animal had been despatched with one blow, and not to molest the person of Muslim women. At the end of

oath-taking, the Guru hailed the converts with a new form of greeting

*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa
Waheguru ji ki Fateh*

"Hail the Khalsa who belongs to Lord God
Hail the Lord God to Whom belongs the Victory!"

The very first ordinance issued by the Founder of the Khalsa to the Sikh congregations throughout the subcontinent, confirms the above, and his definition of the Khalsa corroborates all that further as in his own words:

*"He whose mind dwells, night and day,
On the ever-effulgent Light,
And never swerves from the thought of one God;
He who is full of love for God and faith in Him,
And believes not, even mistakenly,
In fasting and worship of the graves of Muslims
Or sepulchres of Hindus;
He who recognises the one God and not another,
And does not believe in pilgrimages, Ceremonial acts of mercy
And charity, penances and austerities;
And he whose heart is illumined within
By the Light of the Perfect One,
He is to be recognised then
As a pure member of the Order of the Khalsa."*

All that ushered in a complete break with the past of all those who joined the Order of the Khalsa. It also marked "the culmination which had crowned Guru Nanak's revelation." It also pronounced complete independence and distinctiveness of the Sikh religion. "That such has been the stout belief, and the basic impulse of the Sikhs and their history can be readily ascertained by any dispassionate person who would take pains to enquire with an open mind." He or she would surely come to a similar conclusion.

Further authentication to this stance has been duly provided by John Clark Archer, who, after conducting a critical and comparative study of the Aryan and Semitic religions and recognising the separate entity and identity of Sikhism, has maintained that "Indeed Sikhism in itself reveals something of what in the last analysis religion is....." It is "an

Sikhism, which was born just about five centuries back and which has survived so gloriously through this eventful period of the modern world in full gaze of history. More so, when it has been duly recognised not only as an original and distinct, but also as an independent and autonomous higher religion of the world.

independent and conspicuous order of its own, with a character worthy of comparison with that of Hinduism and Islam, and with Christianity in particular..... the five centuries of Sikh history provide many lessons in human thought and action which are of more than passing value..... Sikhs may stand, therefore, as symbols and examples of all who search for God and Truth..... They preserve among themselves a hardy tradition of religious and political activity, and enjoy among Hindus, Moslems, Christians and other peoples, an extraordinary prestige." The dispassionate enquirer would also find like an American convert, Ralph Singh, that the followers of this distinct faith "have their own Prophets who brought a new divine revelation to earth which is enshrined in their own sacred scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, regarded as the living Word of God." But, a biased enquirer, like Hew McLeod, who has, according to Justice Gurdev Singh "attacked most of the Sikh traditions, institutions and beliefs, questioned their validity and striven to create doubts about others," would, on the other hand, maintain on flimsy props and erroneous conclusions that "Sikhism does not deserve much consideration as it is only a rehash of a minor effete Hindu creed" and that Guru Nanak was not the founder of this religion "as he did not originate a new school of thought or set of teachings." McLeod has even gone to the extent of choosing not to accept the aforesaid account of the birth of the Khalsa and the five emblems and rules of conduct prescribed for it by Guru Gobind Singh himself on the Vaisakhi of 1699, "not because he finds any evidence to falsify it, but by simply refusing to believe it," saying, "Our knowledge of this (18th) century is still limited. Traditions abound, but so too do compulsive reasons for scepticism. What we do know, however, indicates that

traditions relating to the period of Guru Gobind Singh must be, in some considerable measure, set aside. The slate must be wiped clean and must not be reinscribed until we have ascertained just what did take place during the eighteenth century."

But the history and tradition of a religion cannot, and should not be "set aside," "discarded" or "wiped clean" on the mere suspicions or unjustified scepticism of an ex-employee of a Christian Mission. Such scepticism is unwarranted particularly in the case of a religion, viz.

Besides, as already stated, this is a prophetic religion. It is born of a direct and definitive revelation like all other great and 'higher religions' of the world, "Instead of drawing authority and inspiration from any revealed scripture, such as the *Hindu Puranas* and *Smritis*, Guru Nanak depended on his own mystical experience." The revelation did not also come to him as an 'external inspiration' (called *wahi zahir*) which "was used for the production of Quran" during whose process "the mind of Muhammad was passive and the message, an external one, was brought to him by Gabriel." On the other hand, "It seems certain," says Duncan Greenlees, "that his (Guru Nanak's) views welled up from the deeps of inspiration in his own heart and owed little or nothing to what he received from others, either through books or through their words." Guru Nanak himself vouchsafed this fact and has himself recorded those experiences and revelations, received directly from God Himself, in his own bani or revealed word, preserved till today in its original and undefiled form, singling out his religion, thereby, "from, most other great theological systems as regards the authenticity of its dogmas." He has defined this as *Khasam-ki-Bani* ("Word of the Lord") in one hymn, and *Eh Bani Mahan Purakh Ki*, ("This Word of the Supreme Being") in another.

The spiritual and religious truths which Guru Nanak preached, had been revealed to him "through a direct encounter with God at some level of consciousness", and he preached what he had been told and taught by God Himself. He conveyed only those words to the world which God had wished him to give forth as His divine message, as stated by him in verses such as the following:

*"As the Lord's Word descends to me
So I express it, Lalo !"
"I have uttered only what You, O' Lord!
Have inspired me to utter."*

Guru Nanak has also mentioned in another hymn that he was an ordinary minstrel who was commissioned and blessed by God with His service. Describing his first audience with the Supreme Being, the Guru sang aloud thus:

*"I was an idle bard,
God assigned to me a rewarding task,
And commanded me to sing His praises night and day.
He summoned me to His Eternal Mansion,
Bestowed on me the robe of holy laudation,
And feasted me on the holy Name ambrosial.....
The Supreme Being is attained, says Nanak,
By laudation of the holy Eternal."*

As is well-known to students of comparative religion, contents of revealed religion are conveyed to the people by the Supreme Being through His special messengers, either by calling them to His presence, as in the case of Moses, or by communicating His messages to them, as in the case of Prophet Muhammad. As regards Sikhism, God is stated to have been pleased to use direct ways to convey His Words, Laws and Commandments, to its founder, as stated above by the first Sikh Prophet, Guru Nanak, himself in his own words.

His successors in the Apostolic Lineage have not only endorsed this fact, but have also recorded their own experiences and audiences, as under, in their respective writings, compiled in 1604 by the Fifth Master in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and preserved intact to this day:

By COMMUNICATION:

✠ As stated by Guru Amar Das, the 'Third Master: "God is Sole and Supreme, None is His equal. I speak as and when He makes me speak, My utterance is directed by Him."

✠ As confirmed by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master:

(i) "To Nanak the Truth was revealed by the Lord. So he relates mysteries of the Divine Portal."

(ii) "Know the utterance of the holy Preceptor to be pure and true. Disciples of the Master: For, the Lord-Creator Himself makes him utter it."

(iii) "The Lord has appointed me, the unsophisticated, to His task."

✠ As affirmed repeatedly by Guru Arjun Dev, the Fifth Master;

(i) "Inaccessible, unperceivable, my eternal Lord, Nanak speaks as Thou inspire him to speak."

(ii) "By myself I do not know what to say; I have stated all by His command."

(iii) "This servant of the Lord while Conveying the Divine Word, Speaks as the Lord directs him."

- (iv) "What can I utter? I know nothing to utter; As the Lord Wills, so He makes me utter."

By AUDIENCE:

- ✠ As stated by Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master
*"I, a minstrel of the Lord-God,
Came to the Divine Portal,
The Lord inside listened to my supplication,
And called me into His Presence. Addressing me, He asked,
'What brings you here, My Minstrel'
I prayed, 'Confer on me, O, Gracious Lord;
The boon of your ever-abiding Name Divine.'
The Bountiful Lord granted my prayer, Conferred on me meditation on the Name
And blessed me with a robe of honour."*
- ✠ As affirmed by Guru Arjun Dev, the Fifth Master:
*As I have attained the sought-after Lord,
Illumination and joy have filled me.....
I have been fully blessed by the Perfect Lord
Who has come, in His grace; to His servant."
The Lord-God called me into His Mansion
Wherein I consumed nectar (of Immortality)."*

Such important disclosures, solemn statements, persistent affirmations and firm conviction, in the existence and beneficence of God, prove beyond doubt that Sikhism is a revealed religion. It is so, because it has been directly revealed by God through a line of Ten Prophet-teachers, who, after receiving its contents directly from Him, presented to mankind in word and deed. They reproduced it in exactly the same original form and also recorded it in their sacred writings. It is so, because it still remains primary in its source, and pure in its contents. It is neither selective or elective in its nature nor secondary in its source, nor adulterated in its content. Hence, says M. Mujeeb, "the revelation that came to Guru Nanak, must have been as direct and immediate, and as independent of history and social circumstances, as the religious literature of the Sikhs show it to be."

That being so, Sikhism can in no way be called an admixture or juxtaposition of various doctrines gathered from this religion or that theological system by its Prophet-teachers who were genuine messengers of God. Its tenets and teachings have been borrowed neither from Hinduism nor from Islam, nor from any other such source, as has been alleged by those who have not been able to study or understand its

essentials properly or dispassionately. It is true, in the words of R.C. Majumdar, that "his was the first and also the last successful attempt to bring together the Hindus and Muslims in a common fold of spiritual and social brotherhood." The first words he uttered when called to take up the mission of his life after the aforesaid Audience with God were:

Nah ko Hindu Nah Mussalman.

"There is no Hindu, there is no Mussalman."

On the face of it, this cryptic phrase was "a simple announcement, and yet a significant one in the context of India of his day. To a society torn by conflict, he brought a vision of common humanity, a vision which transcended all barriers of creed and caste, race and country. He reminded men of their essential oneness. The terms, 'Hindu' and 'Mussalman', included Jainas, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and so on. Guru Nanak was asking men of all faiths and denominations to look beyond external divisions and distinctions to the fundamental unity of mankind. In proclaiming the unity which lay beyond particularisms, Guru Nanak was not overruling any existing religious designation or tradition. His intention was more radical: "he wanted to point men beyond their accepted condition to a new possibility—a human community with a true spirit of fellowship and justice, with that deep ethical and spiritual commitment which expresses itself in concern for fellowman. Nor was he seeking a syncretistic union between Hinduism and Islam, or striving to achieve in his teachings a judicious mixture of elements from both to be acceptable to all. His equal attention to Hindu and Muslim identities and use of some of their religious vocabulary have led some to depict him as the reconciler of the two faiths, and to see Sikhism as 'a deliberate mingling of Hindu and Muslim practices. To do so will mean missing much of his individual genius and misinterpreting the historical development issuing from his revelation." The beginnings of the Sikh faith, in fact, go back to this revelation which Guru Nanak brought to light around 1496, soon after his enlightenment and just before his departure for his preaching odysseys in India and abroad.

Sikhism is, above all, a complete religion in all respects like all other original and revealed religions of the world.

- ✠ *It is Ahl-al-Maqam*, having its own spiritual and political Capital, viz., the holy city of Amritsar (as Mecca is for Islam), with its world famous

Harimandar (Golden Temple) and Akal Takht which are its focal point, and for its followers the highest seat of spiritual and temporal authority, besides being "the centre of a World religion, meeting ground of the various facets of the human-spirit, and a profound symbol of future confluence of the World cultures into a universal culture for mankind."

✠ *It is Ahl-al-Kitab*, possessing its own holy book, viz., Guru Granth Sahib (as Quran is for Islam), which is not only the Guru Eternal of its adherents, but also unique among the world's sacred scriptures. It has been acclaimed as "the only non-denominational scripture," the "scripture of universal religion" and "part of mankind's common spiritual treasure," which, according to Arnold Toynbee, "should be brought within the direct reach of as many people as possible" and which also "deserves close study from the rest of the world."

✠ *It is Ahl-al-Milla* being a true religion revealed by Guru Nanak and having its own fellowship of faith and a cohesive community, called sangat and Panth. The Turkish and Persian connotations of the word will mean a 'nation', a 'people' and a 'state.' Sikhs are a casteless democratic society, assuring equal status and respect for all. It is for this society that Guru Gobind Singh, while expressing his great love and respect for it, declared:

*"Whatever is available in my house, my wealth,
My body, my mind, even my head
Are ever at the disposal of my people."*

Paying his tribute to their selfless services, contributions and achievements, he also stated without any reservation that:

*"It is through their favour that I have won my battles,
And have gifts been bestowed. It is through their favour that
I have overcome my troubles And my stores are filled.
It is through their favour that I have acquired knowledge
And have smothered my enemies. It is also through their
favour that
I am exalted and have attained this position; Otherwise,
there are millions of
Humble persons like myself going about."*

After administering *Khande di Pahul* to the First Five, knighting them as Singhs, and proclaiming

them as his *panj piare*, the inaugurator of that 'self-abnegating, martial and casteless' Fellowship of Faith, Guru Gobind Singh himself besought to be initiated by them in the same way as he had initiated them. Having been initiated and admitted as such to their brotherhood, called Khalsa, he later announced that he had created the Khalsa in his own image under the direct command of God, the Timeless Being:

*"The Khalsa is my alter ego, my own image,
The Khalsa is my embodiment.
In it I have my being.
The Khalsa is my beloved ideal."*

Hence, there was to be no difference between him, the Guru and the Khalsa, as created and initiated by him in his own image. All this is unheard of in the annals of the religious and spiritual history of the world.

✠ *It is Ahl-i-Kalam*, having firm faith in the doctrine of the Shabad the holy Word, and the Shabad-Guru i.e., the Word is Guru and Guide.

"God permeates the celestial music of the Word." The Word is the essence of all meditation and discipline.

God's Name is cherished in One's heart by means of the Word.

The supreme state, realisation and liberation is attained by means of the Word."

The Word alone can ferry us across the Ocean of Existence.

The holy Word is the true Preceptor,

The Guide, the Mystery profound and inscrutable.

And it is the Word, the absence of which results in spiritual confusion."

✠ *It is Ahl-al-Zaban*, having its own language, viz., Panjabi (as Arabic is for Islam), with its own specific script called Gurmukhi, in which its scripture, annals and chronicles, etc., stand recorded right from the beginning.

✠ *It is Ahl-al-Nishan*, having its own distinct flag or banner, called *Kesri Nishan Sahib*, with *Khanda* (the Khalsa emblem) inscribed and or installed thereon (as the parcham is for Islam). It flies over all Sikh temples, the gurdwaras.

✠ *It is Ahl-al-Shahad*, cherishing a long and unique line of great martyrdoms, like those of its two prophets (viz. the Fifth, Guru Arjun Dev and the Ninth, Guru Tegh Bahadur), the Sahibzadas (Babas Ajit Singh, Jhujar Singh, Zorawar Singh

and Fateh Singh) and their followers (such as Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Mani Singh).

- ✠ *It is Ahl-al-Shamshir*, possessing the ceremonial sword called *kirpan*, as a symbol of power, sovereignty and weapon of defence and justifiable offence in time of need. This specific weapon is a significant part of the required uniform of a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood, being one of the Five 'Ks' or symbols of the Sikh faith, obligatory for him to always keep on his body. "Since a member of the Khalsa Brotherhood is pledged not to accept any alien restrictions on his civic freedom, he is enjoined to insist on and struggle for his unrestricted right to wear and possess arms of offence and defence."

According to a quotation attributed to Guru Gobind Singh:

"The political power and the State rest on armaments.

And without political sovereignty,

The good way of life cannot securely prevail in Society."

As he created the Khalsa "to establish the ever-persisting community of saint-soldiers," who could assist in the fulfilment of Guru Nanak's revelation and mission, it was considered essential to equip them with an "instrument of offence and defence and as an emblem of power and dignity which the people of India had lost and which Guru Gobind Singh wanted to restore."

At the same time, he approved and allowed recourse to the sword as 'the last resort of a reasonable man for settling conflicts when all other means have failed in due course. In his letter to Emperor Aurangzeb, he, therefore, made it quite clear that,

*"When an affair is past every other remedy,
It is just and righteous to draw the sword."*

It is obvious that the creator of the Khalsa created this new metaphor of the sword "to give a new orientation to the minds of men given to passivity."

- ✠ *It is Ahl-al-Sunnah* as well, having its own usages, customs and a distinctive code of conduct recorded in its scripture, compositions of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal, various Rahitnainas and Rahit-Maryada.

Describing the Sikh way of life, these works cover not only the spiritual discipline and moral code, but

also the social behaviour of the community whose members "are required to observe a distinctive code of conduct, one which specifies normative behaviour, outward appearance, and social obligation."

Sikhism is, thus, a complete and perfect religion, not only because of its having such prominent features, elements and essentials of a 'higher-religion', but also because it was established, as its Founder stated, to carry out a specific command of the Lord-God, Who Himself is, as proclaimed by Him in the following couplet, All perfection or perfection-incarnate:

"All that the Perfect One has made is perfect. There is nothing lacking or excessive in its making."

It is dynamic, stable and eternal, too, as, according to the holy compiler of its sacred scripture,

The holy Preceptor has laid the immutable foundation of the faith

That never and in no way shall shake."

Rather, it becomes firmer and firmer with the passage' of each day, as stated below:

"The eternal foundation laid by Guru Nanak, Is ever-ascendant."

According to the following assertion of the contemporary bards, Rai Balwand and Satta,

*"Guru Nanak founded the True Dominion of God.
He raised the citadel of Truth on firm foundations"*.

On these foundations was raised a glorious spiritual and temporal edifice by Guru Gobind Singh who imparted his "stem Olympian air" to the followers of his, who are recognisable till today by their distinctive appearance and are distinguished by their ever-present high spirits, particularly in a period of adversity and crisis. That is so because "His impress not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but contrary to the experience of ethnological experts, it also operated materially and gave amplitude to their physical frames. They came to be regarded as models of physical beauty and stateliness of manner. A tremendous change was affected in the whole tone of their national character. Even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and distinctive. The sweepers, barbers and confectioners, who had never so much as touched the sword, and whose whole generation had lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called higher classes, became, under the stimulating

leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, doughty warriors who conquered fear, and who were ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru."

This revealed, distinct and complete religion of such self sacrificing saint-soldiers is a universal world faith with an all-embracing appeal and elevating message for all mankind. "It is the faith of the New Age," says Rev. Bradshaw, "It is the *summum bonum* for the modern man. It completely supplants and fulfils all the former dispensations of older religions. The other religions contain Truth, but Sikhism contains the fullness of Truth. The older faiths were good in their day, but that day is now past; and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak. Just as we appreciate the discovery of modern living and do not want to exchange our modern jet airliners, automobiles and electricity for the horse-drawn carriages and candles of the past, we do not want to exchange the New Age Faith of Guru Nanak for any of the old age systems and their antiquated philosophies. The Sikh faith is the universal religion for the now and future space age. The Sikh religion is truly the answer to the problems of the modern man." And it "is the only living faith," according to Bittencourt, "that gives the healing outlook on life."

As regards its potential and prospects in the religious domain of the world, it was Macauliffe who, while addressing the Quest Society in 1910 at London, stated: "The Sikh religion (as compared to other religions) presents no mysteries, and embraces an ethical system such as has never been excelled, if indeed it has ever been equalled. It offers fewer points of attack than any other theological system, and if patronised and cherished, as its religious and political importance deserves, by a powerful government, it might become one of the first religions on this planet."

Dorothy Field observed in 1914 that "Sikhism is capable of a distinct position as a world religion, so long as the Sikhs maintain their distinctiveness. The religion is also one which should appeal to the Occidental mind. It is essentially a practical religion. If judged from the pragmatism standpoint, which is a favourable point of view in some quarters, it would rank almost as first in the world. Of no other religion can it be said that it had made a nation in so short a time. The religion of the Sikhs is one of the most interesting at present existing in India, possibly indeed in the entire world. That it should have transformed the outcaste Indian—a notoriously

indolent and unstable person—into a fine and loyal warrior is little short of a miracle." It was Arnold Toynbee again who prophesied, therefore, as recently as in 1960 : "Mankind's religious future may be obscure; yet one thing can be foreseen. The living higher religions are going to influence each other more than ever before in the days of increasing communication between all parts of the world and all branches of the human race. In this coming religious debate, the Sikh religion, and its scripture, the Adi Granth, will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world."

This will indeed be so, because it will have the opportunity of sharing the sort of experience which the Nobel-laureate Pearl S. Buck had gained when she observed, after going through the 4-volume English translation (by Dr Gopal Singh) of the Guru Granth Sahib: "I have studied the scriptures of other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find here in these volumes. They are compact in spite of their length, and are a revelation of the vast reach of the human heart, varying from the most noble concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body. There is something, strangely modern about these scriptures and this puzzled me, until I learned that they are in fact comparatively modern, compiled as late as the 15th century, when explorers were beginning to discover that the globe, upon which we all live, is a single entity divided only by arbitrary lines of our own making. Perhaps this sense of unity is the source of power I find in these volumes. They speak to persons of any religion or of none. They speak for the human heart and the searching mind." And they do speak in verses such as these which, indeed, indicate that unique concept of unity and universality:

*"The One Lord is our Father,
We all are His children. None is our enemy,
Nor is anyone a stranger to us. We are in accord with
all..
The one God is pervasive in all creation
At the sight of which Nanak is in bloom of Joy."*

These and many other hymns contained in the Guru Granth Sahib, clearly visualise and preach a religion which knows no ethnical, racial or regional limitations; recognises no distinction on account of birth, sex, caste, creed or colour, embodies universal respect and concern for all, and regards all as equals.

This is testified by its first and last prophets, Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Gobind Singh, in the following words:

*"There is Light among all
And that Light is God's Own.
Which pervades and illuminates everyone."
"Some one by shaving his head
Becomes a sanyasi, another a yogi,
And yet another passes for a monk or ascetic. Some
call themselves Hindus,
Other claim to be Muslims;
Among these some are Shias and some are Sunnis.
Recognise all as belonging to the one race of
humanity
God as Creator (for the Hindus) and God as Good
(for the Muslims)
God as Sustainer and God as
Merciful Is all one and the same
God.
Recognise not another even in
error or in doubt. Worship that
One alone,
As He is the Supreme Lord of
us all. It is only His form, His
Light
That is diffused in one and all."*

Hence, the followers of this universal faith conclude their daily prayer to that One God, in the name of their founder, Guru Nanak Dev, with the following couplets:

*"May Your holy Name,
Be ever in ascendance.
May peace and prosperity come
to all !!
In Your Will
By Your Grace !!*

They, thereby, ask for God's blessings in favour not only of their own community, but also of entire humanity, for the maximum good of each and every creature in the world.

Thus,

*"Contemplation of the True Lord brings
illumination,
Which enables one to remain unattached in the Midst
of evil.
Such is the greatness of the True Preceptor (That*

*through His grace and guidance) One can attain
fullness
While living with one's wife and children."*

Hence, Sikhism is the religion of our time, modern in outlook, scientific in analysis, rational in approach and practical in adaptability, suited to the needs, aspirations and conditions of the modern man and his social set-up. It is a religion which is concerned with the creation of a just social order, and is committed to social equality and peaceful co-existence, as proclaimed by its Fifth prophet, Guru Arjun Dev, in the following verse

*"The Gracious Lord has now promulgated His
ordinance;
None shall dominate over others or cause pain;
All shall abide in peace and happiness.*

*As the governance shall be gentle
and affectionate."*

Sikhism enjoins on its followers social responsibility involving both social service and social action:

*"He who does dedicated service
in the world gets a place at His Portal.*

*They alone understand the right
way Who eat the bread of their labour,
And share it with others."*

The above directives of Guru Nanak, (couched in his own pithy aphorisms: *Nam Japo, Kirt Karo, Vand Chhako*) are indeed "the foundation of a Spiritually oriented, dynamic social life." His frequent exhortations to follow the under-mentioned six-sided discipline cultivates and follows

the virtues associated with it and leads further to the enrichment and fulfilment of such an ideal life

- | | | |
|----------------|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Naam</i> | : | Devotion to the Divine Name. |
| <i>Daan</i> | : | Giving to others, particularly to the needy. |
| <i>Isnan</i> | : | Purity of mind, body and environment. |
| <i>Seva</i> | : | Service of mankind. |
| <i>Simran</i> | : | Contemplation and remembrance of God. |
| <i>Satsang</i> | : | Fellowship or company of true believers Association with holy men. |

*Apart from being such a distinct
monotheistic faith, Sikhism
is also a social and fraternal
religion, standing equally for the
common Fatherhood of God and
universal Brotherhood of Man,
guaranteeing equal status to all
human beings and asserting that
normal family life, lived with
virtuous conduct and firm faith
in God, surely leads to the path
of salvation.*

Sikhism is thus based on humanistic and universal values of the purest form. Human freedom and dignity, self-realisation and self-confidence, service and sacrifice have been the essential elements of its ethos.

The history and heritage of this religion, whether in its principles, doctrines and sacred pronouncements, or in the practical lives of its founders and followers, "has been one of exhortation to liberation from all kinds of degrading bondage, mental, spiritual and social. Long before the modern idea of social freedom was evolved in the West, Sikhism had brought to mankind the message of freedom. In its social aspects, it was a movement of freedom from feudalism and caste tyranny. While socially, it brought to man liberation from feudalism and caste tyranny, spiritually it brought to man freedom from suppression and those false beliefs which enslaved man to a selfish or ignorant priestcraft, whether the priest was called Brahmin, Yogi or Mullah." The founder of the holiest Sikh shrine and the compiler of the Sikh Scripture, Guru Arjan Dev, has himself recorded the impact of this unique movement in the following verse:

*"The eggshell of doubt has shattered,
And the mind is illumined;
The Master has freed us from bondage
By cutting off fetters from our feet."*

This is the verse which Macauliffe, while recognising its lasting significance, reproduced on the title-page of each of the six volumes of his magnum opus, *The Sikh Religion*, published in 1909 by the Oxford University. This is also the verse on the basis of which Banerjee stated, seventy years later: "The fetters of ritualistic religion were cut off and the captives were..... freed; and the foundations of the Spiritual Empire were laid. On these foundations was raised an imposing structure of Temporal Empire, blessed by Guru Gobind Singh's electrifying utterance:

RAJ KAREGA KHALSA.

Prof. Dr. Harnam Singh Shan

Born in September 1923 at Dhamial, near Rawalpindi, the Professor's academic qualifications and field of study and research make fascinating history in themselves! After getting Honours in Punjabi (Giani) at University of Lahore in 1942, he gained Honours in Persian and Arabic (Munshi Fazil) there and continued, with certificate in Hindi from the Punjab Government in Simla (1948), then MA in Punjabi from Chandigarh in 1953 and a course in Braj Bhasha from Dehra Dun in 1957, plus a course in linguistics from Coimbatore in 1959. The Ph.D in Indian Lore & Literature came from the University of London in 1962 and 35 years later, the D.Litt in Punjabi, Sufi and Sikh Studies from the Punjab University Chandigarh in 1999.

The prolific works of the Professor include 79 books, 182 research-papers and searching articles, innumerable book reviews, forewords and much else. He has travelled extensively on lecture tours to Pakistan, the United Kingdom, Iran, Germany, the United States and Egypt, Australia, Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia, Mexico, China and Canada. He was key speaker at the 36th International Congress of Asian & North African Studies at Montreal in August-September 2000 where he presented two papers, including "An Epoch-making Event in World History", being creation of the Khalsa in 1699.

Professor Dr. Harnam Singh Shan's academic career climaxed as being head of the Department of Punjabi & Sikh Studies at Chandigarh (1958-62 and 1972-84 respectively) during which time he started the preparation and publication of the Punjab University Papers & Monographs on Sikh Studies Series. He has been bestowed several other honours including Saropas (Robes of Honour) from the community and the Sanad in recognition of his contributions to the language, literature, culture and history of the united Punjab, Land of the Five Rivers.



This first appeared in Nishaan IV/2001.

JAP(u)ji Sahib

The Psalm Eternal

The Sikh scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, opens with a basic creedal text called *Jap(u)*, meaning 'meditation'. However, the Sikhs call it *Jap(u)ji* or even *Jap(u)ji Sahib*, 'ji' and 'sahib' being two honorific epithets that are added out of reverence. In the 'index' of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, *Jap(u)* has been indexed as *Jap(u) Neesan*. In the earliest available breviary (gutka), dated 1710 AD (manuscript in the Punjab University Library, Lahore), Guru Nanak Dev thus addresses his successor, Guru Angad Dev:

Dear Man! None shall attain my proximity in the Lord's Court without reciting Jap(u)ji. Only he who possesses the pass (neesan) of Jap(u)ji shall be admitted there.

The Sikhs are a religious community, traditionally identified by their unshorn hair (which they hold as sacred), and men by their colourful headgear, the turban. Although the Punjab is their seat of domicile, they can now be found, on account of massive diaspora, in most countries of the world, generally as an infinitesimal minority. Their total population in the world would be around 25 million.

Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539) founded their religion. A line of nine successor gurus followed him. Of them, the fifth, namely Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606), compiled the Sikh scripture : *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. The tenth Guru, Gobind Singh (1666-1708) brought to an end the succession of corporal Gurus and vested the holy book with 'eternal Guruship'. Thus, he made 'the holy Word', the perpetual living Guru of the Sikhs. He also infused among them an insatiable zest for freedom and with the baptism of the sword transformed them into an Order of God's own knights-at-arms, known as the *Khalsa*.

Their holy book, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, is a truly pluralist scripture because, besides the works of the Sikh Gurus, it also embodies the works of a number of Hindu saints as well as Muslim Sufi dervishes. It opens with the seminal work of Guru Nanak, the *Jap(u)ji* that is the basic creedal text incorporating the fundamentals of the Sikh faith. It is also considered the prime burden of the scripture.

This is a poetic text consisting of 38 stanzas with two *slokas*, one serving as its prologue and the other as its epilogue. Altogether, it is comprised of 383 lines made up of 2090 words, not one of which is inept or superfluous. Altogether this composition is of great philosophical import, it presents neither a discursive nor a logically structured format. On the contrary, it is characterised by a mellifluous poetic form. Its highly inspired verse absorbs the mind of a seeker and brings tranquility through its placid rhythms.

Mool Mantra or 'the Prime Revelation,' that pithily enunciates the nature and essential attributes of the One God (*Ik Oankar*) prefaces it. This singular Deity (*Oankar*) not only pervades every pore of whatever is, but also transcends even its fullest entirety. He is un-begotten (*Ajooni*), immortal (*Akal*), and self-resplendent (*Sanbhau*), yet, is the Essence of Existence (*Sat Naam*). Being the Creator (*Karta Purakh*), and having none higher than Him or even coequal, He is naturally without fear (*Nirbhau*), and without jealousy (*Nirvair*), but ever brims with sovereign grace (*Gurprasadi*).

The *sloka* with which the *Jap(u)ji* opens, and which serves as its prologue, delineates the trans-temporal nature of this Supreme Existent:

*He was in the very Beginning,
He was when Times began,
He is Now,
And, in Truth, shall always be!*

Thirty-eight stanzas or *paurs* (literally: rungs of a ladder) follow this prologue. These vary in size, metric measure, and rhyme scheme. In spite of such structural diversity, the *Jap(u)ji* uniformly preserves its poetic finesse as well as contemplative profundity. At places, it appears, the author flies into a kind of lyrical ecstasy and goes into inspired repetitiveness-repetitiveness that is the essential requirement in the practice of *Jap(u)* or meditation.

The *Jap(u)ji* is a work in the *sutrik* tradition. A *sutra* is an aphoristic statement, revelatory in nature, without exegesis or argument and trans-subjective in import. It freely draws its symbols and allusions

from history, mythology, and philosophy (*darshanas*). Its sutrik style coupled with the vast resource of its symbolism, makes *Jap(u)ji* a work that is not only profound but also complex in spite of the simplicity and clarity of its language. That is, perhaps, why despite hundreds of exegeses, the *Jap(u)ji* still awaits an all-satisfying exposition.

The text of the *Jap(u) ji*, with occasional digressions, outlines the path that a spiritual seeker is expected to pursue in order to achieve his aim. In order to make this aim explicit, the Guru, in the very first stanza of this work raises a question:

*How can we, then, Truth attain?
How to rend illusion's veil?
And then goes on to explain 'the how':
Know you this immutable writ
His Will only shall prevail.*

We must live in accord with the Divine Will that has been inscribed into our very being. In order to live thus requires that we identify that Writ. That would be possible only if we can de-alienate ourselves to unite with Him. The Guru provides us with instruction about how to overcome alienation, and proceed step by step so as to have the Beatific Vision of the Lord.

*Rung by rung we would thus ascend
To unite with the One—that is our aim.*

Here and there, as we proceed through the text of *Jap(u)ji*, we do come across a few digressions that serve some significant functions. Some of them affirm the dignity of human life, others stress rejection of ritual formalism, and still others embody comments of cosmological import. They do appear kind of parenthetical statements, but they have fundamental reformatory import, often of ethical significance.

According to Guru Nanak, God's language is of 'infinite love' (*Bhakhia bhao apar*). In this very tongue God Almighty must have revealed Himself to the Guru, who would have received that revelation in sublime wonderment (*vismad*). What the Guru thus received, he, in turn, revealed unto the whole world in the tongue of the people.

The language of *Jap(u)ji* is Punjabi of those times. (According to a UNESCO report, Punjabi is now amongst the major languages of the world, 13th in order according to the number of people that speak it). Before Guru Nanak, Sanskrit alone had been accepted as the authentic medium of divine revelation (*shruti*). However, the

priestly class, the Brahmins, had made learning of that language their sole proprietary right. So, it had come to be far removed from ordinary people. No religious ceremony or ritual was possible without the help of a Brahmin. Guru Nanak sought to break the hegemony of the priestly class and make Divine Revelation directly available to the people.

Some pundits, in the arrogance of their learning, raised academic objections against his work. They said, "It is not flawless grammatically". However, retorted the devout scholars, "Who can ever raise the wall of grammar in the mighty torrent of inspired lyricity?" The pundits called its languages 'a broken tongue'. However, retorted the devout, "Do not his words represent the broken hearts of the people? Doesn't he empathically echo throbbing of the people's hearts?" The pundits said, "His poetry lacks ornamental figures of speech", "But", said the devout, "do you expect royal glory from ill-clad people?" Guru Nanak was simultaneously the people's poet and the Lord's minstrel. He spoke to the people in their own idiom. Thus, he became the interpreter par excellence of the Divine Revelation for the people. The complexity that one comes across in the *Jap(u)ji* is very little of its language, it pertains principally to its content that is replete with ineffable mysteries.

Among the ineffable mysteries that it undertakes to allude to are God, His nature and essential attributes, the Word and its inherent creativity, Creation and the nature of the universe, human personality in its sublime state, the nature of ethical values and their polarity, spiritual practices and their mystic import, and the spiritscapes through which the soul of a devout practitioner progresses.

The five spiritscapes, or *Khands* as the Guru designates them, are the paramount mysteries whose ineffability the Guru time and again underlines, and whose barest outlines he could make available to us. These cannot be intellectually understood, because they have been scantily described, and they could not have been fully described because they are experiences beyond the gamut and prowess of our language. What makes the situation worse is that there are no cross references pertaining to them available in any other place in the entire scripture. The seeker is just made aware of them and of their barest outlines. The rest he has to discover himself through practice - 'about which there are ample instructions, but their success only a Guru or his word can ensure.

The concluding *sloka* of this work, which is considered its epilogue, seeks to underline three basics one must ever be aware of. First, that man is placed in the lap of nature the air being his guru, the earth being his mother, water being his father, and day and night being his two nurses that nurture him. Second, that in the cozy lap of nature, man not only lives but also acts. However, his actions are subject to divine judgment. Only through meritorious actions may he attain proximity of God. Finally but most importantly, it need be realised that they alone pass beyond the travails of life and attain the vision of God, who ever remember the Lord, practice His presence, and dwell upon His *Naam* (*Naam*, although literally translated as 'name' to imply the Name of God, has a much wider import in Sikh theology. It represents God's creativity and Power as well).

Finally, a word about when this celebrated work was composed. Nothing definite can be said because of lack of unanimity among the various sources of information. Two of the Guru's biographies, the *Puratan Janamsakhi* (ed. H. T. Colebrooke) and the *Janamsakhi of Hajizabad* (ed. M. A. Macauliffe), place the inception of this work during the Guru's crucial communion with God in Sultanpur. While Sodhi Meharban refers this event to the year 1705 AD, other historians (Seva Ram Singh, Hari Ram Gupta etc) consider that it took place sometime between 1496 and 1499.

Another source, namely, Pothi Hari ji, however, considers that *Jap(u) ji* was not composed all in one go, but in parts on different occasions. *Pauris* 28-38 are said to have been composed during the Guru's visit, in 1539 AD, to Achal Batala where he held a dialogue with the Yogis. Some parts, including pauri 22 came to be composed during the Guru's dialogue with Parbrahman. It was even later that the whole text - 38 pauris and two *slokas* - came to be completed.

Thus, there is no consensus about the date of *Jap(u) ji Sahib*. However, do such works really require to be dated? They are eternal. One thing is sure, however, that during the final sojourn of the Guru in Kartarpur, it had become customary for the congregations of his Sikhs to recite *Jap(u) ji* every morning.

Bhai Gurdas bears testimony to this in his Vars:

*Sodar and Arti were chanted (during the evening),
In the ambrosial hours of the morning, Jap(u) was recited*
Var 1: 38

This practice is integral with devout Sikhs.

Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki

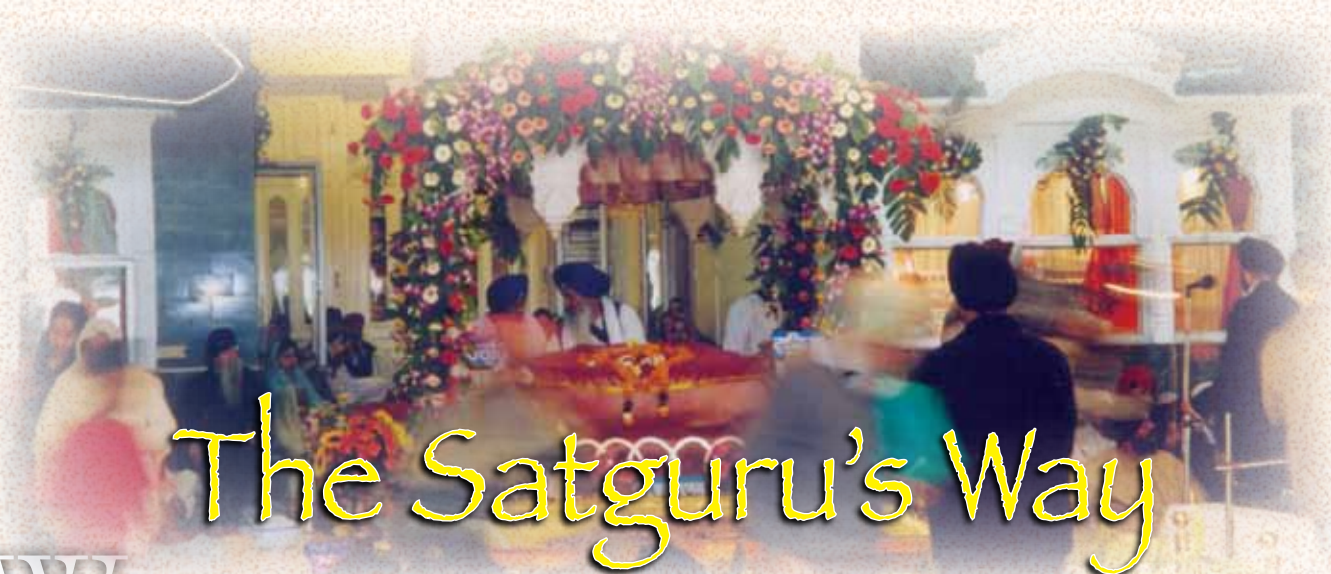
Another significant initiative taken by *The Nagaara Trust* towards dissemination of values and traditions of the Sikh way of life was to arrange an expose of the *Jap(u) ji Sahib* which is the first composition enshrined in the Sikh Holy Book, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* and embodies the fundamentals of



the Sikh faith. The lectures were delivered by the eminent Sikh Scholar, **Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki** at the prestigious India International Centre, New Delhi during March 2001. In consonance with the Sikh message of Universal Brotherhood, the five-lecture series was presided over by the eminent personalities representing various faiths, including Rev. Valson Thampu, Professor of English at St. Stephens College, University of Delhi and Vice Chairman Minorities Commission, Government of Delhi; Maulana Wahid-ud-din Khan the renowned Muslim scholar and President of the Islamic Centre, Delhi; Sardar Bhagwant Singh Dilawari missionary and head of the leprosy home Tapovan at Amravati, Madhya Pradesh, who gave up a promising career in the Indian Foreign Service to 'serve the needy' in consonance with the Sikh values; and the Honorable Ranjit Singh Narula, retired Chief Justice of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, and shining light of the Sikh Community for a long time.

The lecture series were received with great enthusiasm and the cassette-set of the lectures is under issue, Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki has also prepared a treatise on the many facets dealt with in the *Jap(u) ji Sahib*. This is the first of a series of articles on this subject, which we hope to publish with the conviction that this will be of great interest to readers, and will provide clarifications for the uninitiated.

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The Satguru's Way

When we look round, we see that the idea of *Dharam*, i.e. Religion, came to the human mind when the mind craved for equilibrium, equanimity, harmony and peace. In fact all the spiritual schools of thought and great religions of the world are together at the root and again join at the top. The differences lie in between. Some of them lead through labyrinths and roughness, some are hard and difficult to ascend, some are easy to tread, while the faith of some others is full of hurdles and passes through wilderness, full of prowling predators. Humans manage to pass through some of them, while in others man gets totally lost. But for sure they are all meant to lead one to a 'City of Bliss,' Anandpur, and that is where the Satguru's way of life, Guru Nanak/Guru Gobind Singh's way leads us to.

The Satguru's way of life is the clearest and also the cleanest. The ascent may be tough, as is bound to be, but it is well defined. This Way of Life i.e., the *Panth*, is called Sikhism. It is based on rational understanding, intellectual argument, realisation of the Truth (*Sat*) and enlightenment through knowledge (*Gyan*), and interpretation of the Word (*Shabad*) while living a normal life. The stress is on deed, and it aims at forging of the individual character of man and formation of a society of such men, man of God. It lays down the basic principle of attuning one's mind to the Will of the Supreme Being and rooting out selfishness. No amount of intense thinking, or stoppage of mentation, or possession of worldly goods, science or technology, or any system of superficial philosophies, sometimes imposed by institutionalised religion, regimented society, social or moral laws, or any kind of imposition, can quench the basic human search. Only the right approach and discipline of the mind counts.

If the mind is subdued the world is conquered

ਮਨ ਜੀਤੈ ਜਗ ਜੀਤਿ (ਜਪੁ)

Thus the only aim is to control one's mind and to gorge it into a correct attitude so that it may get attuned to, and comes in harmony with the Will of the Supreme Being.

Cheerfully follow His will which is inborn in us and ingrained.

ਹੁਕਮ ਰਜਾਈ ਚਲਣਾ ਲਠਕ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਲਲ (ਜਪੁ)

The question is, how to understand and know the Divine Will. The Guru's *shabad*, the Word, resolves this, if we act upon it and live upto it. This cannot be achieved by nursing one's ego. But, with the help of the *Gurshabad*, completely submerging the self with the Will of God, one perceives His Will. Anyone with will, faith, and devotion along with a clear conscience (ਨਿਰਮਲ ਮਨ) and "discriminating" intelligence, so as to sift the good from the bad (ਬਖੇਕ ਬੁਧ), can achieve this. Until we reach that ultimate stage when we receive "the Word", we have, of course, the *Gurushabad* i.e. *Gurbani* as contained in our Scriptures, provides us the light and guidance.

"I know not what to say;

ਹਉ ਆਖਹੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਨ ਜਾਣਦਾ,

I have only communicated the Commands" (Suhi M.5)

ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਸਭੁ ਹੁਕਮਾਇ ਜੀਉ। (ਸੁਹੀ ਮ: ੫)

Duty towards Creator and His Creation

Sikhism enjoins upon us to fulfil our duty both towards the Creator and His Creation, where to He has been pleased to send us. We have to live this life purposefully, effectively, actively, and joyfully, not bewailing or repenting. Our duty is to continued effort: diligent, hearty and consistent effort. Hence the emphasis on *Sewa* (service). The result, the fruit, lies in the hands of the Omnipotent Bestower. This we must accept, feel content with and be in happiness.

Whatever thou bestoweth stiates; I wander not elsewhere (Todi M.5)

ਜੇ ਤੂ ਦੇਹਿ ਤਹੀ ਇਹੁ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਤੇ ਆਨ ਨ ਕਰਹੁ ਧਾਵੁ। (ਟੋਡੀ ਮ : ੫)

The Sikh Approach

Sikhism is not based on any set of mantras, rituals, formalism, or talismans, postures of worship, (*Yogic Asans*), fasts or penances, signs or symbols, ablutions or trances. There is no place in Sikhism for any *Karamkand*, pilgrimages, austerities, giving up of family life, or renunciation of the world. Mere reading of the scriptures, recitation of hymns and numbering of prayers or their mechanical repetition, dispensing alms and even charities, giving up food or going naked, attainment

of supernatural powers of physical exercises, show of miracles or magic, have absolutely no place in Sikhism. Principles of *Varnashram*, Incarnation, and Idol Worship are basically repudiated. It is explicitly said:

*Reflecting on the Guru's Word,
I am rid of sense of any colour caste and tribe (Sarang M.5)*

ਜਾਤਿ ਬਰਨ ਕੁਲ ਸਹਸਾ ਚੁਕਾ, ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਸਥਦਿ ਥੀਚਾਰੀ। (ਸਾਰੰਗ ਮ : ੫)

Neither *Vedas*, nor *Shastras*, nor *Smrities*,
Nor the Semitic Texts lead to one's emancipation"
(Suhī M.5)

ਬੇਦ ਕਤੇਬ ਸਿਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਸਭਿ ਸਾਸਤ, ਇਨ ਪਤਿਆ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨਹੋਈ। (ਸੁਹੀ ਮ : ੫)

*Burnt be that tongue which sayeth God is cast into the womb
(Bhavi M.5)*

ਸੇ ਮੁਖੁ ਜਲਉ ਜਿਤੁ ਕਹਹਿ ਠਕੁਰ ਜੋਨੀ (ਭੈਰਉ ਮ : ੫)

It is the lesson of life for us to live in such a way as to earn the pleasure and blessing of the Master. We are not to stop at only adoration of the Master, like other *Sufi* and *Bhagati Margs* postulate. But the aim is to continue loving Him till He starts loving us.

What should I say and how act so that
He may start loving me (Jap)

ਮੁਹੋ ਕਿ ਬੋਲਣੁ ਬੋਲੀਐ ਜਿਤੁ ਮੁਣਿ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰ। (ਜਪੁ)

Sikhism believes in the theory of *Karam* only up to the principle of "cause and effect" which obtains in the whole Universe. But it then takes us further by holding that every individual is responsible for his own *Karam* and if our actions i.e. *Karam*, are "approved," the Grace of the Master will liberate us and take us out and raise us above the labyrinth of the *Karam* Network.

Crores of sins are washed off on remembering
the One Lord

ਕੋਟਿ ਅਘਾ ਗਏ ਨਾਸ, ਹਰਿ ਇਕੁ ਧਿਆਇਆ। (ਵਾਰ ਜੈਤਸਰੀ ਮ: ੫)

"On dawn of Wisdom, network of *Karam* vanishes"

ਗਿਆਨਭਇਆ ਤਹ ਕਰਮਹ ਨਾਸੁ। (ਭੈਰਉ)

Divinity Formless

The essential structure of Sikhism is based on Divinity's concept of being Formless (ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ, ਨਿਰਗੁਣ). The conception of our Godhead is of the Formless and Timeless reality, the Truth that was, is and shall ever be. So is the Guru Formless in the *Shabad*. Similarly the Sikh way of worship is also 'formless,' being solely singing of the devotional music (*Keertan*)-praise of the Lord.

Simran leads to Realisation

Simran and *Sewa* are the two main pillars of Sikhism. *Simran* means remembrance. We have to remember Him always and without break, practicing the presence of the Omnipresent Sustainer of the Universe. This will lead to the realisation of His presence everywhere, around us and in us, and our being present in Him, in His lap. We become aware of His unfailing presence with in us, and around us and feel that we cannot hide even our inner thoughts from Him.

Nothing can be concealed from You, the Omnipresent, Who
watches everywhere

ਆਗੁਰੁ ਦੇਖੈ ਪਿਛਹੁ ਦੇਖੈ ਤੁਝ ਤੇ ਕਹਾ ਛੁਪਵੈ। (ਗਉੜੀ ਚੋਟੀ ਮ: ੧)

Our actions, our thoughts, our feelings, our living will become unblemished and we will be on the right path. *Simran* will take us nearer to the Fountainhead of Life. Such "nearness" and "presence" will generate saintly virtues and Godly values in us and make us God conscious (ਗੁਰਮੁਖ). The basic purpose of *Simran* is to control the human mind and train it to become attuned to and in harmony with the Divine Will (ਗੁਰਮ). Thus *Simran* leads up to nearness and to the presence of the Master.

Sewa through learning and earning

Sewa mean service. We have to live a life of usefulness, of service, help and assistance to others who need it
*Woe be to the hands and feet that do no service,
All other efforts are futile.*

ਬਿਨ ਮੋਢਾ ਧ੍ਰਿਗ ਹਥ ਧੈਰ ਹੋਰ ਨਿਹਫਲ ਕਰਨੀ। (ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ)

Sewa can be physical, social, mental as well as spiritual. Service to humanity is a way to win the Creator's pleasure, because the Master resides in His Creation.

The Creator is in the created

And the created in the Creator, Who is all pervading

ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਮਹਿ ਖਾਲਿਕੁ ਪੁਰਿ ਰਹਿਦਿ ਸਥ ਧਾਈ। (ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤੀ)

But to do service, we must have the capability and capacity to do so. Physical fitness is an essential prerequisite. We must, therefore, first be "learners" and good "earners". If we have enough to share, it is only then that we can give to others. *Sewa* in Sikh parlance is described under a triple head; firstly (ਨਮਜਪਣਾ) remembering the Name, the Master. This includes bringing around others to do the same i.e. realising the "Presence of God" everywhere. Secondly (ਕਿਰਤ ਕਰਨਾ) to earn by hard, diligent, and honest work. If we have enough, we do not look to others for help, but are in a position to help others. Thirdly (ਵੰਡ ਛਕਣੀ) to share with others what we have earned and learnt. We can share our learning, share our food, share our riches, comforts, and all the good that we can spare. This cannot be done through Renunciation, but is possible only by living a successful and useful, worldly and family life.

Sangat and Pangat-the Equalisers

Sangat is the congregation where Sikhs get together under the Satguru's blessings. *Pangat* is the line of diners in the community kitchen. Here in we get the first lesson in *Sewa* when we take care of the shoes of the *Sangat*, prepare the stage and meeting place, cleanse the utensils, serve food and water to all who sit together irrespective of caste or creed. Feeding the needy, *Langar* has become an integral part of the Sikh way of life.

The *Satguru's* commands are very clear:
Spend, but share-Means will every expand.

ਖਾਵਹਿ ਖਰਚਹਿ ਰਲਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਭਾਈ, ਤੋਟਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਵਧਦੋ ਜਾਈ ।

(ਗਉੜੀ ਗੁਆਰੇਰੀ ਮ:

By Whose grace thou eatest delicacies

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਛਤੀਰ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਖਾਹਿ

Bear that Master in mind

ਤਿਸੁ ਠਾਕੁਰ ਕਉ ਰਖੁ ਮਨ ਮਾਹਿ ।

By Whose grace thou appliest scents to thy body

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁਗੰਧਤ ਤਨਿ ਲਾਵਹਿ

Meditate on Him and attain Bliss.

ਤਿਸ ਕਉ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਪਰਮ ਗਤਿ ਪਾਵਹਿ ।

By Whose grace thou livest peacefully in abode.

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਬਸਹਿ ਸੁਖ ਅੰਦਰਿ

Reflect on Him in thy mind for every,

ਤਿਸਹਿ ਧਿਆਇ ਸਦਾ ਮਨ ਅੰਦਰਿ ।

By Whose grace thou enjoyest family life and comforts

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਗ੍ਰਿਹ ਸੰਗਿ ਸੁਖ ਬਸਨਾ

Utter His Name night and day,

ਅਨ ਪਹਰ ਸਿਮਰਹੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਰਸਨਾ ।

By Whose grace though enjoyest love and luxuries

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਰੰਗ ਰਸ ਭੋਗ

Nanak meditate on Him alone who is worthy of worship.

ਨਾਨਕ ਸਦਾ ਧਿਆਈਐ ਧਿਆਵਨ ਜੋਗ ।

By Whose grace thou wearest silks

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਪਾਟ ਪਟੰਬਰ ਹਛਾਵਹਿ ।

By Whose grace thou hast healthful golden body

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਆਰੋਗ ਕੰਚਨ ਦੇਹੀ ।

By Whose grace obtained thy precious body

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਪਾਈ ਦੁਰਲਭ ਦੇਹ ।

By Whose grace thou ridest horses and elephants

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਅਸਵ ਹਸਤਿ ਅਸਵਾਰੀ ।

O mind forget not ever that Lord

ਮਨ ਤਿਸੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕਉ ਕਥਹੁ ਨ ਥਿਸਾਰੀ ।

By Whose grace thou gettest orchards, wealth and territories

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਬਾਗ ਮਿਲਖ ਧਨ ।

By Whose grace thou hast lovely figure

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਤੇਰਾ ਸੁੰਦਰ ਰੂਪ ।

By Whose grace thou obtainest glory

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਤੇਰਾ ਪਰਤਾਪ ।

By Whose grace all thy works are accomplished

ਜਿਹ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਤੇਰੇ ਕਾਰਜ ਪੂਰੇ ।

Feel His Presence ever in mind.

ਤਿਸਹਿ ਜਾਨੁ ਮਨ ਸਦਾ ਹਜੂਰੇ । (ਗਉੜੀ ਸੁਖਮਨੀ ਮ: ੫)

All the wealth, riches, comforts are for your enjoyment, Thy only overriding condition is gratefulness:

Be grateful to Him whose bounties you enjoy.

ਜਿਸ ਦਾ ਦਿਤਾ ਖਾਵਣਾ ਤਿਸੁ ਕਹੀਐ ਸਾਥਸਿ । (ਵਾਰ ਆਸਾ ਮ : ੧)

If we live life in ever gratefulness to the Bestower, all luxuries, enjoyments are justified. Gratefulness creates attachment, love, and nearness and thus the pleasure and blessing of the Bestower Master are all ours.

The Mission

The Mission of the Guru and so that of the Sikh, in the words of the Tenth Satguru, is :

To uphold and advance righteousness, and to emancipate the good "the saint is us"

ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਨ ਸੰਤ ਉਥਾਰਨ ।

To extirpate evil and evil-doers root and branch

ਦੁਸ਼ਟ ਸਭਨ ਕਉ ਮੂਲ ਉਪਾਰਨ ।

Thus if any hurdle comes in the way of achieving the above objectives, it must be faced and conquered. Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the Fifth Nanak, set the supreme example, when even life was offered as sacrifice by him (ਅਰਜੁਨੀ) for a cause, values, and for principles and it is found to be in-effective, it must not be taken as a surrender of those values/ideals. It then becomes incumbent for a Sikh to take up arms, "for the just cause". We find the Sixth Guru taking up the Sword to uphold and protect these. The light that was thought to have been extinguished, with the sacrifice of the Fifth Guru, flared into a blaze which eventually consumed its antagonists.

Conflicts, Struggle and Power for Victory

Dharam is the duty that we must fulfil towards our Creator and His creation. If in doing so, any obstacles come in the way, they has to be swept away. It was with this perspective that the Sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind, wore the two Swords, of 'Piri' and 'Miri', representing the spiritual and the worldly powers. These two Swords were later merged, in the lands of the Tenth Satguru, into the double-edged Sword, the *Khanda*. And this *Khanda* became the "Creator" of the *Khalsa*. About our duty (*Dharam*) the instructions of the Tenth Guru are clear. He says:

Blest is his life in this word who repeateth God's name with his tongue and mediateth on struggle in his heart.

ਧੰਨ ਜੀਉ ਤਹਿ ਕਉ ਜਗ ਮੇ, ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਹਰਿ ਚਿਤ ਮਹਿ ਜੁਧ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ ।

The body is fleeting and shall not abide for every, those embarking the ship of fame (earned out of good deeds), shall swim across the ocean of the world.

ਦੇਹ ਅਨਿਤ ਨ ਨਿਤ ਰਹੈ ਜਸ ਨਾਵ ਚੜੈ ਭਵ ਸਾਗਰ ਤਾਰੈ ।

*Make this body a house of calm resignation,
Light thine understanding like a lamp.*

ਧੀਰਜ ਧਾਮ ਬਨਾਇ ਇਹੈ ਤਨ, ਬੁਧ ਸੁ ਦੀਪਕ ਜਿਉ ਉਜੀਆਰੈ ।

*Take the broom of Divine Knowledge into thy hands
And sweep away the filth of timidity*

ਗਿਆਨਹਿ ਕੀ ਬਛਨੀ ਮਨੈ ਹਾਥ ਲੈ ਕਾਤਰਤਾ ਕਤਵਾਰ ਖੁਹਾਰੈ ।

The conflict, the struggle, the fight on all fronts has to fought continuously and persistently. As long as life lasts, the struggle must continue. Sikhism does not believe in any escape from it, and there is no place for Sanyas; for

When the end of life comes, let me die courageously in the battlefield.

ਜਬ ਆਵ ਕੀ ਅਦਿਧ ਨਿਦਾਨ ਬਨੇ ਅਤਿ ਹੀ ਰਣ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਜੁਧ ਮਰੈ ।

The cause has to be fought for and won. We do not take anything lying down. The Satguru has enjoined upon us to live a life action, as an integrated whole of spiritual intellectual, social, and political activity.

Special Features of Sikhism

There are some special features distinct to Sikhism that make it stand out as an independent and clear identity (ਪੰਥ ਨਿਰਾਲਾ).

The Scripture

Our Scripture is the Guru Granth Sahib. Without any disrespect to anyone, the fact is that this is the only Scripture in the world which is written, prepared, and sealed by the founder who directly received "the Word" (ਬਾਣੀ). We know that the scripture of the Buddhists was written 400 years after the death of its founder, Gautum Buddha. The great *Geeta* was not written by Shri Krishan Maharaj, nor was the Bible composed by or during the presence of Jesus Christ. Similarly the *Quran* was not written by Prophet Mohammad. Who wrote the *Vedas* and when were they composed is not even known.

We find in the Guru Granth Sahib the *Bani* of the Gurus, the Nanaks, and along with it there is the *Bani* of 35 other men of God, Bhagats and Bhattas, who belonged to different castes and regions, schools of thought and religions, but who had understood the Master. Their *Bani* is given equal status and position with that of the Sikh Gurus. The Sikh scripture thus attains a greatness and special status, making Sikhism unparalleled in terms of the cosmopolitanism, catholicism, and tolerance. It will not be incorrect to say that no other Scripture can claim this unique and universal position. This is true secularism.

Circle of Life

Human life begins when the spark of the Individual Soul is separated from the Universal Soul. It can adopt forms according to its deeds and actions. Until it is reabsorbed in the Omnipresent Universal Soul, the circle of life goes on. The Tenth Master has vividly described this process in the following Kabit of his 'Akal Ustat':

As from one fire millions of sparks arise

ਜੇਸੇ ਏਕ ਆਗ ਤੇ ਕਨੂਕਾ ਕੋਟ ਆਗ ਉਠੇ

Though rising separately, they unite again in the fire

ਨਿਆਰੇ ਨਿਆਰੇ ਹੁਦਕੈ ਫੇਰ ਆਗ ਮੈ ਮਿਲਾਹਰੇ ।

*As from one heap of dust
Several particles of dust fill the air.*

ਜੇਸੇ ਏਕ ਧੂਰ ਤੇ ਅਨੇਕ ਧੂਰ ਧੂਰਤ ਹੈ

And on falling on it again blend with the dust;

ਧੂਰ ਕੇ ਕਨੂਕਾ ਫੇਰ ਧੂਰ ਹੀ ਸਮਾਹਰੇ ।

As with one stream millions of waves are produced,

ਜੇਸੇ ਏਕ ਨਦ ਤੇ ਤਰੰਗ ਕੋਟ ਉਪਜਤ ਹੈ

The waves, made of water, all become water;

ਪਾਨ ਕੇ ਤਰੰਗ ਸਭੈ ਪਾਨ ਹੀ ਕਹਾਹਗੇ ।

So from God's form

Nonsentient and sentient things are manifested,

ਤੈਸੇ ਬਿਸ ਰੂਪ ਤੇ ਅਭੂਤ ਭੂਤ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਹੋਇ

And springing from Him, shall all be united in Him again.

ਤਾਹੀ ਤੈ ਉਪਜ ਸਭੈ ਤਾਹੀ ਮੈ ਸਮਾਹਗੇ ।

Salvation

Sikhism does not aim at salvation or deliverance as the end, which means a static merger with and reabsorption of the Individual Soul in the Universal Soul and so to be finished with. This tantamounts to virtual suicide. This is left entirely to the grace of Akal Purakh. Our duty is confined to right thinking and right actions.

I seek no Deminions, nor Deliverance either,

ਰਾਜ ਨ ਚਾਹਉ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਚਾਹਉ

I crave for nothing but the love of His lotus feet.

ਮਨਿ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲਾਰੇ । (ਦੇਵ ਗੰਧਰੀ ਮ ੫)

Democracy

From the very beginning, the Satguru laid the foundations, deep and sound, of real democracy in the Panth. When the Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, administered Amrit to the five Beloved Ones, and then begged of them to administer the same to him, he had passed on Guruship to the Khalsa, under the Spiritual Sovereignty of the Gurshabd, the Gurbani incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib. With the Spiritual Light and Guidance in the Gur Shabad (ਜੋਤਿ) for the interpretation in actual life and matters of policy (ਜੁਗਤਿ) the Guruship was transferred to the Khalsa. The body (ਕਾਇਆ) was eliminated with the declaration that there was to be no Guru after the Tenth Master in any perceptible body.

*The light was the same, the way was same,
Only the body changed.*

ਜੋਤਿ ਓਹਾ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਸਾਇ ਸਹਿ ਕਾਇਆ ਫੇਰ ਪਲਟੀਐ (ਵਾਰ ਰਾਮਕਲੀ)

Thus he established some very important principles. The first, that there would be no 'personality cult' amongst the Sikhs. Second, henceforth there would be collective leadership and collective responsibility.

The tenth Satguru himself implemented and brought these principles into actual practice. When Anandpur

Sahib was evacuated, the Satguru told the Sikhs that this step was not a wise one and would do great harm. But when the majority of the Sikhs persisted in their demand, he finally accepted. We are well aware of the subsequent tragedies that befell them, but he never complained that in spite of his advice they had taken a wrong decision. Similarly the move out of the fortress at Chamkaur Sahib was in compliance with orders of the Khalsa.

A Healthy Family Life

Celibacy or bachelorship is discouraged in Sikhism. At the time that Sikhism was founded over five hundred years ago, people who renounced and gave up their homes were looked up to with reverence. It was said, preached and driven into the people that no one could attain spiritual heights as long as he did not give up his family life and repaired to wilderness, nor could a person other than that of the priest class could perform any religious duty. In Sikhism all these ideas were firmly rejected. A family man was declared by the Guru as much nobler and more useful than one who had given up his own family and home and thus, become a burden on the others.

Why repair to the wilderness to seek Him.

ਕਾਹੇ ਰੇ ਬਨ ਖੋਜਨ ਜਾਈ ।

The Omnipresent, the Detached, is always within three.

ਸਰਬ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ਸਦਾ ਅਲੇਪਾ, ਤੋਹੀ ਸੰਗ ਸਮਾਈ ।

As fragrance is in flower and reflection in mirror.

ਪੁਰੁਪ ਮਧ ਜਿਉ ਥਾਸ ਬਸਤ ਹੈ ਮੁਕਰ ਮਾਹਿ ਜੈਸੇ ਛਾਈ ।

So is He within three; seek Him within.

ਤੈਸੇ ਹੀ ਹਰਿ ਥਮੈ ਨਿਰੰਤਰ ਘਟ ਹੀ ਖੋਜਹੁ ਭਾਈ । (ਧਨਾਸਰੀ ਮ: ੯)

The Gurus are an example by themselves confining to family lives and performing their worldly duties alongwith their religious missions. Even today, some schools of thought applaud bachelors, celibates and hermits. In Sikhism there is just no place for them. On the contrary such persons are considered as parasites on society.

The Guru in the Khalsa

The institution of the Guru amongst the Sikhs is very special and unique. Next to God is the place of the Guru. The need of the Guru is essential to gain light and guidance.

*"Without the Guru it is pitch dark
And nothing can be perceived".*

ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨ ਘੋਰ ਅੰਧਾਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਿਨ ਸਮਝ ਨ ਆਵੈ । (ਸਵਯੈ ਮ: ੪ ਕੇ)

It is the touch of the Guru that energises the godly values and saintly virtues that are inherent in the individual and the dormant.

There are many gems, jewels and rubies in the mind.

ਮਤ ਵਿਚ ਰਤਨ ਜਵਾਹਰ ਮਾਣਕ ।

Only if one were to hearken to the voice of the Satguru”.

ਜੇ ਇਕ ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਸਿਖ ਸੁਣੀ । (ਜਪੁ)

And

Without the true Guru, no one attaineth the Sublime State.

ਬਿਨੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਿਨੈ ਨ ਘਾਈ ਪਰਮ ਗਤੇ । (ਪ੍ਰਭਾਤੀ ਮ : ੫)

The Satguru's Shabad is being broadcast at all times as it permeates and prevails in all things. Any one who wishes to listen to it and take a lesson, has just to tune-in his mind to that wave length. The Guru's "class room" is open to all who have a will to learn, irrespective of class, creed, or country.

*Nanak, the Guru, hath instructed all in Divine Wisdom.
And whosoever heareth is ferried across.*

ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਕਹਿਤੁ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਸੁਣੈ ਸੋ ਘਰਿ ਪਰਾਨਥ । (ਮਾਰੂ ਮ : ੫)

Guru the Disciple and Disciple the Guru

The Gurus functioned in ten human forms, after which the form, the body, was discontinued. The spirit (ਜੋਤਿ) remained, conserved in the *Gurbani*, the *Shabad*, the Word, and under its presiding guidance, the Guruship was transferred to the *Khalsa*. The Sikhs are also known as, and called the *Panth*. For every Sikh there is a threshold which when he or she crosses, and after having received the Amrit, becomes the *Khalsa*, a member of the *Akal Purkh's Fauj*, a class of God-conscious men of warrior-saints. The dynamic presence of the Guru in Gurshabad functions as the driving force. A Sikh works like a tool in the hands of the *Sat Guru*. For a Sikh, the Guru is ever present, and supportive (ਹਾਜਰ ਨਾਜਰ, ਅੰਗ ਸੰਗ), Omnipresent. With the delegation of Guruship to the *Khalsa*, the difference between the Teacher-the Master and the Disciple was eliminated for the first time in human history, Never before had any religious leader, *Avtar* or Prophet, treated his followers as such and given them a status equal to himself. It was the Tenth Satguru who lauded his followers and declared:

*My victories in battle have been through their (Sikhs) favour,
Through their favour I have made gifts.*

ਜੁਧ ਜਿਤੇ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ, ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁਦਾਨ ਕਰੇ ।

*Through their favour all my troubles have been removed.
Through their kindness again my house is replenished.*

ਅਘ ਉਘ ਟਰੇ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ, ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਪੁਨ ਧਾਮ ਭਰੇ ।

*Through their favour I have acquired knowledge,
Through their kindness all my enemies have been vanquished.*

ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸੁਥਿਦਿਆ ਲਈ, ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਸਭ ਸੜ ਮਰੇ ।

*Through their kindness I am exalted, otherwise,
There are millions of poor people like me.*

ਇਨਹੀ ਕੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕੇ ਸਜੇ ਹਮ ਹੈ ਨਹੀ ਮੇ ਸੇ ਗਰੀਬ ਕ੍ਰੋਰ ਪਰੇ ।

*To bestow gifts on them alone in proper,
To make gifts to others in not profitable*

ਦਾਨ ਦੀਯੋ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਭਲੇ, ਅਰੁ ਆਨਕੇ ਦਾਨ ਨ ਲਾਗਤ ਠੀਕੇ ।

*To bestow gifts on them alone will bear fruit hereafter
And bring praise in this world,
To bestow on others in altogether useless.*

ਅਕੀ ਫਲੈ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ਦਯੋ, ਜਗ ਮੈ ਜਸ, ਅਉਰ ਦਯੋ ਸਵ ਫੀਕੇ ।

*All the wealth in my house,
With my soul and body is for them.*

ਮੇ ਗੁਰ ਮੈ ਮਨ ਤੇ ਤਨ ਤੇ ਸਿਰ ਲਉ ਧਨ ਹੈ ਸਭ ਇਨਹੀ ਕੇ ।

*For the first time, the Guru became the Disciple and the
Disciple the Guru.*

*“Wah, Wah, Wonderous Gobind Singh;
You are the Guru and you are the Disciple.”*

ਵਾਹ ਵਾਹ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ ।

Freedom from all Fears

The Guru is never without his powers, strength and forces. They are an integral and inseparable part of the Guru. So when the Guru and the Sikh become one, all values, virtues, forces and powers of the Guru become part and parcel of the Sikh as well. That is how a single *Khalsa* becomes equal to a lakh and quarter (in common parlance) and every Sikh in whom the Guru functions, works and functions like an institution by himself. Having been provided with an anchor in the Fearless, all powerful One, the *Khalsa* is freed of all fears: the fear of the priest class, the fear of the high class and high castes, fear of the State and fear of the ruler, the mental fear created by superstition and institutionalised formalism and ritualism of religion, and above all, the fear of death itself.

*“With the Fearless one dwelling within thee;
Where do you get the fear from?”*

ਨਿਰਭਉ ਸੰਗਿ ਤੁਮਰੈ ਥਸਤੇ, ਇਹ ਡਰਨੁ ਕਹਾ ਤੇ ਆਇਆ। (ਗੁਰੂਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ: ੫)

Importantly

Death is the privilege of the Brave.

Provided they die for an just cause.

ਮਰਣੁ ਮਣਸਾ ਸੁਰਿਆ ਹਕੂ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਹੋਇ ਮਰਨਿ ਪਰਵਾਣੇ। (ਵਛਹੰਸ ਮ: ੧)

The Khalsa therefore does not bow to, does not owe allegiance to any perishable creature-but, only and solely to the *Wahe Guru* the Almighty, the *Akal Purkh*.

Khalsa the Invincible

The above precepts inculcated over the years, infused such fearless courage and virile strength in the Sikhs that the Khalsa became invincible. The rule of tyranny was overthrown and the tide of fanatic bigotry stemmed. It turned human beings into gods. It turned serfs and slaves into Sirdars and valiant knights. It turned sparrows into hawks and cows into lions. The downtrodden, depressed and exploited became such formidable fighters that Rajas and Nawabs shuddered before them.

The Khalsa, Identity and Guru's Image

The Khalsa was thus created in the Satguru's own image. That is why we have unshorn hair. Every Sikh is duty bound to rever, preserve and uphold this image and identity as the Satguru's Standard of Victory. These have to be kept aloft and respected even at the cost of one's own life.

“Khalsa is my own image. I reside in the Khalsa”.

ਜਬ ਲਗਾ ਰਹੇ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਨਿਆਰਾ।

We know that our very existence depends on and is bound with our independent separate identity an image. Once we lose these, we will be drowned in the unfathomable morass of what is called Hinduism. That is why the injunction is:

“So long as the Khalsa retains independent identity,

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮੇਰੇ ਰੂਪ ਹੈ ਖਾਸ, ਖਾਲਸੇ ਮੇ ਹਉ ਕਰੇ ਨਿਵਾਸ।

I will bestow on them full glory.

ਤਬ ਲਗਾ ਤੇਜ ਦੀਰਿ ਮੈ ਸਾਰਾ।

But the moment they adopt Brahmanical ways,

ਜੋ ਇਹ ਗਹਿਰੇ ਬਿਖੂਨ ਕੀ ਰੀਤਿ।

I will not trust them.”

ਮੈ ਨ ਕਰਉ ਤਿਨ ਕੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ।

And the injunctions is:

“Do not present yourself without Keshas and Arms”.

ਬਿਨਾ ਸਸਤ੍ਰ ਕੇਸੰ ਦਿਉ ਨ ਦੀਦਾਰੇ।

Unbounded courage

This merger of the Guru with the Khalsa, therefore, created such overwhelming energy, daring courage, bravery and readiness always to help the needy and the oppressed, that the Khalsa was looked at with awe. When Ahmad Shah Abdali, after ransacking Delhi and the countryside, was taking away some 30000 Hindu women and girls to be auctioned in Afghanistan, the Khalsa, unmindful of the risks, pounced upon the Abdali forces and rescued those helpless women. Not only that, these women were then escorted safely and honourably back to their respective homes by the Sikhs. Then again, when a Brahmin came to Amritsar and complained that the Nawab of Qasur and taken away his daughters, the Khalsa rushed to Qasur, punished the Nawab and restored the daughters to the Brahmin.

Sri Sahib : The Sikh's 'Sword'

The Sikh sword, the Kirpan, is not meant to be brandished irresponsibly. It is a symbol of duty to resist aggression, tyranny, and injustice, and meant to sweep aside obstacles the obstruct performances of one's Duty. It is meant to destroy evil. It is not a butcher's knife but a surgeon's lancet. *In short, the kirpan is a symbol of the will and power and determination of a Sikh to live a true Sikh's life.*

The kirpan has to be used very judiciously and that too as a last resort when all other means of argument persuasion, diplomacy, and reasoning, have failed. When the bigoted communalist element among the majority community in India forgetting the sacrifice and martyrdom of their own saviour, Guru Tegh Bahadar, the Ninth Nanak, tried to assault his mausoleum, Sis Ganj, in Old Delhi, the shining steel of the Sikhs, ready at hand, was never touched nor flashed.

At the same time, there should be no doubt, the Sikh's kirpan is not meant to be a mere show piece. The injunction of our Tenth Master is:

“When all other means have failed,

ਹਲਾਲ ਅਸਤ ਬੁਰਦਨ ਥ ਸਮਜੇਰ ਦਸਤ।

It is righteous to have recourse to the Sword”.

ਚੂੰ ਕਾਰ ਅਜ ਹਮਾ ਹੀਲਤੇ ਦਰ ਗੁਜ਼ਸਤ ।

The Sword is an allegorical reference to the force of righteousness. For a Sikh, therefore, the legitimate use of force in the defences, of human values is not only right but becomes incumbent, when or if an occasion arises – because he refused to submit to evil.

When the Sword is brought to function, it must be effective and decisive. The Tenth Master invokes the Sword in these words:

*“Thou art the Subduer of countries,
The Destroyer of the armies of the wicked,
In the battle field thou greatly adornest the brave”.*

ਖਗ ਖੰਡ ਥਿਹੀਡੰ ਖਲ ਦਲ ਖੰਡੰ ਅਤਿ ਰਣ ਮੰਡੰ ਥਰਥੰਡੰ ।

*Thine arm is infrangible, Thy brightness refulgent,
Thy radiance and splendour dazzle like sun.*

ਭੁਜੁ ਦੰਡ ਅਖੰਡੰ ਤੇਜ ਪ੍ਰਚੰਡੰ ਜੋਰ ਅਮੰਡੰ ਭਾਨ ਪ੍ਰਭੰ ।

*“Thou bestowest happiness on the good,
Thou terrifies the evil,
Thou scatterest sinners, I seek Thy protection”.*

ਸੁਖ ਸੰਗ ਕਰਤ ਦੁਰਮਤਿ ਦਰਣ ਕਿਲ ਥਿਖ ਹਰਣੰ ਅਸਿ ਸਰਣੰ ।

*Hail! Hail the Creator of the world,
The Saviour of creation, My cherisher,
Hail to thee, O Sword!*

ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜਗ ਕਾਰਣ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟ ਉਬਾਰਨ ਮਮ ਪ੍ਰੀਤ ਖਾਰਣ ਜੈ ਤੇਗੰ ।
(ਬਚਿਤ੍ਰਨਾਟਕ ਪਾ: ੧੦)

The Khalsa : Integrated Perfect Whole

That the exact moment in time of the birth of the Khalsa is known is unique to the creation of a Nation. This is the special status of the Khalsa. The Khalsa was not created out of vengeance or in an impulse. Nor was it created as a “time-server”, a tactical or strategic step or as a reaction to any barbarous oppression in particular. After 200 years of meticulous preparation and planning, the Khalsa was created in 1699 at the pleasure of the Akal Purkh (ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀਮਤਿ) and as ordained by Him, after full thought, thorough deliberation and meticulous planning in the Perfect, Whole, and Masculine Image, (ਤੁਬ ਸਹਿਜੇ ਰਚਿਓ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਸਾਥਤ ਮਰਦਾਨ). The Khalsa was created by the Satguru, at Lepel Griffin has said, like Jupiter taking out Minerva from his thigh, like Durga producing Chandi from her forehead.

Being an integral, integrated, perfect whole, a Sikh is like a Brahmin when he reads the scriptures, recites the Gurbani, leads in prayers, delivers a sermon, preaches at the *Sangat*, performs religious rites and

social ceremonies. When he wields the sword, fights battles, sprints to the help of the helpless and defends his family and country, he is a *Kshatriya*. He is a *Vaish* when he tills the land and does a craftsman’s job. When he cleanses the dirty utensils of the community kitchen (*langar*), dusts the shoes of the *Sangat*, sweeps the house and the Gurdwara compound, takes the farmyard manure on his head to the fields, and does other service to the needy, that very Sikh is a *Shudra* too. And when he radiates his “Sikh-life” (ਸਿਖੀ), provides light and guidance to others, he becomes a Missionary,

*When defining a Sikh, the Satguru said:
Nanak craves for the Dust of the Guru,
Who always remembers himself.*

And makes other remembers the Name (God).

ਜਨ ਨਾਨਕ ਯੁਤਿ ਮੰਗੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗੁਖ ਸਿਖ ਕੀ
ਜੋ ਆਪਿ ਜਪੈ ਅਵਰਹਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਜਪਵੈ ।

*There are no taboos on food or drinks in Sikhism.
The Satguru says:
“All foods and drinks are pure,
That God hath bestowed for sustenance”*

ਖਾਣਾ ਪੀਣਾ ਪਵਿਤ੍ਰ ਹੈ, ਦਿਤੇਨੁ ਰਿਜਕੁ ਸੰਥਾਹਿ । (ਵਾਰ ਆਸਾ ਮ: ੧)

*The only condition is:
“O Friend; the food pleasures are vain,
That corrupt the mind and pain the body”.*

ਬਾਬਾ ਹੋਰੁ ਖਾਣਾ ਖੁਸੀ ਖੁਆਰੁ ।
ਜਿਤੁ ਖਾਏ ਤਨੁ ਪੀੜੀਐ ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਚਲਹਿ ਵਿਕਾਰ । (ਸ੍ਰੀ ਰਾਗ ਮ: ੧)

History records that Guru Nanak cooked venison at Kurukshetra and from the time of Nanak II, Guru Angad, meat was served in the *Langar*.* Principal Teja Singh and Dr. Ganda Singh in their *History of the Sikhs* have stated that Sikhs are essentially non-vegetarians.

A Sikh when he is baptised, is told that he has now taken rebirth in the Satguru’s House and henceforth his father is Guru Gobind Singh and mother Mata Sahib Devan and he becomes the citizen of Anandpur.

Anandpur is the City of Peace and Eternal Bliss. That is where the Satguru’s way of life takes us to.

*Bhayee Ardaman Singh
Bhayee Sahib of Bagrian*

** Guru Amar Dass before presented himself to Guru Angad, had to partake meat prepared in the Langar specially, in order to confirm the former’s total abrogation of his Vaishnavite antecedents.*

This first appeared in Nishaan I/2001



SIKHS

and the Third Millennium

The Sikh movement, started by Guru Nanak (1469-1539), culminated in the creation of the Khalsa in 1699 CE. The Khalsa completed 300 years of its birth in 1999, when the Tercentenary of its creation was celebrated with great enthusiasm all over the globe. The occasion also generated intense academic activity which included, inter alia, high level seminars and publication of literature highlighting such features of Sikh philosophy and history as making it a future religion of the world alongside the four earlier and much older world religious faiths. Coupled with literature, the extensive use of multimedia brought about an unprecedented awareness of this young religion among the world community. The Sikh Diaspora is almost

everywhere, and Sikhs are no more strangers in any part of the world. In fact, it is now difficult to find a society without the colourful sprinkling of turbaned Sikhs. Doors of the Sikh religion are open to all. It has thus found takers in all castes, colours, races and nationalities. The keen interest evinced by the non-Sikh world community provides the much desired impetus to further intensify efforts to share our rich spiritual heritage with the rest of mankind.

As we are in the 21st century, the third millennium, it is necessary to recall the message of the Gurus, and to assess our past performance and the present situation for planning our future. For, if one forgets one's past and ignores one's present, one has no future.

The Message

Sikhism, youngest of the world religions, offers a model for spiritual and temporal life. "There is One Father and we are all His children," says the Guru: all human beings constitute a universal brotherhood, united with the bond of love. There are no high castes or low castes. There is no discrimination on the basis of colour, sex, race or creed. Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master declared entire mankind as one race. Significantly, this message of love came when the clash between the indigenous Hindu and the invader Muslim civilisations marked by hatred and intolerance, was at its height in the sub continent.

The Gurus rejected ritualism and laid stress on the essence of religion.

Monotheism: There is only One God (*Ik Onkar*). He is the Creator of the Universe. He loves His creation and is immanent in it.

World View: This world is not an illusion as preached sometimes. It is real. "Since He Himself is real, so is His creation."

Truthful Conduct: Guru Nanak says, "Truth is higher than everything; Higher still is truthful living."

Goal of Life: It is not personal salvation after death, but the status of *gurumukh* or *sachiar* attuned to the Will of God to be attained in this life.

Methodology: Sikhism rejects the dichotomy between spiritual and temporal life. It is a whole-life system. A *gurumukh* lives in this world as a householder and is engaged in an honest occupation, and sharing his earnings with others in need, keeping his mind always fixed on God. These are the three pillars of the Sikh way of life. He sees God is everybody, which promotes love for entire mankind and leads to its selfless service. A Sikh is committed to equality and justice. He is enjoined upon to fight for *dharma* or righteousness and, if necessary, to make the supreme sacrifice for the cause. In fact, it was the Gurus who introduced martyrdom in the Indian religious tradition.

Human Dignity: Life is valued as a gift of God to be lived with honour. "He who lives with dishonour, does not deserve the food he eats," says the Guru.

Status of Women: Women have been given perfect equality with men. The Guru pleads, "How can you consider her inferior when she gives birth to kings?"

Social Responsibility: Sikhs accept social responsibility as a duty, "Liberation for self as well as for the world" is their creed. Politics is not taboo. It is necessary to bring the 'Kingdom of God' on earth.

Special features of Sikhism are in :

Universalism: Guru Nanak's teachings are universal, applicable and valid in all situations - social, political or geographical, and are for all times. Stress is on eternal values.

Shabad Guru: This is a unique contribution to religious thought. All the ten Gurus were One. The Word (Shabad) revealed by God through them, now enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib, is the Eternal Guru.

The Saint Soldier: Side by side with meditation or Naam Simran a Sikh is expected to defend justice, equality and freedom, with force when necessary.

Oecumenism: The Guru claims no exclusive authority to liberation. He seeks the cooperation of all faiths. He says "The world is aflame. Shower Thy Grace, and save it though whichever door it is possible."

The Foundation

Guru Nanak, founder of the Sikh religion, appeared towards the end of the fifteenth century, when Lodhis ruled over the northern part of the sub continent. The times were marked by political slavery, social divisions based on caste and religion, and a clash between two major cultures. The Hindus constituted the vast majority, but were ruled by the alien Muslim minority who, with superior military strength, had invaded India nearly seven hundred years earlier from the outside and conquered the sub continent without much resistance. Hindus, with their caste system and the widely held belief in *ahimsa*, were no match for the invaders who had no such inhibitions. Hatred between the two communities was at its height. Hindus called the Muslims *malechhas* (barbarians), while the latter called the Hindus *kafirs* (non believers). There was no meeting ground. The rulers were following a policy of repression and forcible conversion of their subjects. The Hindu society was divided into castes and the lower castes (*Sudras* and *Vaishas*), were treated by the superior castes as worse than animals.

Guru Nanak with his prophetic vision, observed the misery and suffering of the common man, resulting from political subjugation, social discrimination, religious mistrust, hatred and ignorance. The suffering was not

confined to India. As Bhai Gurdas says, the Guru saw the whole world virtually aflame. The Guru's sensitive mind felt the pangs of the sufferings of the masses. His heart melted with compassion, and he set out on his long itineraries known as *udasis* to offer solace to the afflicted populace through the divine message of love peace, justice and equality, service and sacrifice. His benevolence knew no boundaries, geographical, political social or religious. His travels covered places as far as Assam in the east, Sri Lanka in the south, Mecca in present day Saudi Arabia and Baghdad in the west, and Tibet in the north. His message was received with open arms wherever he went. The presence of his followers in all these places upto this day bears ample testimony to the universality of his message. Guru Nanak is unique among prophets in the sense that he attracted an international following in his own lifetime.

The Guru Successors

The Guru was dealing with a society completely demoralised by centuries of political slavery and religious repression. The Guru in his lifetime had explained his system and recorded it in his *bani*, and those who came in contact with him had benefited from it. He had also provided a model for individual life by his own example and for corporate living through a settlement he established at Kartarpur, which also became the headquarters of his mission. However, much more was required. The Guru aimed at complete transformation of the society from one of helpless cowardly victims of repression to that of strong, confident and self-respecting saint-soldiers ready to resist injustice and high-handedness from any quarters. This could not be achieved in one generation. The Guru, therefore, decided to appoint a successor to carry out his mission. In fact, nine successors followed one after the other and over two centuries later - the Khalsa - the *Guru Panth* took the final form.

The Khalsa

The Khalsa became an organised body of saint-soldiers committed to the divine cause of righteousness and ready to make the supreme sacrifice in the defence of *dharma* and the weak. Following the example of the Gurus, the Khalsa revolted against repression and forcible conversions. They suffered unprecedented hardships and torture and faced genocide at the hands of the rulers during the 17th century. Perseverance and

deep faith in the Gurus and their cause, meant that the Khalsa not only survived, but came out victorious and set up the Khalsa empire or *Sarkar-e-Khalsa* in North India, under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, which brought peace to the people of the troubled land after several centuries. Unfortunately, because of treachery, the Golden Era did not last more than half a century, and the Empire fell to the British in 1849.

In the struggle for India's independence, Sikhs contributed the major share of sufferings and sacrifices in the form of jail terms, exiles, torture, death sentences, in the run upto 1947. However, Sikh aspirations for an autonomous status and an honourable place in the Indian Union were not realised, since Congress leaders went back on the assurances given to the Sikhs to that effect. Even at the time of reorganisation of states on the basis of language in 1956, a separate state was denied to Punjabis for no other reason than that Sikhs would be in a majority in such a state. The Sikhs had to launch a protracted struggle to eventually get a truncated Punjabi Suba, with no control over its capital, water resources and power. Thus, the Sikhs are still engaged in a struggle for autonomy and return of large Punjabi-speaking areas left out of the depleted Punjab state.

Looking at the past, Sikhs have every reason to be inspired by their history. It was the Sikh Gurus who imparted the values of equality of and social justice to society. It was the Sikhs who, under the inspiration of the Gurus, sealed the North Western Frontier of India against aggression from foreign invaders that had plagued the subcontinent for a thousand years. It was they who fought, and eradicated the evils of this caste system, untouchability and the abhorrent practice of sati. It was the Sikhs who fought for human rights and freedom of religion. It was the Sikhs, who freed their places of worship from the corrupt mahants and stooges of the British Government in early 20th Century.

A result of the recent past is the large scale migration of Sikhs to other countries and there is now a sizeable and ever increasing Sikh diaspora in parts of the world, making them a truly international community.

Present Situation

Despite its past glories, the *Panth* faces numerous problems during the present times. Although the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) runs the government in present Punjab in a coalition with the BJP, and is also a

partner in the National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre, the “glow of freedom” the Sikhs have struggled for, is still not visible. The infamous *Operation Blue Star* and the repression that followed continue to cast their painful shadows on the Sikh psyche. The Panth is divided into several political parties as well as religious sects. The SAD was originally constituted to look after the political interests of the Sikh community. It has, however, opened its doors to non-Sikhs and is, at the moment, more worried about its secular image as a Punjabi party. This has considerably diluted its right to be the sole representative of the *Panth*. As a result other ‘Akali Dals’ have appeared, which have only added to the confusion.

There is no unanimity on the long term political goals of the Sikhs. While some sections demand a sovereign independent state, others prefer autonomy within the Indian Union. The SAD has favoured the Anandpur Sahib Resolution of 1973, subsequently modified in 1978. The Hindu majority, however, considers this as secessionist, and is in no mood to concede the demand.

There are challenges to Sikh identity and concerted efforts are afoot to treat the Sikhs as a sect of Hindus. The *Rashtriya Sikh Sangat* wing of the BJP is busily engaged in confusing the Sikhs on this issue. The Sikhs resent this as an attack on their identity.

Then there is the problem of apostasy, particularly among the Sikh youth. Under influence of the West and TV culture, alarmingly large numbers of Sikhs have dropped the most visible and essential requirement of Sikhism - the unshorn hair.

The Sikhs outside Punjab as well as Sikh diaspora outside India have their own peculiar problems. Besides, there are millions of ‘tribal’ Sikhs like *Vanjaras*, *Sikligars*, *Lobanas*, *Tharus*, known as *Nanak Panthis*, who are in utter neglect and abject poverty in several states of India, notably Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and elsewhere. They have received no attention from the Panth and are vulnerable to influence of missionaries of other faiths. To the list of problems must be added the recent controversies over the Dasam Granth, Nanakshahi Calendar, All India Sikh Gurdwaras Act, Sikh Personal Law, seating arrangements in *langar*, the authority of the *Takht jathedars*, and so on.

These problems should cause serious concern among the community and its leaders, but are by no means

insurmountable. What is alarming, however, is that we are not prepared and organised to deal with these problems, which demand solutions and decisions at the Panthic level.

But who is the decision-maker at this level? Is it the SGPC? Is it the *jathedar* of Akal Takht? Is it the council of high priests? Is it the SAD or its President? Or is it an individual who happens to control major *Panthic* organisations through political authority? It is difficult to give a categorical answer to any of these questions in the affirmative.

While authority of the Akal Takht is accepted by all without question, there is no such unanimity on the absolute authority of its *jathedar*. In fact, we do not have enough evidence in history to show that this position was at all created, or approved of, by the Guru. Also, the spirit of Sikh thought does not provide for any dictatorial authority to an individual, however highly placed. This could be abused by an unscrupulous incumbent as was done by Arur Singh in honouring the man who had ordered the Jallianwala Bagh massacre in 1919.

The SGPC, often called Parliament of the Sikhs and is no doubt the most representative body of the Panth, is the second alternative. This too, however, is not the ideal choice. Sikhs abroad, and even the Indian Sikhs outside Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh, are not represented on it. Its mode of election does not attract men of the required religious calibre among Sikhs. Further, the fact that the SGPC elections are fought by political parties, the goal becomes political authority or hegemony of a group, not management of gurdwaras or serving the *Panthic* interests. In view of this and also because of the existence of other bodies like the Delhi Sikh Gurdwaras Management Committee, the claim of SGPC as the sole representative of the Sikhs is difficult to sustain.

With regard to the council of high priests as the central decision-making body of the *Panth*, nobody is clear as to who are the members of this council. Are they the *jathedars* of the five *takhts*? History does not support this tradition. In fact, until a few years back, there used to be only four *takhts*. And the two *takhts* (Patna Sahib and Hazoor Sahib) had no *jathedars*. They had their high priests who were not under the control of the SGPC and seldom attended the meetings of the council. According to tradition, high priests of these

two *takhts* are not supposed to leave their *deras*, and the best they could do was to depute their nominees with the approval of their respective managements. While we consider this alternative, we should also not forget that there are no qualifications prescribed for the high priests, nor are there any satisfactory procedures for their appointment. Not infrequently, their appointments result from political convenience or compulsions of the party in power.

It is clear that there is no agency to represent the Sikh *Panth* and to take decisions on its behalf, which is acceptable to all. During the Gurus' times, the Sikhs looked to the Guru for guidance, direction and decisions. When the Guruship was vested in the Guru Granth Sahib, it was stipulated that the Guru Panth or a representative body of Sikhs would take decisions on its behalf. This was the intention of Guru Gobind Singh when he nominated five *pyaras* to go with Banda Singh Bahadar on his expedition to the Punjab. However, in the post-Banda Singh period when Sikhs had to face repression and exile, this institution could not be formalised. The concept was revived during the misl period when the heads of various misls used to meet at the Akal Takht on Vaisakhi and Diwali to discuss their problems and a common agenda for the Panth. Their unanimous decisions used to be called *gurmattas* and were accepted by all as decisions of the Panth. This practice was discontinued by Maharaja Ranjit Singh for his own reasons, and has remained redundant since.

This vacuum is responsible for the prevailing confusion and uncertainty. While there are too many persons or agencies to claim leadership, there is none enjoying the authority of the Panth.

It is clear that, for a solution of the present as well as future problems, we have to fill this vacuum. An agency has to be created that can represent and speak on behalf of the Panth. The SGPC being the biggest, and comparatively the most representative body, should take an initiative in this direction. With the cooperation of the DSGMC and other major organisations of Sikhs like the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Damdami Taksal and others, the SGPC should convene a meeting of their representatives to discuss this issue. Sikhs abroad should be adequately represented on it. An Apex Body should be created and procedures for its functioning be clearly laid down. The role of *takhts* and their *jathedars* should be defined, as

also their qualifications, tenure, mode of recruitment, privileges, and so on.

This Apex Body should be assisted by Advisory Committees consisting of eminent Sikhs and experts from different disciplines, for advice on religious and other technical matters. No decision should be made without reference to these Committees. It should not be forgotten that only sound decisions taken in the interest of the Panth will attract compliance. On the other hand, decisions taken in haste, based on personal prejudices, and without adequate thought to possible consequences, are more likely to be defied. Unfortunately, some of the decisions taken by leaders during the recent past, belong to the latter category, and have caused divisions in the Panth and immense damage to its prestigious institutions.

It is hoped that the SGPC will take the initiative on the above lines. If the proposed Apex Body of the Panth can be set up, it may be the biggest gain of the tercentenary, and the trauma suffered by the community in recent years will not have gone in vain.

The list of problems mentioned above is by no means exhaustive. New problems may continue to arise. But once we have an agency or a body fully representative of the Panth to deal with them, there is nothing to worry about.

Political Goal

While this issue should also be decided by the above proposed body, it seems necessary to make a few observations in this regard.

"We are not Hindus", Bhai Kahn Singh thundered in 1897 ! In fact, Guru Nanak had left no doubt about his religion being an independent revealed faith, when he refused to sear the sacred thread of the Hindu faith, and when he declared that he looked upon people as 'neither Hindus nor Musalmans'. Guru Arjun Dev later reaffirmed this when he said:

*We neither are Hindus nor Musalmans;
Our body and life is Allah-Rama's.*

The independent identity of the Sikh faith is recognised by all responsible persons and organisations. Stray voices continue to rise claiming Sikhs to be a part of Hindus. Such voices deserve no notice, and should be ignored !

The Sikh Nation

That the Sikhs are a nation is also not seriously disputed anymore. According to Gokal Chand Narang, "Guru Gobind Singh created a nation... ", "... when I say the creation of a nation, I mean the words to be taken literally, for when Guru Gobind Singh began his work, there was no such thing as a Hindu nation."

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the Sikhs established a powerful state over a vast territory in North India. The subsequent loss of the territory does not mean loss of nationality as well.

In a brilliant analysis of the question of Sikh nationality,' Dr. Gopal Singh concludes: "As I have mentioned earlier, the three incidents of the 1980s have finally consolidated the national consciousness among the Sikhs. It is difficult to foresee a dilution in this consciousness, because in these incidents, the Sikhs as a community suffered humiliation, unforgettable psychological blows, physical injuries, and loss of life and property.

"Therefore, I am of the view that Sikhs today are a nationality like any other nationality in India. I would be happy if someone comes out with a definition of nationality which Sikhs do not fit into."

As a nation and with distinct religious identity, the Sikh claim to a homeland or a sovereign state follows naturally. However, the concept of sovereignty has undergone a considerable change since the Second World War. The so-called independence has yielded in turn to interdependence. Not long ago, Europe housed over a dozen independent sovereign nation states, fighting one another to their mutual ruin and destruction. They have, in their own interest, agreed to drop part of their sovereignty and decided to manage their defence, foreign affairs, and currency collectively. Movements within Europe are free, as is the trade, to the advantage of all. They are well on their way to becoming the United States of Europe, on the pattern of the United States of America.

We too can learn from their experience. Instead of fighting for a small independent state, sandwiched between two hostile neighbours and with no access to the sea, it may perhaps be more prudent to work for a federal structure in India in which the federating units have complete autonomy within. Some common subjects like defence, international affairs, currency and so on, could

be entrusted to the federal government. This demand is shared by most other states as well. The membership of this union should be made so attractive that even neighbouring states of the subcontinent would like to join it. The federating units may even be encouraged to seek membership of the United Nations in some form, which will give the Union added support in the UN. With this kind of freedom and autonomy, no state will ever want to secede from the Union, even if provision to this effect may exist in the federal constitution. The willingness of partners will constitute the real strength of the Union.

The whole of India (*the sub-continent: ed*) is the homeland of the Sikhs. The first recorded reference to the word 'Hindustan' was in the bani of Guru Nanak, who traversed the whole of India and much farther beyond its borders. Sikhs have their holy shrines spread throughout the Indian subcontinent. By confining ourselves into a small isolated state we do not want to lose access to these shrines, as has happened in the case of the gurdwaras in Pakistan.

We have made tremendous sacrifices for the independence and defence of India. We cannot afford to throw away the gains of our sacrifices. Economic considerations and the interests of Sikhs living outside Punjab in India and abroad, also demand that the Sikh homeland be a member of such a Federation.

International Scenario

Peace has eluded mankind ever since the dawn of history. The twentieth century witnessed two World Wars. Huntington, who has made comprehensive study of the prevailing world situation says:

"World War I or the Great War was the 'war to end all wars' and to make the world safe for democracy. World War II, as Franklin Roosevelt put it, would "end the system of unilateral action, the exclusive alliances, the balances of power, and all the other expedients that have been tried for centuries - and have failed." Instead we will have 'a universal organisation' of 'peace-loving Nations' and beginnings of a 'permanent structure of peace.' World War I, however, generated communism, fascism, and the reversal of a century-old trend toward democracy. World War II produced a Cold War that was truly global. The illusion of harmony at the end of that Cold War was soon dissipated by the multiplication of ethnic conflicts and 'ethnic cleansing,' the breakdown of law and order, the emergence of new patterns of alliance

and conflict among states, the resurgence of neo-communist and neo-fascist movements, intensification of religious fundamentalism, the end of the 'diplomacy of smiles' and 'policy of yes' in Russia's relations with the West, the inability of the United Nations and the United States to suppress bloody local conflicts, and increasing assertiveness of a rising China. In the five years after the Berlin wall came down, the word 'genocide' was heard far more often than in any five years of the Cold War. The one harmonious world paradigm is clearly far too divorced from reality to be useful guide to the post-Cold War world."

In the changed environment, culture appears to play a dominant role in determination of relationships. "In the post-Cold War world, states increasingly define their interests in civilisational terms. They cooperate with and ally themselves with states with similar or common culture and are more often in conflict with countries of different culture....."

"Now that a Marxist-Leninist Soviet Union no longer poses a threat to the Free World and the United States no longer poses a countering threat to the communist world, countries in both worlds increasingly see threats coming from societies which are culturally different....."

"As of early 1993, for instance, an estimated 48 ethnic wars were occurring throughout the world and in 164 'territorial-ethnic claims and conflicts concerning borders' existed in the former Soviet Union, of which 30 had involved some form of armed conflict."

A "global war involving core states of the world's major civilisations is highly improbable, but not impossible. Such a war, we have suggested could come about from the escalation of fault line wars between groups from different civilisations, most likely involving Muslims on one side and non-Muslims on the other."

"At the micro level, the most violent fault lines are between Islam and its Orthodox, Hindu, African, and Western Christian neighbours. At the macro level, the dominant division is between 'the West and the Rest'."

Should, unfortunately, such an escalation trigger a conflict between two civilisations, it will surely engulf the whole world, and with the huge stocks of nuclear weapons available with major powers, the outcome will be catastrophic. Mankind may be completely annihilated marking the end of its history.

Role of Religion

Although religious division has often led to conflict, religion can also play an important role in averting this catastrophe, if its real spirit is invoked. As Regis Debray put it, "It is not the opium of the people, but the vitamin of the weak". Unfortunately, however, the emphasis is on the features that divide, rather than on the ones that unite. Islam and Christianity have followed an aggressive programme of proselytisation. As a result, the percentage of the former in the world population rose from 12.4 in 1900 to 17.1 in 1985, and that of the latter increased from 26.9 to 29.7 during the same period. While such an increase is due to conversion in both cases, in Islam it is also effected through reproduction. As a result projections for 2020 are that there will be 19.2% Muslims and 29.9% Christians in the world.

To put an end to clashes between religions, some well-wishers of humanity would like a common universal religion or a global civilisation to emerge.

Ninian Smart says in his work *The World's Religions* "so long as humans are brought up in different paths, so they will see the world differently, and for each path some things will seem natural and right and others not. But the paths cross. We can benefit from that social justice, which Marxists struggle for; human freedom, which liberals emphasise; love of God and fellow humans, which Christianity preaches; brotherhood, which Islam promotes; calm and mysticism, which go with Buddhism; devotion and pluralism, which Hinduism points to; harmony with nature, which Taoism commends; the cultivation of interpersonal behaviour, which is a lesson from Confucianism; holism in life, which we find in Africa; finding meaning through suffering, which Judaism has had to emphasis; the importance of inner sincerity, which we find among the Sikhs: these and many other spiritual and moral values are not of course mutually incompatible. In that respect, though we may not achieve a global religion, we may achieve a global civilisation in which values from the great traditions are woven together in a glittering net. Perhaps it will turn out like the jewel net of Indra, of which Huayen so eloquently speaks: "each stone reflecting every other."

This pious wish, however, is unlikely to be fulfilled, at least in the foreseeable future. No faithful follower of

a religion will shed his belief in his own religion in favour of any new syncretic universal system. What is required is respect for other religious systems side by side with faith in one's own, or a philosophy of multiculturalism.

This is exactly what Guru Nanak preached. Although his system includes all the elements of a universal religion listed by Ninian Smart, the Guru never called for conversion. He laid emphasis only on the basic values and firmly held that no label of a religious denomination, or rituals prescribed by it, can lead to salvation. The salvation of an individual as well as the human race can only come from an understanding of God's Will and carrying it out in life. God is the Creator. He is immanent in the universe. He is the Father of us all. He is benevolent and looks after and loves His creation. In fact, He is all love, and it is through love alone, that He can be realised. One's love for God can be expressed only through altruistic deeds in the service of mankind.

The salient features of the Guru's system have been listed earlier. The stress in this system is on basic spiritual values, freedom of faith and respect for other faiths, in the practice of one's own religion.

To the Muslim he said:

*Hard it is to deserve the name of Mussalman,
Only one truly so, may such be called.
First, must he hold in love the way of the holy;
Like iron on grindstone should be cast off his
possessions.*

*In the way of the Preceptor should he have faith,
And banish illusion of death and life.*

To the Lord's will should he be obedient:

*With faith in the Creator as compassionate he
becomes,*

May he be called Mussalman.

To the Pandit, who wanted to initiate him through the sacred thread (Janeoo), he said:

*Make compassion the cotton, contentment the yarn;
Continenence the knot and purity the twist;
Such is the true sacred thread of the self.*

*Thou Brahmin-priest! Put this on me shouldst thou
have it.*

To the Nanak Panthi yogi, his message was:

*Make contentment the earrings; modesty thy begging-bowl and
pouch;*

Contemplation thy ashes.

*Make thy quilt from realisation of thy mortality, And keep thy body
virgin;*

Thy code and staff, faith in God. Let all mankind be thy sect.

Conquering thus thyself, mayst thou be lord of the world.

The Guru's message is for all. It is the message of love, service and sacrifice. It is the message of happiness and bliss for all. It is the message of justice and equality. It is the message of not just tolerance, but genuine respect for other religious beliefs. It is the message of cooperative effort for eradication of suffering from the planet. The world needs this message, to avert the impending tragedy of clash of civilisations.

Let us disseminate it, and pray with the Guru for the Lord's grace on all (*Sarbat da Bhala*):

Some utter His name as Rama, others as Khuda;

Some serve the Lord of the universe, others Allah.

Gracious Lord Almighty, compassionate, bestow grace on all.

[Guru Granth Sahib]

Dr. Kharak Singh

*[Excerpts from the Bir Memorial Oration at the India
International Centre]*

Dr. Kharak Singh was born in 1922 at Rayya near Amritsar, and got his M.Sc. in Agriculture in 1954 and Ph.D in Agro Econ. from Ohio State University in 1967. After teaching at the Punjab Agriculture College, Lyallpur and later at Ludhiana, he was with the Government of India's Ministry of Agriculture before serving with the United Nations FAO at Rome from 1968 to 1984. He founded The Institute of Sikh Studies in Chandigarh in 1989.



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The Universe and Sikh Thought

The basic aspects of Sikh thought are naturally the same as those of other world religions and, as may be expected, their treatment by Sikhism is, in the main, on the lines of the Hindu and Buddhist speculative thought. Wherever Sikhism differs or departs from these lines of thought, it does so, as a rule, not by introducing new terms or concepts but by underlining an already familiar concept, or by amplifying or interpreting it otherwise. This is as it should be, for thus alone is it possible to effect a new advance of expansion in the cultural and religious horizon of mankind and it is thus that all great cultures and civilisations have emerged and developed.

The Universe

In Sikh thought, the final duality between the Matter and Spirit is denied. The basic Sikh thought is strictly monistic:

"From One the Many emanate, and finally into the One the Many submerge."

All that exists, whether in the form of phenomena and appearances, as Becoming, or as Numenon and Reality, as Being, is, in fact, the Spirit and the Mind. The individual mind, the numerous forms of life and the inanimate matter are all Spirit in different forms. Out of its own impulse and initiative of the Spirit a process of involutions occurred for some limited purpose, the precise nature of which is beyond human comprehension. All we can say is that such is its nature and such is pleasure. The fraction of the universe in its initial form, which the modern theorists, such as Abbe Lamatre call the Primaeval Atom, resulted from the involutory impulse of the Absolute Spirit, God. In this Primaeval Atom was originally concentrated, in a super-dense state, that which expanded and



disintegrated, through an antithetical evolutionary impulse, for thousands of millions of years of the human mind and finally into the universe as it is today. This eruptive, Missionary impulse, whereby the Primaeval Atom has issued into the innumerable forms constituting the universe, has reached its highest point, up-to-date, in the creation of man and man, therefore, is the point in creation from where the inverse movement of evolution may take a further leap towards the Spirit. These two processes of involution and evolution, *apasarpani* and *upasarpani* as the profound ancient Jaina thought speculated, constitute a double but simultaneous movement, and thus creation of the universe is an involution-cum-evolution process, a descent and an ascent. The universe, thus, is nothing but God-in-Becoming. "The Formless has become all the innumerable forms, Himself. He, that is beyond the attributes, inheres. Nanak declares the doctrine of the One Absolute Being, that is Becoming, for the One indeed is the Many."

The main doctrines of Sikh theology are grounded in this view of the Ultimate Reality and its nature.

Genesis

With regard to the coming into being of the Primaeval Atom, the Sikh doctrine is that the process was instantaneous, caused by the Will of God. "The forms become in consequence of the Divine Will. Comprehension fails at this stage of understanding of the Divine Will."

After thus stating this beginning of the becoming, the further statements made in the Sikh scripture about the creation and evolution of the universe, are remarkably akin to the picture which has now been adumbrated by scientific speculation after considering the data revealed by the recent advances in Observational Astronomy and probes into the heart of Matter.

One of the basic hymns in the Sikh scripture, which may be called the Hymn of the Genesis, reveals:

"For millions upon millions, countless years was spread darkness,

When existed neither earth nor heaven,

But only the limitless Divine Ordinance.

Then existed neither day or night, nor sun or moon;

The Creator into unbroken trance was absorbed.

Existed then neither forms of creation, nor of speech;

Neither wind nor water,

Neither was creation, or disappearance or transmigration.

Then were not continents, nether regions, the seven seas,

Nor rivers with water flowing.

Existed then neither heaven or the mortal world

Or the nether world.

Neither hell or heaven or time that destroys."

.....

"As it pleased Him, the world He created;

Without a supporting power the expanse He sustained."

.....

"None His extent knows.

Of this from the Master, perfectly endowed comes realisation."

Man's basic predicament

Paul Tillich identifies man's basic predicament as existential estrangement from his essential being, estrangement which is expressed in anxiety about meaninglessness of life, gnawing awareness of alienation and incurable lack of wholeness, as his existential dilemma: "my bedstead of anxiety, strung with strings of pain and my cover quilt of alienation is my existential predicament. O, my God, take note of it and have mercy upon me."

Paul Tillich, the modern Western man, was not aware that, in the Sikh scripture, not only has the

human predicament been noted, but the way to its cure has also been pointed out: "Let man take refuge in God and proceed to cure his incurable sickness through identifying himself with God's purposes: How else can man secure abiding peace and wholeness except through refuge in and communion with God?"

Man being the highest-yet point in the process of creation, where the evolutionary impulse has apparently near-exhausted its initial momentum, it is man on whom now the responsibility rests for consciously revitalising this impulse for a further evolutionary leap.

"Thou art the very essence of God. Therefore, know thyself as such."

"You have received this gift of the human body and it is from here that the further upward movement towards God realisation starts. Therefore, now make an all-out effort to reach the Goal and do not waste human life in frivolities."

It is the involution-cum-evolution which is responsible for creation of the universe, and which after reaching the point of human consciousness, has reached a stasis, and the man is thus a voluntary diminution of the infinitude of God, for some obscure but limited purpose, as indeed, all forms of existence represent a diminution of God. Since God is truth, knowledge, bliss, light, harmony and immortality, the involuted forms of creation are so much less of all these. Man being the stage at which the evolution has emerged into self-consciousness, man is capable of knowing that he has reached a particular stage of the creative process, and he is capable, volitionally, of taking steps to evolve upwards to the next stage. This is the stage of the *brahmajani*, or the God-conscious man, and it is this notion of evolution, the premonition of which finds expression in the later 18th and early 19th century West European literature in the form of the concept of 'the Superman.'

"Lo, I preach to you the Superman; Superman is the meaning of the earth," said Nietzsche. Again, "Man is a rope stretched between the animal and the Superman..... what is great in man, is that he is a bridge, and not a goal."

Sikhism agrees with this except, that Sikhism declares that 'the meaning of the earth' reaches far beyond the stage of the Superman, and Superman is only an interim stage 'a bridge and not a goal.' Sikhism endorses Nietzsche that the sphere of the activity of the Superman, and of the higher-still goal of the evolution, is 'the earth', in the sense that it is on this earth that a perfect human Society of God-conscious men, a

psycho-social perfection, is the ultimate objective of the impulse of God, which has originally given rise to the process of creation. In contradistinction to all those and previous philosophies and religions, which taught that the ultimate goal of man was either absorption into God, or entry into a supermundane Kingdom of God, wherein there is abiding propinquity to God, Sikhism urges man to divinise the whole of humanity on this earth by transforming mind, life and matter, through a conscious effort and will, and with the aid of the spiritual technique of the Narnyoga, which is capable of taking along the whole psyche of man to a level of existence, undreamed of before, where pure knowledge, limitless harmony and divine bliss would prevail. This indeed would be *Society of human deities in the terrestrial spheres of the universe*. It is the teaching of the Sikh Gurus that the supreme duty of man is to make an all-out effort towards this divine goal, and the Sikh Gurus not only point out this goal, but also reveal the way towards it. "Hail, the Guru, a hundred thousand times, hail, for He reveals the secret of transforming mankind into deities and that, too, in an instant."

The Ultimate Reality

The Sikh concept of the Ultimate Reality is more akin to the Judaic notion of an Almighty Person than to the Aryan concept of an immanent neutral Principle. The basic formula of Sikh dogma is the opening line of the Sikh scripture which characterised the Ultimate Reality as follows:

"The One Becoming-Being. Truth. Numenon. Creator. Person. Without fear of another. Without animosity towards another. Beyond Time. Form, Unborn Self-expression. Light Contacted by human mind through (His) Grace."

Doctrine of Maya

The doctrine of *maya* has been basic to the Hindu and Buddhist speculations from the very beginning. The best known work, apart from the omniscient Mahabharata, in which the term, 'niaya' (relative truth) is employed as a philosophical concept, is the metrical treatise, *Karika*, by Guadpad, where-in, unlike the *Mahabharata* (*Bhagwadgita* XVIII. 6.1), the term is not taken for granted, but is explained and defined. Since this name, Gaudpad, was borne by the teacher of the famous philosopher of Hindu monism, Samkara, the author of the *Karika* may be the same person who might have lived at the end of the 7th century. This work, *Karika*, is usually printed with the *Mandukya-Upanisad*, and for practical purposes, is regarded a part of it. In language and thought, both,

it bears a remarkable resemblance to Buddhist writings of the *Madhyamik* School, and criticism of the Hindu orthodoxy that the monism of Samkara, in which the doctrine of *maya* is embedded is, in reality, crypto-Buddhism, not without substance. In the *Karika*, the world of appearances is compared to the apparent circle of fire produced by a whirling lighted torch. This striking image first occurs in the *Maitrayana Upanisad* (VI. 24). It also occurs in the Buddhist Mahayan scripture, the *Lankavtarsutra*, which purports to be an account of the revelation of the true Religion of Gautama, the Buddha, when he visited Ceylon and there gave discourses to the King of the island, Ravana, and his wife, Mahamati. This represents a well matured phase of speculation in Buddhism, as it criticises the Hindu schools of philosophy of the Samkhya, Pasupat, as well as other schools. It includes a prophecy about the birth of Nagarjuna, the great Buddhist savant of the 4th century A.D., and it mentions the advent of Guptas which marks the renaissance of Hinduism in India. It also alludes to the fresh incursions of the Hunas into northern India, which incursions destroyed the Imperial Gupta dynasty at end of the 5th century A.D. Throughout the Hindu speculative and religious literature ever since, this doctrine of *maya* is admitted as in some way an independent principle of the process and ontological structure of creation. True, the subtle Samkara asserts that the principle of *maya* is *aniravacani*, that is, it can neither be said to exist nor not to exist. A is neither A, nor not A. Whatever else this statement may mean, it does concede that *maya* has a positive existence.

Sikhism denies the doctrine of *maya*, thus conceived. As ignorance and nescience have no positive existence, they merely being the aspects of the self-limited involuted Spirit, likewise, *maya*, as such, has no positive existence. It is merely a way of saying that the individual consciousness perceives the Reality only in the form of partial knowledge, which is there on account of involution. As the darkness is merely a negative aspect of the light of the sun, similar is the case with ignorance and nescience.

"What is there positive to which we can give the name of *maya*? What positive activity is the *maya* capable of?"

The human soul is subject to the pleasure and pain principle in its very nature, as long as it operates on the individuated plane of consciousness.

Again, "*Maya*, in the form of a snake, entwines to render human mind immiscible with the real, and the more it is accepted at its face value, the more it

misguides. Rare indeed is such a man who overcomes and casts it away." Further, "what is maya except a befooling magic trick? A dry blade of grass afire, a passing shadow of a summer cloud, a momentary flooding after a tropical rain, for him who is out of communion with God."

What do these dissertations on maya mean in the Sikh scripture?

Maya is the antithesis of *moksha* in Hindu thought. But maya is not the antithesis of the Absolute Reality. There is no incompatibility between the *brahma* and *maya*, for the former is not opposed to the Many. It is *advanda*, non-dual, that is, it has no opposite being outside all classification. To be precise, 'classification' is exactly maya. Maya noun of Sanskrit is derived from the root *matr*, 'to measure to form, to build, to lay out a plan', the same root from which Graeco-Latin words, 'metre' 'matrix', 'material' and 'matter' are obtained. The fundamental process of measurement is division. Thus, the Sanskrit root, *dva*, from which we get 'divide', is also the Latin root of 'dus', and the English, 'dual.' To say, then, that the world of 'facts' and events' is maya is to say that the words, 'facts' and events' are terms of measurement rather than the real itself, per se 'Measurement' is setting up bounds of all kinds, whether by descriptive classification or by screening. Thus, the 'facts' and events' are as abstract as lines of latitude or feet and inches, metres and centimetres. This is not to be confused with the "Idealism" or "Monism" of the Western philosophy, for all concrete things are not, in reality, illusion, unreal, or just, the One. They are not unreal and, illusory, because *maya* is not non-existence, it is a wrong mode of apprehension. It is not 'One', because 'One' is a thing, a mode of measurement and, therefore, itself *maya*. To join the 'many' into 'one' is as much *maya* as to separate the many from one.

The world, as we perceive it, is made up of surfaces and lines, of area of density and vacuity, but the 'maya' concept of the Sikh scripture says that these forms and appearances, these things and events have no "own-being", *svabhava*; they do not exist in their own right, but only in relation to one another, like "the spark of a dry blade of grass", or like "the fleeting shadow of a summer cloud." Concretisation and formalisation is maya, when the human mind attempts to comprehend and control that which impinges upon his consciousness. This is the unreal world of Buddhism, the world of 'name and form', *namarupa*. When the Sikh scripture says that "*maya* is a snake which entwines human consciousness, and whosoever takes it at its face value, him *maya*

misleads and confuses", it means that man confuses his measures with the world so measured, of identifying money with wealth, fixed convention with fluid reality. The Sikh doctrine of *maya* points out the impossibility of grasping the actual world in the verbal net of man's mind and the fluid character of those very constructions he thus artifacts. This world of maya escapes both the comprehension of the philosopher and the grasp of the pleasure-seeker, like water from a clutching fist, "like the fleeting shade of a summer cloud."

This interpretation of the concept of *maya* in Sikh terminology has far-reaching consequences in so far as it pulls the Hindu mind out of the slough of indolent introspective pre-occupation, and subjectivism, generated by the belief that the whole world of the appearances in which man is born to pursue his socio-political life, is no more real than a phantasmagoria in the minds of the gods above. By giving a foundation of solid reality to the world of appearance, this re-interpretation of the concept of *maya* conforms to a sense of reality, a feeling of urgency and an objectivity to the whole frame of mind of man, which is necessary for the all-out effort to speed up the evolutionary process through the human will, and thus is the core of the precepts of Sikhism, as a way of life.

Ethics

The fact that religious experience, per se, is non-moral, has been known to Hindu thought from the very beginning. In the West, it has been recognised clearly only in recent times. It was Dr Otto who in his *Idea of the Holy*, about a half century ago, made this point finally clear. In the Judaic religious tradition, for all practical purposes, religious life and ethical conduct appear to have been made identical. The Ten Commandments of Moses are ethical precepts. In the Koran, it is these ethical commands which are presented as the essence of religion. Western scholars are sometimes shocked at the stories narrated in the ancient Hindu texts, of the conduct of gods that does not conform with strict ethical standards, and about which the narrator of the story expresses no moral horror and passes no censorial judgement. From this, the Western reader erroneously concludes that ethics has no place in the Hindu religious practice and tradition. This is far from the truth. From the very beginning, it has been recognised that ethical conduct is the very foundation on which the life of a religious man must be based. The rules of conduct of the Buddhist *sharamans*, the formulary of conduct of Jain *bhikshus*, the daily rules regulating a

Brahmin's life, bear ample testimony to the fact that the relation of ethics to religious experience is well recognised and established, though a man with secular sovereign status is exempted from moral censure.

This moral exemption, however, is more judicial rule rather than a moral precept. The case of non-human gods, though is obviously on a different law. In Sikhism, while it is recognised that the religious experience belongs to a category of values which has a unique status and ontological structure in its own right, it is, nevertheless, insisted that without strictly ethical purity of conduct there is no possibility of any advance in the religious experience. A religious life, not strictly grounded in ethical conduct, or a religious discipline which ignores the ethical requirements, is considered as a highly damaging error. "The seed of the teachings of the Guru cannot germinate except in the field of ethical conduct, constantly irrigated by the waters of truth." And, "A man of religion is every characterised by ethical deeds, honest living, sincerity of heart, and a fearless passion for truth." "Nanak maketh this emphatic declaration, let all men ponder over it. Ethical conduct is the only true foundation of human life on earth." Sikhism, thus, lays a stress on morality which raises the moral law to a higher and absolute status such as was not so in the Hindu and Buddhist thought.

The Buddhist and Brahminic systems appear to tacitly assume that morality is a means to felicity and that it is not obedience to a law which exists in its own right as demanding obedience, what Immanuel Kant called, the Categorical Imperative. It is true that by them moral conduct is regarded as governed by the cosmic law, called, the law of karma, which means that good deeds bring good results and evil deeds bring evil results. "The evil deeds I did in past lives have now become impediments and misfortunes for me." Sikhism, however, raises ethical conduct to a higher and more independent, absolute status, and makes it as the true expression of the harmony of human personality with the Will of God. All ethical conduct, therefore, is not merely conducive to good results such as happiness, but it is primarily an act of establishment of concord between the human personality and the Person of God. Since this concord is the highest end and the goal of human existence and endeavour, it is, therefore, the basic ingredient of the highest activity of man which is religion. Thus, Sikhism while recognising that the order of Reality which is revealed as numenon to the human experience doesn't fall under the category of ethical experience, it unequivocally emphasises that the two

cannot be divorced or separated, and that the nature of the numenon is such that its realisation is impossible without ethical conduct. The ethical category and the numenal category are distinct, but are structurally and inseparably joined.

In this way, the Sikh thought fuses the Hindu thought and the Semitic tradition on the subject of ethics and religion.

Free Will

European philosophy and theology have been much exercised on the subject of the 'free will', while the Hindu tradition has considered this subject as of minor importance. The explanation for this lies in the analytical understanding of the concept by both the tradition. In European thought, an individual is conceived of as a permanent fixed entity, basically separate from the rest of the world which is his universe. It is argued that without freedom of will there is no moral responsibility, there can neither be guilt nor punishment, either in society or hereafter, before the throne of God. This problem has not much troubled the Hindu thought which considers that there is no such thing as a completely free and stable entity, called 'the individual' and secondly, the Hindu argues, that if the human will is not free then what does the term, "freedom", mean? What instance shall we bring forth with which to contrast the supposed determination of human will?

Our notion of "freedom" is inalienably derived from our own experience to which we give the name of "will." Whatever, therefore, we may mean by "freedom", it is ultimately in the terms of our own 'will', that we give meaning to it. Thus interpreted, to say that human will is free, is an axiom, as well as a tautology. There is no meaning in the thesis that human will is not free, for "free" is that which is like unto the human will. The trouble, however, arises when we give to the expression "free will", a meaning which we have not derived from our experience of our 'will', but which have been superimposed by our intellect. Thus, we like to think that "free will" is that power of volition of the human individual which is totally uncaused and unconditioned. The concept of 'self-caused inevitability' and 'freely chosen determinism' would appear as puzzling, if not altogether nonsensical to the Western mind. A little reflection, however, will show that such a "freedom" does not, and cannot, in fact, exist, and further, that, if it did and could exist, it will destroy all foundations of 'moral responsibility', 'sense of guilt', and justification for 'punishment' either here or hereafter.

To begin with, there are the facts of heredity, the environment, and the subconscious mind. There is not much doubt that an individual is the product of his heredity the inner mechanism of which the science of biology has discovered recently in the fertilised germ-cells and its genes, which make all the organic cells that make up the body including the brain and the nervous system. This pattern we inherit from our parents and our ancestors and it is certainly a determination of the choices that we make in our lives from time to time. Psychology has revealed to us that subconscious layers of human mind as the seat of instincts, emotions, and intuitions, for those who faithfully follow the dogma of the Church Council of Constantinople (553 D.D.) which anathematised the doctrine of metempsychosis as fundamental, accumulated in the course of untold numbers of previous births and rebirths of the individual. They are certainly a determinant throughout a man's life in the matter of his choice and the conduct that follows it. Again, from outside, the social environment is active in continuously influencing and moulding the individual's mind, and thereby his power of choice and conduct. These three factors, the physical, the environmental and the hereditary, are there as fact, and their powers of influencing the human power of choice cannot be denied. In this sense, there cannot be 'free will', as an uncaused and unconditioned factor which solely determines as to what choice, in a given situation, an individual will make. But, even if there were such a "free" will, it will entail disastrous consequences. If a man's actions are not free, when they can be shown to be casually chained to his character, the sum total of his heredity, past experiences and environment, then the only circumstances in which it would be proper to call a man "free", would be those in which he acted independently of his received character, that is, of his habits, desires, urges, and perspective on life and all the rest. But, if this agent of 'free' action, is not to be equated and identified with that which is subject to particular desires and urges, which is circumscribed by given environmental and circumstantial set-up, which is devoid of character, motives, persistent interests and the like, then who is this agent of 'free' choice, the 'he'?

Such a notion of 'free' will completely dissolve the agent of action; a person with such a 'free' will is a completely disembodied and unidentifiable entity. Such an entity can neither be blamed nor praised. Indeed, such an entity would be truly like the "Superman" of Nietzsche, "beyond good and evil." Nor can such an entity be held responsible for what it does, for it

would be clearly unreasonable to hold an individual responsible for his actions, of we did not think there was a cause and effect connection between his character and his conduct. When we can show that there is no such connection, as, for instance, an act is committed as a result of coercion, we do not normally hold him responsible. The reason is not that the one act is 'uncaused' and 'free', while the other is 'determined'. In one case, the cause lies in the character of the individual over which he has, in some sense, control while in the other case, he has no such control. As we gain new knowledge about the kinds of causes that effect conduct, we change our mind about the kinds of behaviour for which we should hold men responsible.

The recent shifts of stress in the science of Penology in the modern world, and the ancient wisdom of the East and West, which iterated that an individual is ultimately responsible for nothing, must be appreciated in the context of this analysis, and not in the superfine frame of reference of 'determinism' and 'free will.' "A man reaps only what he sows in the field of karma," declares the Sikh scripture. It simultaneously says that, "Say, what precisely is it that an individual can do out of his free choice? He acteth as God Willeth." And the Bhagavadgita asserts that, "God sits in the heart of every creature with the consequence that all revolve in their set courses, helplessly tied to the wheel of *maya*". That man is free to choose and act to some extent, and to the extent that he is so, to that extent alone he is morally responsible and subject to praise and blame, is a true statement. That there is no such entity, and no such entity is conceivable, which is wholly 'uncaused' and 'undetermined' and further that in the ultimate analysis, the whole area of individuality can be linked to a cause of causes which are supra-individual, is also a true statement and these two true statements are not self-contradictory nor incompatible with each other, constitutes the Sikh doctrine on the subject.

This brings us back to our immediate experience that seems to carry its own certitude with it, that, in some sense, we are 'free', for we have the notion of 'freedom' as the core of this experience. Sikhism, while implicitly taking note of the three factors which determine the powers of human choice, lays stress on this fourth factor, perpetually present and operative in the human mind, which possesses the autonomous power of choice. This autonomous power is divinity in man, according to Sikhism and it is this core around which the whole human personality is built. It is, at heart, "the source of all human misery, as well as the panacea of all his ills." "How many men demolish the wall of nescience

that separates him from God? By being in tune with the Will of God. And how shall we know the Will of God? Nanak answers: "It is embedded in the very core of human personality." It is this autonomous power of free choice which is given to every human personality, and by virtue of which the effects of the other three determining factors of human choice are interfused and thus, the act of free human choice gives birth to a new event, which is not wholly determined and which is not a mere combination and aggregational consequence of all these four factors, but which is a new event, unique in nature, and potently capable of giving rise to other similar events in the future. It is this power of free choice that is included in man's original heritage which has the capacity to go beyond this heritage, and thus, within the limits given, a human being is free to shape his own destiny. Nor are the other three factors, his received character, the environment and the subconscious mind, merely accidental and fortuitously superimposed upon the individual, for they too are the fruits of his past karma of uncounted previous births and thus, they are self-determined, self-caused, result of free choices earlier made. When and why and how did an individual make the first free but wrong choice? This question relates to the First Things and, therefore, ex hypothesis, the individual comprehension fails at this point: "the son observeth and knoweth not the birth of his father."

Doctrine of Karma

The doctrine of karma is not the same as the doctrine of pre-destination of the Christian theology. Karma is, in a sense, fate, self-caused inevitability, not pre-destination, for within the limits given (and these limits constitute the karma inherited from the previous births), a man is free. This karma is not 'fate', because all the time we are making our own karma and determining, the character of our further status and births. The doctrine of karma as understood in higher Hinduism, and as expounded in Sikhism, merely teaches that our present limitations are traceable to our acts of autonomous choice in our past lives and as such, our karma is a source of rewards and punishments which we must enjoy and endure, but this idea differs from the idea of 'fate', as commonly understood in European thought, in as much as it is not inexorable, for all the time we are making our own karma within a context, the core of which is always free and autonomous.

Existence of Evil

The existence of evil, it might be said, is the main reason for the keen interest in religion and, therefore, the explanation of evil is the chief problem of theologies

and religious philosophies. Whether it was God who created evil and whether evil is due to misuse of the gifts of free will, are problems which constantly occur and recur in almost all religions of the world. But the presence of evil, as a de-tranquilliser and disturber of the composure of the human mind, cannot be ignored or argued away, so much as that perceptive minds regard it as the preponderant characteristic of the existential human situation.

The main trend of Hindu thought on his problem is that since the world itself is unreal, the existence of evil in it is not of greater concern to the individual than the world itself. He asserts that the proper course for the human soul is to seek *mukti*, liberation or unison with God by renouncing and discarding this vain show of appearances, called the world. The Hindu, thus, is not very much concerned to prove that evil does not really exist in the world, or to explain why God allows it to exist. Since the world itself is no more than a phantom and an insubstantial dream, the evil itself cannot be of a more enduring substance and, at any rate, it is of no direct concern to the man of religion.

Sikhism cannot and does not adopt this view, because Sikhism does not accept the ultimate dichotomy of matter and spirit and does not accept as an independent entity, the principle of illusion, *maya*. Since Sikhism postulates that religious activity must be practiced in the socio-political context of the world, the problem of evil is very much a real problem to Sikhism as it is to the European thinker. Sikhism, therefore, returns almost the same answer to the problem of evil which the European pantheist gives, namely, that since God is all things and in all things, evil is only something which is a partial view of the whole, something which appears as such, when not seen from the due perspective. Sikhism asserts that there is no such thing as the independent principle of evil, as some theologies postulate, although there are things in this world which are evil. This antithesis of evil and good, according to Sikhism, is a necessary characteristic of the involution syndrome involved in the process of creation of the world. Evil and good appear at one stage of this involution-cum-evolution and they disappear when the process of evolution culminates into the united experience of God, just as the white ray of light splits into its variegated spectrum while passing through a prism, and again gathers these multi-chromatic hues into its all-absorbing whiteness when it becomes itself again. In the final stage of things, "all evil transmutes itself into good, and all defeat into victory." When a complete perspective is granted to man by the Grace of

God, all evil melts into its source which is All-Good." There is no independent principle of evil in the universe because God is All-Good and, "nothing that proceeds from All-Good can be really evil, and there is naught, which proceeds from any other source but God."

But this Sikh metaphysical speculation on the ontological status of evil, does not supply a clear cut answer to the problem of evil as man encounters it in his everyday experience and life.

Ours is a time of upheaval-political, social, religious, and moral; our most urgent problem is to forestall the catastrophe the menaces us, catastrophe of total destruction, and unprecedented unrest and violence. The causes of the present troubles and future dangers can all be traced back to the lack of any root-principles, generally agreed in philosophy, religion and politics. Everywhere, old class structures of society have been undermined by the advent of democracy. European hegemony and overlordship in Asia and Africa have yielded place to independence or partnership. In religion, the simple faith in the ancient theologies and in their sacred writings as the explanation of the universe and as the foundation and sanction of morals, has been shaken by the impact of modern science. Civilisation has been disadjusted, and confusion prevails. General consensus is that the present age is mostly concerned not with the world of ideas, but with the world of things, material things that we make and use, sell and buy. Though physical sciences, technology and economics are of immense value to mankind, it is not anywhere in that world that we may hope to find the solution to our problems, and that solution, whatever it might be, lies in the world of ideas. Men's actions are determined by their ideas and not vice versa, as fanatical Marxists fondly hope and obstreperously assert. Right ideas are those that lead to good actions, and good actions are those that are known to lead to welfare. Wrong ideas are those that lead to opposite results, suffering and disaster. Welfare means everything worthwhile, material, intellectual, moral and spiritual welfare.

To discover the constituents of welfare and to find ways to attain it, constitute a continuous enquiry, discussion, study, meditation and argument. Thus, the ancient problem of evil is reopened, and the explanation of its that monotheistic theologies give, namely, to argue it away at the transcendental level, appears unsatisfying: the two world wars of our times, for instance. If God is omnipotent and benevolent, why are there wars? The answer that the ontological status of evil is negative and non-existent, or the answer

implicated in the *Book of Job*, constitute an impressive argument and a magnificent poem, respectively, but in the face of the concrete evil, the latter appears a sterile philosophy and the former an evasion, but no straight answer. In the case of a dualistic theology that concedes two real and positive opposing powers good and evil, it would appear that if God has created a maleficent power, the power of evil, or negation and denial, then God is not All-Benevolent, but if this power is co-equal and co-existent then God is not All-powerful. The problem of evil may be a mere abstraction, but there are problems of evil everyday in tangible and concrete situations and they raise not merely the philosophical questions about the status and origin of evil, but also what is the moral imperative for man, in dealing with evil situations in day-to-day life.

Sikhism takes direct and full cognisance of this aspect of the problem. While it denies evil an ultimate status in the structure of Reality, it squarely faces the concrete existence of evil in the day-to-day life of man, as well as the agents of evil in human affairs.

"The cannibals say ritual prayers of Islam, and the assassins strut about as practising Hindus..... All concern for human decencies and respect for ethical conduct has disappeared and the evil rules supreme."

Sikhism calls upon all men of moral perception and spiritual awakening to oppose the agents of evil, the evil-doers and their aides singly, through appropriate Organisation, to opposite relentlessly, till the end, till this evil is destroyed or contained. The Light of God, that shone through the Sikh Prophets to guide mankind is unambiguous and uncompromising on this point:

"O, God of Benedictions, this blessing above all, we do ask of You: the will and tenacity to tread the path of good promoting actions and fearlessness in opposition to the agent of evil. ...the Light of Sikhism is for the supreme purpose of urging men to destroy and extirpate evil-doers."

But since, according to Sikh metaphysics, the evil is just a passing phase, a phenomenal occurrence, neither there in the beginning nor there at the end and, therefore, having no substance or real existence, why should any man of understanding bother to oppose it or to destroy or contain it ?

Sikhism answers this question: The ancient Hindu insight into the scientific laws governing character formation tells us that, "what a man does, what he attitudineses, that he becomes." To tolerate evil, to co-exist with it and not to confront it, is to accept and compromise with it. Such acceptance and compromise are anti-

virtuous passivity and negative life style and the destiny of ethical and spiritual negation is hell. A negative personality is a naked personality. In the absence of a proper covering of virtue and merit, there is no more frightful fate that can overtake man: "On its predestined march towards hell, a naked soul looks truly frightful."

Jacob Boehme in his *Signatura Rerum*, tells us, "What is evil to one thing that is good to another. Hell is evil to the angels, for they are not created thereunto, but it is good to the hellish creatures. So also heaven is evil to the hellish creatures, for it is their poison and death."

Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) wrote in his *Heaven and Hell*: "No punishment is from the Lord, but from Evil itself; because Evil is so joined with its own punishment that they cannot be separated."

By co-existence and non-confrontation with evil things, man is utterly degraded from his essential humanity, and becomes a hellish creature and thus, his punishment is great.

"Fall and rise, rawness and ripeness an ripeness known and seen hereafter in the next world."

Numenon and Samsar, or The Reality and Appearance. Samsar is the principle of change, which determines the world of phenomena and in Hindu thought and in some other systems of metaphysics, it has been argued that on this account it is unreal. It is presumed as axiomatic that the real must not be infected with change. The basic formula of Sikh dogma, with which the Sikh scripture opens, is preceded by the exegetic statement that "all change, all evolution, all that is characterised by the time-process, is ultimately real."

The Numenon, the order of Reality, which is revealed to the human mind through gnosis, therefore, is not something which is fundamentally different and away from the phenomenon, altered in the gnosis is not that what really is, but it is the mode of perception and the quality of prehension of the individual, which is transformed, thus revealing the vision of the numenon. It is this very mundane and the material world and the phenomena which is fresh and differently apprehended and recognised by the human consciousness, a consciousness that is enlarged and uplifted. Sikhism, therefore, is in agreement with the aphorism of the great Buddhist philosopher, Budhagosa who declared, that, "*yas-samsaras tan-nirovanam*", that is, "the flux and the Absolute are the same."

Kapur Singh

Sirdar Kapur Singh, (2 March 1909–14 August 1986) is regarded as one of the greatest scholars of Sikhism. He was an intellectual of high calibre and a restless, introspective and thinking personality; a philosopher and logician, with specialisation in comparative, abstruse and exegetical study of Aryan and Semitic religions. He was a linguist known for his equal command over many modern as well as classical Asian and European languages.



Sirdar Kapur Singh who joined the elite Indian Civil Service, was also an administrator with quick grasp and a tight control. Later, as a Member of Parliament, he was known for his intelligent parry and sharp thrusts, a most eminent protagonist for an honourable political status for Sikhs within the Indian Union. He was an individualist, both feared and respected by friend and foe alike, Sirdar Kapur Singh was verily an exciting and multi-dimensional personality.

Born in a middle class peasant family of rural Lyallpur district, now in Pakistan, S.Kapur Singh topped the list of successful candidates in the subject of Philosophy of the Master of Arts degree examination of the Punjab University in 1931.

*In 1934, he earned a Tripos from Cambridge University in England, and also passed the Indian Civil Service Examination. While serving with the Indian Civil Service, he had the audacity to interact with M.K. Gandhi, and developed close relations with the Sikh Leader Master Tara Singh. In 1941, under orders of the Government of India, whose employee he then was, all copies of his book *The Hour Of The Sword*, based on the *Panth Prakash*, of Rattan Singh Bhangoo, were ordered to be confiscated.*

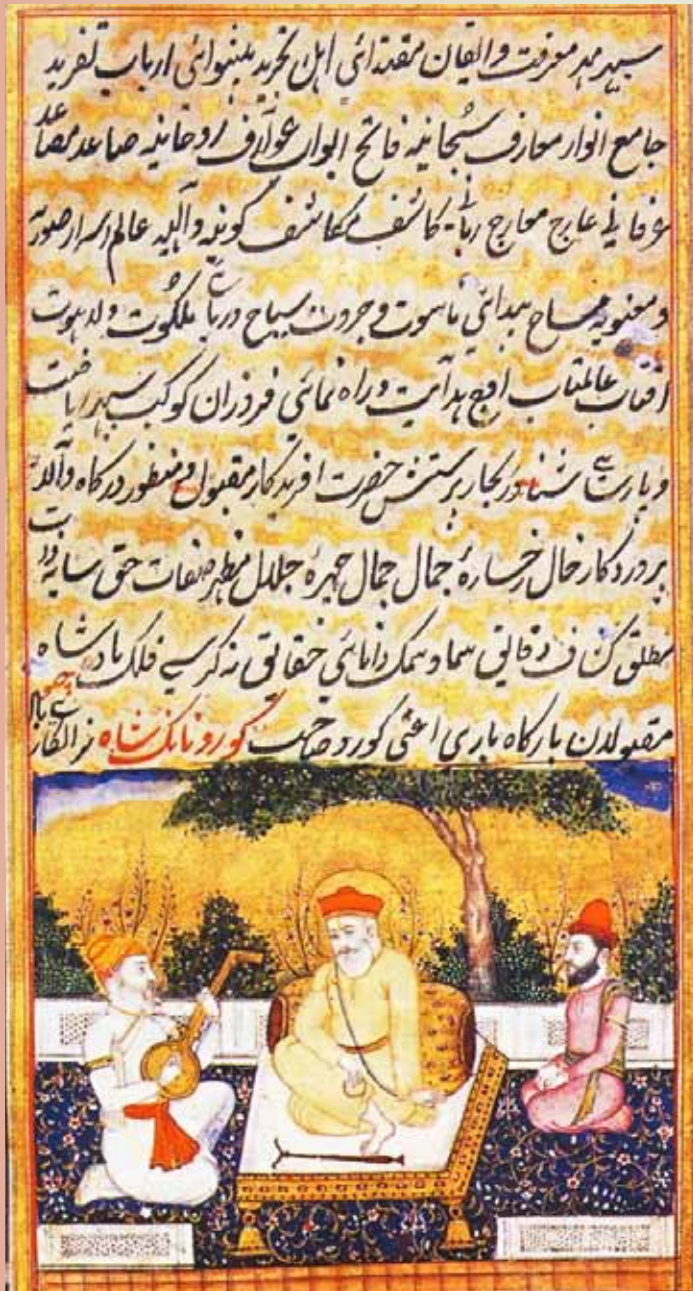
*His *Parasharprasna*, a thesis in English on the status and significance of Sikhism, is considered to be the hall-mark of Sikh scholarship. He wrote some wonderful romantic-philosophical-satirical poems in Punjabi, and a book titled *Hasheesh with Punjabi poems*, was published in 1986 for private circulation. He was the first person to translate into Punjabi the Buddhist Classic *Dhhammapada*. He was a prose stylist of distinction and published more than 200 papers in English and Punjabi.*

He lectured in various universities, and before highly intellectual audiences, and toured all over the world. He lived at Chandigarh in the Punjab, during his last years.

This first appeared in Nishaan III/2001.

Images of a Heritage

Authored by Tejinder Singh, an alumnus of the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur, and a senior officer of the Indian Administrative Service, this brilliantly illustrated large format book is a fascinating collection of visual images of the Sikhs and their realms from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century.



Illustrations in the Persian manuscript *Gulgashat-i-Punjab*, Clockwise from left: Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Dass



Compiled for the first time as the “best of such collections remaining in India” this is a poignant reminder of the fact that the other “best” collections are now virtually permanently abroad, in Britain, the United States and Canada in the main.

This is the first in a series of two books dedicated to the legendary Dr. M.S. Randhawa, “for his earnestness in acquiring miniature paintings of Punjab and the hill states for Indian museums. Many works had already left the country during British times and after independence the exodus would have quickened, except for these efforts of his. A large number of the paintings illustrated in this book are part of the collection acquired by him for government galleries”.

Of special significance for Sikhs are the paintings of the ten Gurus which are the focus of this review of Tejinder’s brilliant book.

The two broad themes of Sikh painting were religious and court portraiture. Stylised paintings of the Sikh Gurus were being painted in Guler and other hill areas even before the advent of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Also popular were *janamsakhi* series based on the life of Guru Nanak. A typical *janamsakhi* would consist of a number of folios with paintings of Guru Nanak along with the narrative. The paintings would be of notable episodes in his life and some were indeed well rendered. Even though the art of miniature painting in Punjab was soon to wane, some brilliant works were done. The paintings done at Maharaja Ranjit Singh’s court at Lahore and the paintings of the Sikh Gurus done at the Patiala court, around the middle of the nineteenth century, were as marvelous as the best of other miniature paintings.

The Sikh religion is unique to have teachings and examples on extremes of human conduct, that of piety and forbearance preached by Guru Nanak and the call to arms of Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikh Gurus in between, also occupy special positions for their contributions to the Sikh religion, their acts of resistance and martyrdom in the face of oppression from the Mughals and the process of moulding the Sikh identity. Initially when Guru Nanak founded the religion, the identity of Sikhs was not too conspicuous as Sikhism welcomes people of all religions, castes and classes. Only over the years, under the later Gurus, Sikh identity crystallised, culminating with the forming of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh in April 1699. In the painted images, therefore, the largest number are those of the founder Guru Nanak and of Guru Gobind Singh. Individual portraits of other Gurus are also there, as well as those on specific themes like the compilation of the Guru Granth Sahib, the establishment of the Golden Temple, depiction of sacrifices and acts of martyrdom by the Gurus.

Guru Nanak is invariably shown with his companions Bala and Mardana in lively scenes from the *janamsakhi* series, and sometimes even with Guru Gobind Singh, apart from other paintings depicting all the ten Gurus together. The paintings of the Sikh Gurus were never contemporary to their lives and were on the basis of historical facts and legends. Guru Gobind Singh was the ideal of the Sikh painters and has been lovingly depicted in the various series. He was a warrior saint and his entire family was martyred, including his four sons. He was also a man of letters and among other treaties wrote the *Dasam Granth*. These qualities and his turbulent life and struggle made him the most important icon for the painters. In the paintings, Guru Gobind Singh is always shown as a gentle warrior, baptising the Sikhs or with his 'beloved five', the *panj pyare*. His courage as well as literary skills come out very clearly in his famous *Zafarnama* to the evil emperor Aurangzeb which includes:

"Did I not know that thou, O faithless man, wert a worshipper of wealth and perjurer? Thou keepest no faith and observest no religion. Thou knowest not God, and believed not in Muhammad. He who hath regard for his religion never sweroveth from his promise. Thou hast no idea of what an oath on the Quran is, and canst have belief in Divine Providence. Wert thou to take a hundred oaths on the Quran, I would not even then trust thee in the slightest. Hadst thou any intention of keeping thine oath, thou wouldst have girded up thy loins and come to me.

When thou didst swear by Muhammad and called the word of God to witness, it was incumbent on thee to observe that oath. Were the Prophet himself present here, I would make it my special object to inform him of thy treachery. Do what is incumbent on thee, and adhere to thy written promise. Thou shouldst have cheerfully fulfilled it, and also the verbal promises of thine envoy. Everybody ought to be a man of his word, and not utter one thing while he meditateth another. Thou didst promise to abide by the words of thy qazi.

If thou hast spoken truly, then come to me. If thou desire to seal thy promise on the Quran, I will gladly send it to thee for the purpose. If thou come to the village of Kangar, we shall have an interview. Thou shalt not run the slightest danger on the way, for the whole tribe of Bairars are under me. Come to me that we may speak to each other, and that I may utter kind words to thee".

***The Sikhs: Images of a Heritage**
 Text and photographs by T.S. Randhawa
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Clock wise from top left (opposite page): Guru Arjan, Guru Har Gobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master.

SARKAR-e- KHALSA

The Power of Synthesis



*Text of speech by Fakir Syed Aijazuddin, OBE, at the Annual Dinner 2001
by the Maharaja Duleep Singh Centenary Trust, marking the bicentenary of Sarkar-E-Khalsa,
at Raphael Cartoon Court, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1 September 2001.*

First of all let me express my appreciation to the Trustees of the *Maharaja Duleep Singh Centenary Trust* for inviting me to be your keynote speaker tonight. The occasion as you know is commemoration of the bicentenary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's formal acknowledgment in 1801 as the master of Lahore. That event might have gone unnoticed, had it not been for the imaginative and tireless efforts of the Sikh community, both in India and here in the United Kingdom. I was honoured to be a speaker at a similar Bicentennial function in New Delhi earlier this year that was presided over by the Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. And I am equally honoured to be here in London tonight.

That trip to New Delhi demonstrated two truths for me; the first, that it was still possible for Indians

and Pakistanis to talk in a common language on the same subject without disagreeing. The second, that it is still natural for an admixture of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims, of Britons, Indians and Pakistanis, to sit together, to eat together as we are doing tonight, without any communal overtones. Occasions like these remind us that not only is it natural but it is vitally necessary for us to continue the effort to coexist in peace, and in a spirit of mutual accommodation.

The Raphael Cartoon Court as the locale for tonight's Annual dinner is an inspired choice and "an inspiring one, for the genius of Raphael," an art-historian once wrote, "was a unique power of synthesis that enabled him to merge the qualities of Leonardo and Michelangelo, creating an art, which is at once lyric and dramatic, pictorially rich and sculpturally solid."

Raphael may have been inspired originally by the two great masters of the Italian Renaissance, Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo, but he emerged in time with a masterful identity of his own. If you look about you, you will notice that Raphael's cartoons reflect brilliantly that very 'power of synthesis'. A fertile synthesis between artistic colour and sculptural form, between the warp of painting and the weft of tapestry. A miraculous synthesis between the man Jesus and Christ the Saviour. And the divine synthesis between the God that is in Man and the God that is in God.

If I extend that analogy to Sikhism as a faith, I can recognise that as the newest religion in the subcontinent, it too illustrates 'the power of synthesis'. It drew its inspiration from two senior predecessors - the two major religions in the subcontinent, Hinduism and Islam. It synthesised what was good in their teachings and has emerged over the past five hundred years with a unique, forceful identity of its own.

If it has succeeded, it is because Sikhism concerns itself with God, and emphasises that part of God that is apparent in Man. Had Sikhism been only about rituals and symbols or conventions, it would have exhausted itself at the death of its founder Guru Nanak, just as had Christianity been only about miracles, it would have been entombed with the corpse of Jesus of Nazareth, without the prospect of a resurrection.

Tonight, surrounded by Raphael's glorious cartoons, I would like to talk to you about another equally productive synthesis that took place two centuries ago, a confluence between governance and religion. The man responsible for that synthesis was Maharaja Ranjit Singh, whom we are celebrating tonight to honour as *Sarkar-e-Khalsa*, the king who ruled as a commoner.

My very presence here is the byproduct of that historic confluence, for how else could I explain why I, a Pakistani Muslim, an art-historian cum chartered accountant, should be speaking to you about a Sikh Maharaja, Ranjit Singh? During the next twenty minutes or so, I hope to provide you with some answers.

One natural qualification I suppose is that I come from Lahore, once the temporal capital of the Sikh kingdom. For many of you, Lahore evokes an image of a famous cannon, better known, thanks to Rudyard Kipling's novel, as 'Kim's gun'. It had been cast in 1757, and although formidable by the ballistic standards of the time, it was fired only twice. Today,

it stands silent, marooned on a traffic island, a 'vain monument of strength'.

Lahore is equally, if not more, famous for its historical monuments. Its horizon, on a clear day, is dominated by the *Badshahi Mosque*, the second largest in Asia, completed in 1765 for the emperor Aurangzeb. Nearby stands the white domed Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, built after his death in 1839. These monuments, forming two sides of a square known as the Hazuri Bagh, connect the evening of the Mughal Empire with the brilliant morning of Sikh power, the kingdom founded by Ranjit Singh.

At first glance, no one looking at the Sikh ruler would have suspected him of possessing an imperial potential. Like Napoleon Bonaparte, he was deceptively short in height. Those of his opponents who were careless enough to mistake a lack of height for a lack of a stature soon paid the price. I am reminded of a remark made about another diminutive leader, the late Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri. "Be careful," a politician who knew him warned. "He is as deep below the ground as he appears above it."

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's roots lay as deep beneath the ground as his arboreal personality spread wide above it. He was born in 1780, in an age when the cordite smell of revolution permeated the air. A year after his birth, a freedom-fighting American force supported by the French captured Yorktown and set into motion the American War of Independence. Before Ranjit Singh was twenty years old, in France Napoleon had overthrown the Directory. It was an age of transition. It was an age of ambition, and of opportunity. And Ranjit Singh had a surfeit of both.

With inimitable skill, as the head of the Sukerchakia misl, one of numerous confederacies jostling for supremacy in the Punjab, he gradually expanded his slender patrimony, until by 1801, he emerged as its acknowledged head. He executed a treaty with the neighbouring British in 1809 by which they acknowledged his sovereignty. And by the end of a reign lasting almost forty years, through a combination of conquest, coercion and conciliation, he had extended his hold over a vast area that spread from the Sutlej in the east, to Jammu and Kashmir in the north, eyeball to eyeball with the hostile Afghans in the mountainous west, and to the fertile Panjnad in the south.

By the time the British Governor General Lord Auckland visited him in December 1838, there was

no ambiguity; Auckland knew that he was not only negotiating with a counterpart, but he was talking to an equal. To mark his visit, Auckland presented Ranjit Singh with a painting of the young Queen Victoria, done by his sister Emily Eden and based on this official coronation portrait of her by Sir George Hayter.



During that visit, Ranjit Singh had deflected Emily Eden's attempts to sketch him. He knew that his attributes were not physical. Ungainly, pockmarked and one-eyed, he had more handicaps than an international polo player. But what Nature denied him

with one hand, Fate rewarded him liberally with the other. He may have been illiterate but he was shrewd, intelligent and prepared to learn from the best teacher in life-experience.

His success remains in many ways an enigma. It defies rational analysis. Like another unlettered leader closer to our own time – President Ronald Reagan – Ranjit Singh too learned his lessons in statecraft on the job. Dr Henry Kissinger, in his book *Diplomacy*, once asked a conference of historians at the Library of Congress, "how so un-intellectual a man (as Ronald Reagan) could have dominated California for eight years, and Washington for another eight, and how a president with the shallowest academic background was able to develop a foreign policy of extraordinary consistency and relevance."

Kissinger as you know never asked a question to which he did not already know the answer. He identified two key ingredients of leadership. 'a sense of direction and having the strength of one's convictions'.

A third ingredient to the success of such untutored leaders as Ronald Reagan and Ranjit Singh lay in their selection of the right man for the right job. It lay in their ability to choose subordinates whom they would allow to out-perform them, but never to outshine them. Maharaja Ranjit Singh compensated for his own deficiencies by surrounding himself with men of talent. He was in a sense a parallel to the Christ of Raphael's cartoons. He was a fisherman of men. Casting

his net among the various religious communities he had under his protection, Ranjit Singh drew from amongst them a trawl of supportive courtiers.

The most flamboyant amongst them were unquestionably the Dogra brothers. Raja Dhian Singh,

the ablest of them, functioned as his quasi-chief minister. He managed the complex politics of the kingdom with a dexterity that must have exercised all the six fingers on his hands. His insatiably ambitious brother Raja Gulab Singh later bought the territory of Kashmir with money that he had pilfered, so it was said, from the Sikh treasury in the Lahore Fort ! His furtive negotiations with the British behind the back of the Sikh durbar are a case study in real politik and real estate. He purchased the state of Kashmir for the price of a song. The echoes of that contentious refrain have hung over the sub-continent ever since, and were heard again most recently at Agra.

Certainly the most unassuming amongst Ranjit Singh's courtiers were the three Muslim brothers: Azizuddin, Imamuddin and Nuruddin. I am aware that talking about one's ancestors might be regarded almost as ill-mannered as talking about one's children. My only justification for doing so is that the lives and careers of these three Muslim courtiers supply perfect examples of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's radical attitude towards religion, and of the fine balance he needed to maintain between the various ethnic communities which jostled, often abrasively, at his court.

The eldest of these brothers - Azizuddin - began his career as an apothecary and very soon his myriad talents secured him a place close to the person of the Maharaja. Being fluent in Persian, the *lingua franca* of 19th century diplomacy, must have helped. He articulated the Maharaja's thoughts, translating his policies into diplomatic exchanges and negotiated skillfully on his behalf with visiting foreign delegations. He became, as he put it, the Maharaja's 'parrot of sweet sound'. For Azizuddin, an avowed Muslim, maintaining such a precarious position in a Sikh court could not have

been easy. He had to camouflage his prodigious talent beneath a self-effacing humility. Protective of the Maharaja's interests and in turn enjoying the Maharaja's protection until the very end, he was an unusual servant of the Crown, a Cardinal Wolsey who survived, a Wolsey who managed to serve his God as faithfully as he had also served his king.



A second brother Imamuddin became the keeper of the Sikh Treasury at Govindgarh, another position of trust, but it is the life of the third brother - Nuruddin, my lineal ancestor - that I would like to cite as another credential for my presence here tonight.

Between 1810, when his name first appears in historical records, and the moment of his death in 1852, there is no single event of significance in that turbulent period of Punjab's history that did not include Fakir Nuruddin, either as an active participant or as an informed witness. He served as the administrator of Lahore until the death of the Maharaja in 1839. During the bloodthirsty decade that ensued, and particularly during the minority of the young Maharaja Duleep Singh, he served with creditable integrity, becoming a member of the Regency Council for the juvenile Maharaja.

And when Duleep Singh's mother Rani Jindan was exiled from the Punjab, he was trusted enough both by the British and by her to accompany her caravan of elephants on the first stage of her exile. Incidentally, she was the only Rani of Maharaja Ranjit Singh to have been painted from life, and that too by a British artist George Richmond.

The association of our Fakir family and the Sikh community fortunately did not terminate with the end of the Sikh Raj. Nuruddin's son - Fakir Zahuruddin - served the young Duleep Singh as a tutor and accompanied him into exile at Fatehgarh. My father Fakir Waheeduddin wrote a popular biography called *The Real Ranjit Singh*, and I in my generation through my own books have tried to perpetuate that connection. Every year, on 10 March, on the anniversary of her death, I visit the grave of Princess Bamba Sutherland, the eldest daughter of Maharaja Duleep Singh. She died and was buried in the city where her grandfather Ranjit Singh had once ruled.

Princess Bamba returned to the Punjab, but she could not reverse her family's history. That is a device, though, available to us historians. Let me take you back in time, therefore, from her life as a displaced princess, through the middle age of her father as the disappointed ex-Maharaja Duleep Singh before his final departure from England, to his promising youth when he was still a favourite of Queen Victoria and a decorative member of her court, to his hope-filled childhood as an heir-apparent unaware of what the future held for him, and still further back to the glittering court of his father Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Sarkar-e-Khalsa.

This painting by August Schoefft once hung here in the *Victoria and Albert Museum*. While its gregarious

composition, crowded with over a hundred figures, reminds one initially of the work of the British artist William Frith, it has a kinship also with Raphael's famous painting *The School of Athens*. In that particular painting, Raphael had aggregated a veritable encyclopaedia of Greek philosophers. As one art analyst put it, on the same canvas, Raphael 'distinguished the relations among individuals and groups, and linked them in formal rhythms.'

Similarly, Schoefft distinguished the relations among his subjects, locating them in their political context. He put the ruling family of Ranjit Singh - the fulcrum of the Sikh state - in the main group, making them the epicentre of attention. He collected the European mercenaries like the Frenchman Jean Francois Allard and the Italian Avitabile and contrasted the international diversity of their origins. He contained, as Ranjit Singh had done, in one simmering group the Muslim feudatories like Sultan Mohammed Khan from Multan. And by subtle placement, Schoefft made each of his figures identify his own role in the politics of his time. Like Raphael through the benign figures of the Greek philosophers in his painting, Schoefft allowed each of his volatile personalities at the Sikh court to reveal 'the intention of his soul.'

Having portrayed the majesty of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's political governance, Schoefft in a separate painting caught also 'the intention' of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's soul. He depicted the Maharaja at Amritsar listening to a recital from the Holy Granth, using the Golden Temple in the background. For dramatic effect, he showed the Maharaja wearing the famous *Koh-i-Noor* diamond on his arm.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had already passed away when Schoefft visited Lahore in 1840 and made his sketches for this painting. He must have heard, as we have done from the court chronicle, that moments before Ranjit Singh died, he had signaled that he wanted to donate the priceless diamond to the Hindu temple of Jagganath at Puri. This final act of piety went unfulfilled. The coveted stone passed through the hands of his successors and ultimately into a less deserving treasury - the secular Armoury in the Tower of London, to become part of the British crown jewels.

Similarly, the golden throne that Maharaja Ranjit Singh had commissioned for himself but rarely sat upon, found its way after the collapse of his kingdom through the East India Company to the Victoria and

Albert Museum. Its very emptiness today suggests that after him, there has been no one small enough in height or large enough in stature to occupy it.

When I began this evening, I had spoken of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign as being a synthesis between religion and governance. Practised in its purest form, such a synthesis could be equated with secularism, and I know that there are many who would like to regard the Maharaja's reign as a model of secularism.

I believe that Ranjit Singh's open-minded, unifocal approach to all religions was less an official policy than a consequence of it. However desirable secularism may be as a virtue, it is nonetheless a virtue born of necessity. The natural instinct amongst men and therefore amongst manmade religions is to live within themselves, not with each other. It is ironical that the very challenge that confronted Maharaja Ranjit Singh a century and a half ago has manifested itself again for different reasons and in different locations all over our globe: how does one govern a multi-religious, pluralistic society?

That challenge is being addressed by all of us daily. It is being addressed in the domestic multi-religious diversity that is India. It is being addressed by the monotheistic majority that is Pakistan. And it is being addressed here in the United Kingdom by the mirror images of the very same religious communities that once populated the Punjab.

Your country, Great Britain, is gradually crowding with ethnic communities, the first immigrants of which were born beyond its seas. The descendants of those Punjabi-born Sikhs, Muslims and Hindus of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's time are now British-born citizens of this country. The challenge he faced of integrating them into a manageable, cohesive, egalitarian community within the perimeters of a state two hundred years ago has taken on a 21st century ethnic complexion.

Someone asked once how the Japanese as a people manage to remain so ultra-polite. The reply he received was that when you have so many people crowded on one island, you learn to be polite. Modern secularism though is more than a matter of politeness. It is a matter of being tolerant not when you have to be, but because you want to be. It is a matter of recognising and acknowledging a common God in every man. That is not an easy task for the

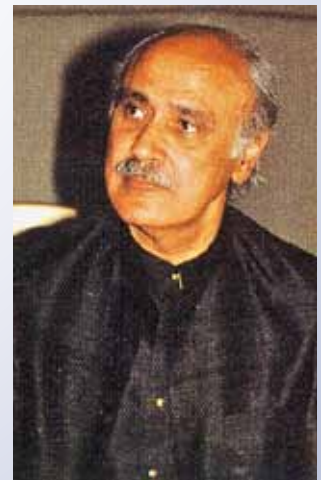
ordinary mind to comprehend. It takes an even greater mind to inspire fellow men to co-exist as social and spiritual equals.

In 1848, a document was published in Europe, far away from the turmoil then agitating the Punjab. That document, issued in an age of monarchies, spoke daringly of the equality of Man. That document was the *Communist Manifesto*, issued by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. Had it been published a decade earlier, while Maharaja Ranjit Singh was still alive, and had a Persian translation of it been available in the Punjab at the time, Ranjit Singh would undoubtedly have asked Fakir Azizuddin to read it out to him.

I believe he would have found nothing in it that he did not already know. For as the Sarkar-e-Khalsa, a leader among equals, Ranjit Singh was familiar with its message. During his life he had tried to enjoin the sort of equality they were now advocating. He had already tried to put into practice what Marx and Engels in their generation had only begun to preach.

Let me conclude this address by once again thanking the Trustees of the *Maharaja Duleep Singh Centenary Trust* for their generous invitation to speak to you tonight. It is not often that one has the opportunity to pay homage before such a distinguished gathering to the memory of one of the noblest sons of the sub-continent. And it is even rarer for someone to be asked to be what his ancestor was a bicentennial ago, to be the Khalsa-e-Sarkar's 'parrot of sweet sound.'

Fakir Syed Aijazuddin's lineal ancestor Fakir Nuruddin was administrator of Lahore till 1839 and later served as a member of the Regency Council for the young Maharaja Duleep Singh. Fakir Syed Aijazuddin, who did his chartered accountancy from England & Wales, later become head of the Lahore Museum and Principal of Aitchison College, also in Lahore.

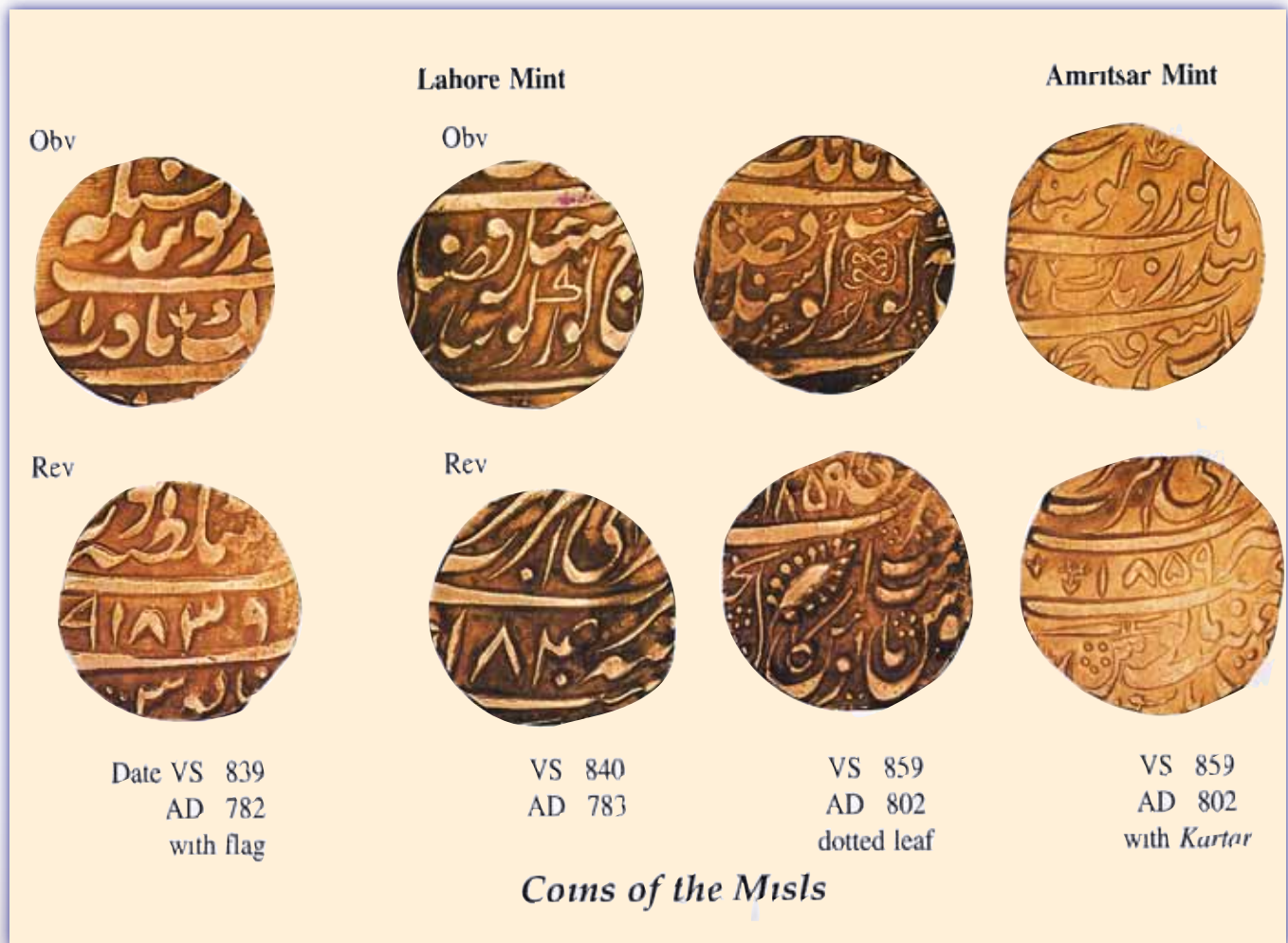


This first appeared in Nishaan IV/2001

Divine Coinage of the Sikhs

The bi-centennial of the coronation of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is an appropriate occasion to recall the coinage of the Sikhs. Their coins exhibit the theme of divinity and valour, which are hallmark of the nation. The Punjab's history has been chronicled extensively but a study of the unique and distinct coinage of the Sikhs has remained somewhat neglected.

The period of the coinage discussed in this article is from Baba Banda Bahadar (AD 1710) and includes the Misl, the Kingdom of Punjab under Maharaja Ranjit Singh and concludes with the annexation of Punjab in AD 1849. This covers a span of about 140 years.



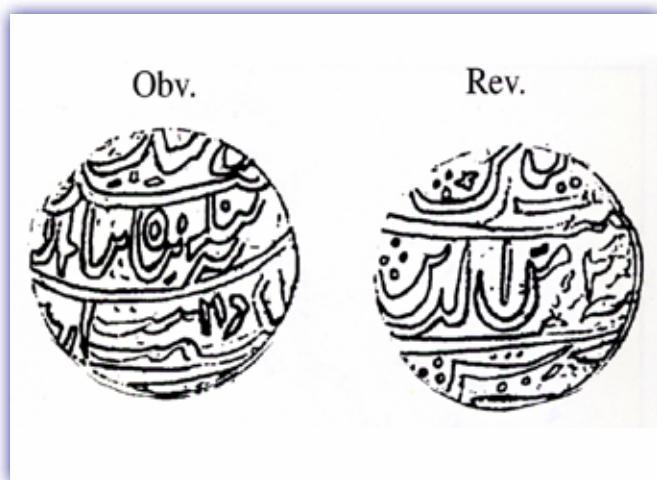
Baba Banda Bahadar was appointed leader of the Sikhs in AD 1708 by Guru Gobind Singh. As head of the Sikh army, he waged war against the Mughals to avenge the cruel death of the Guru's sons. The first Sikh coin was struck by Baba Banda Bahadar (Banda) after he had consolidated his seat at Lohgarh in AD 1710. This is a silver rupee, and the couplets thereon are dedicated to the glory of the Sikh Gurus. This dedication is, perhaps, unique as the coin does not bear the name or title of the ruler. In normal numismatic tradition, a new monarch would announce his ascension to the throne and order coins to be struck to commemorate and mark the event. Such coins generally had the name of the new ruler, his title and at times even his effigy. However, the Sikhs departed from

this accepted practice and struck coins in the name of their Gurus: Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs believed that victory (*Fateh*) and power are not achieved by mortals, but is a blessing bestowed by the *Sachcha Padshah* - the True King, the supreme authority.

The Banda coins have Persian couplets:

Obv: *Sikka Zad Bar Har Do Alam Fazl Sachcha
Sahib Ast Fath- I - Gur Gobind Singh
Shah-I-Shahan Tegh-I-Nanak Wahib Ast*

Translation and Transliteration: *Coin struck in the two worlds (spiritual and secular) by the grace of the true*



Lord. Nanak is the provider of the sword (power) by which Guru Gobind Singh, King of Kings is victorious.

Rev : *Zarb Khalsa Mubarak Bakht
Ba Aman Ud Dahr
Zinat At Takht
Mashwarat Shahr
Sanah - 2*

Translation and Transliteration: *Struck at the Refuge of the world, the Council City, the Ornament of the Throne, of the Blessed Fortune of the Khalsa. Year 2*

These coins have no Vikrama Samvat dates (Vikrama Samvat = VS. AD 1 = VS 57) but the regnal years 2 and 3. Banda Bahadar introduced his own calendar commencing from his victory at Sirhind, and the numerals 2 and 3 pertain to this calendar. There is no mint name, but from a reading of the honorific names assigned to cities at that time, Lohgarh seems to be the most probable location.

The question is as to why were the accepted numismatic practices dispensed with? Were these coins struck to serve as devotional aids, as is the intent behind the issue of temple tokens? There are no records to show that this was one of the reasons behind the issue of the coinage beginning with Banda Bahadar. However, it is apparent that these coins contributed to further propagating Sikhism and its message. They also served as a defiant symbol against the religious persecution, which the Mughals had carried out against the Sikhs to force them to convert to Islam. In fact, history records that before Banda was dismembered, he was offered the option of being spared the eventual horrific decapitation if he and his son and followers renounced their faith.

These coins could have had another function, which was to send an unambiguous and clear signal to the Mughal oppressors that the Sikhs, with the help and blessings of their Gurus, would never succumb nor be vanquished. It was as if a rallying battle cry was distributed in and through the coins, and they became the medium of the message at the time of the Sikh state's formation, then still in its infancy.

The official seal of Baba Banda Bahadar which he used for *Hukamnamas* and *Farmans*, or orders, was patterned after the seal of Guru Gobind Singh and repeated the couplet:

*Deg Teg O Fateh Nusrat Be-dirang
Yaft Az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*

Translation and Transliteration: *Abundance, the sword, victory and help without delay Guru Gobind Singh obtained from Nanak.*

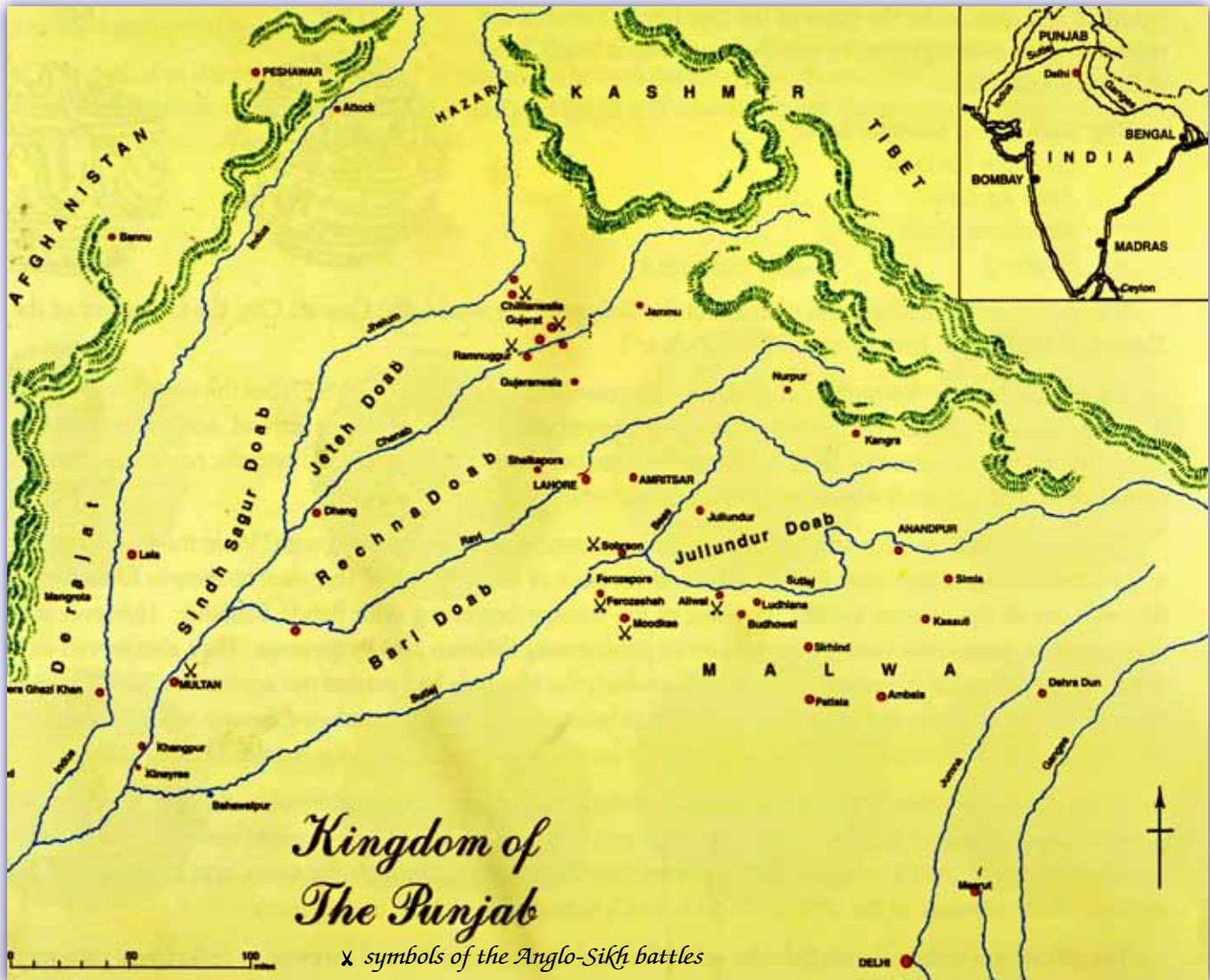
Banda Bahadar was executed by the Mughal emperor in AD 1716. Leaderless, the Sikhs were in for more difficult times but they again reorganised themselves into Misls or clans, each under its own chief. Not only did they carve out their own territories, often in rivalry with each other, but were also under double attack by the Afghans and the Mughals. As they emerged victorious and took over major cities, they minted their own coins.

The first Misl coin was struck at Lahore in VS 1822 (AD 1765). The couplet is from the seals of Guru Gobind Singh and Banda Bahadar and thus

these coins are known as 'Gobind Shahis' or money of (Guru) Gobind. The next coin was struck in VS 1829 (AD 1772) at the mint in Multan. A variety of Sikh coins were struck at the sacred city of Amritsar, the first in VS 1832 (AD 1775). The Amritsar coin is known as *Nanak Shahi*. Later, however, all Sikh coinage came to be known as *Nanak Shahis*. The translation of the reverse of tile Amritsar coins reads as 'struck at illustrious Amritsar in the Vikrama

Misl coins continued to be struck till the ascendancy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Ranjit Singh, head of the Sukerchakia Misl rose to power in AD 1799. He was proclaimed Maharaja in AD 1801. Maharaja Ranjit Singh ruled a vast Kingdom whose area stretched over thousands of square miles. His territorial ambitions continued to be of concern to the British. When he died in AD 1839, the Kingdom extended in the north across the Great Himalaya Range into



Samvat year during the fortunate rule of the *Takht Akal*'. The history of the major Misls can be traced through their coinage. The coinage from these three cities is mainly attributed to the Bhangi Misl, but there is evidence to believe that other Misls also had a hand in the striking, particularly at Amritsar. The

Ladakh; in the north-west to the borders of Afghanistan and its southern boundary was the river Sultej (see map).

Though a monarch, Ranjit Singh, believed that he was but a servant of the Gurus and hence coins should continue to bear their name and not his. This was a reflection of his deep humility and

the supreme esteem in which he held them and his faith. Thus, he continued to have his coins struck with the same inscriptions as were prevalent during the Misl period. Previously, only Sikh silver rupees had been struck. For the first time now, Maharaja Ranjit Singh introduced coins in various denominations. These consisted of the gold mohur, silver rupee and copper paisa. Silver coins are in denominations of one, half and quarter rupee. The copper paisa and half paisa are in the *Gurmukhi*

script and read 'Akal Sahai Guru Nanakji', they were also struck in the Persian script. Most rupees have a high silver content and were valued at sixteen annas to the rupee.

His currency exhibits a refinement both in terms of artistry and workmanship, when compared with that of the Misl period. Coins are embellished with the moon and stars, little flowers, beads and chevron borders. The calligraphy rivals contemporary Mughal and Durrani money, specially



on those struck at the Sikh Peshawar mint. Symbols of varying kinds such as *Kartar*, leaf, trident, sword, *Om* and *Ram* appear on them. Some coins, in the year that Maharaja Ranjit Singh came to the throne, bear the royal umbrella on the side, and some a *panja* (hand) in the middle. The post-Maharaja Ranjit Singh period brought in other symbols and names like the flag, trident, Sat, umbrella, *Ram* and *Shiva*. These decorations are religious and martial symbols.

Significantly, all his coins only had one symbol in common - a leaf. Because of the stylistic variations of the leaf, it is difficult to trace the botanical origins. Several attempts have been made to identify the significance of this symbol. It has been suggested that it could be pipal, ber or even a lotus leaf. Until now, no conclusive proof of its origin has been provided and

this subject continues to engage numismatic scholars in controversy and speculation. Whatever the name or origin of the leaf may be, it is very distinctive and easily recognisable. Perhaps the intention was that this pictorial representation would help the common man easily identify it as a coin of the Sikh realm.

The main mints of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were at Amritsar and Lahore. As his dominions increased, he established mints at Multan (AD 1818), Kashmir (AD 1819), Derajat (AD 1821) and Peshawar (AD 1834). In Kashmir, eleven successive governors held office during his time. Only coins from this province bear the initial or symbol of each individual governor. One prominent Governor, Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa, was a general held in high esteem by the Maharaja for his valour. It is interesting to note that the Nanakshahis of Kashmir came and continued to be known as *Hari*



The Amritsar Mint

Obv



Morashahi

VS 862

AD 805

Rev



Singhjis in the region, long after the annexation of the Punjab in AD 1849.

There is an amusing anecdote linked to one of the Maharaja's coins known as the *Morashahi*. It is well known that Ranjit Singh was fond of the good life, dance and dancing girls were a part of his *zenana* or harem. One of his favourites was Mora, a woman of uncommon beauty and whom he later married. He is said to have been seen drinking with her, while perched upon an elephant on the streets of his capital Lahore. Mora, too, like the Mughal empress Nur Jahan before her, wanted coins to be struck in her name. It is believed that the clever Maharaja, not wanting to give offense to his subjects and yet wanting to indulge Mora ordered coins to be struck bearing a peacock tail. The peacock in Punjabi is called *mor*. These coins, thereafter, came to be known as Morashahis or coins of Mora and are now much sought after.

The legacy of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign continues to this day. Unfortunately, as far as his illustrious coinage is concerned, it had a short span. Soon after annexation of the Punjab, this unique and remarkable currency struck by the first Sikh King was discontinued. Mints all over Punjab were closed. The *Nanakshahi* was sent to Bombay and Calcutta to be melted down and re-coined into Company rupees.

We are fortunate that some of these coins still survive and can be seen in various museums, notable

amongst them being the Lahore Museum, the British Museum in London, the Sheesh Mahal in Patiala, the American Numismatic Society in New York and some private collections.

The author is a member of the Standing Committee of the American Numismatic Society (ANS) on Central and South Asian Coins. Member of the Art Acquisition Committee for the Khalsa Heritage Complex - subject expert for numismatics, textile, decorative arts and traditional Punjabi jewellery (Anandpur Sahib Foundation). She has catalogued the Sikh collection at the ANS and has worked on several other Indian collections. The Oriental Numismatic Society UK, has published several of her papers. She has a large collection of coins including an extensive and noteworthy collection of Sikh coins and tokens.

Daughter of the former CAS, Air Chief Marshal H. Moolgavkar, Jyoti does research on the coins of India and has recently conducted a study and an examination of several thousand Indian coins of various varieties at the ANS.

Jyoti Rai

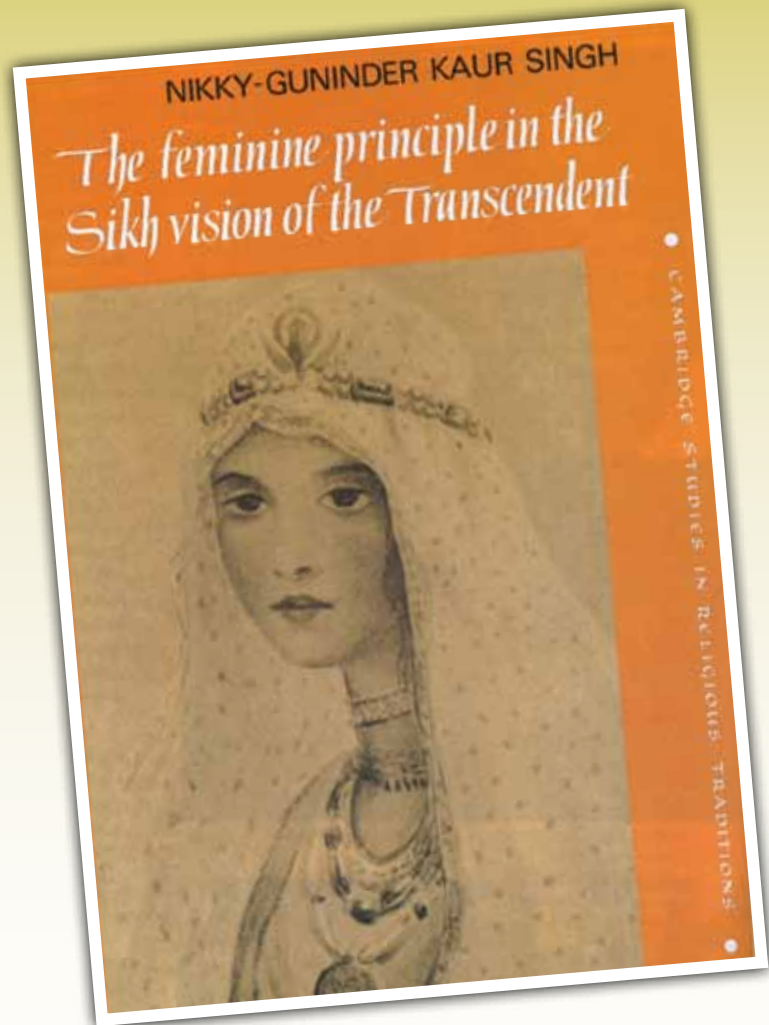
This first appeared in Nishaan II/2001

Book Review

This excellent thesis explores the presence of the feminine in Sikh conception and perception the Transcendent Reality. Sikh scriptures; transitional writings of the Sikhs and their modern secular literature constitute the sources for the investigation. Within these extensive parameters; Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh closely analyses feminine imagery, tone, and symbolism, and in so doing recovers a holistic pattern of imagining and experiencing the sacred which can serve as a mode of empowerment for women.

The book is divided into eight chapters which approach the Sikh vision of the Transcendent from historical scriptural, symbolic, mythological, romantic, existential, thical, and mystical perspectives. Each of these discloses the centrality of the woman, and enables the author to reverse what she regards as the one-sided and rocentric hermeneutics which has prevailed in Sikh scholarship. The author maintains that the Sikh gurus and poets did not want the feminine principle to serve just as a figure of speech or literary device, it was rather intended to pervade the whole life of the Sikhs. Her work bolsters the claim that literary symbols should be translated into social and political realities and gives expression, too, to a powerful new voice in religious studies, whose fresh treatment of a religious tradition that has been relatively neglected in scholarly literature which will give new direction and authenticity to feminists worldwide. Nikky-Guninder Kaur Singh is an Associate Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Colby College, Waterville. She has contributed chapters to ,a number of books, and is the, author of numerous scholarly articles, as well as monograph entitled *The Guru Granth Sahib: its physics and metaphysics*.

The Purutan Janamsakhi records that the Japu was the first expression of Guru Nanak's vision of the Transcendent articulated in the Divine Presence, is the opening text in the Guru Granth and has become the morning prayer for the Sikhs. The Mul Mantra or the Creed Essential at the outset o the Japu begins with the celebration of Ikk Oan Kar – the singular metaphysical ground of all that exists.



The Book's cover depicts Rani Raj Kaur taken from an edition of Rana Surat Singh (Amritsar: Khalsa Samachar, 1967). She is seen wearing Sikh symbols: Guru Nanak's formulation of the *ikk oan kar* is inscribed on the medallion worn round her neck, and Guru Gobind Singh's symbol of the *khanda* decorates her head-band.

The Sloka or finale to the Japu is full of vibrant and concrete images. Structurally, the sloka is crucial to the theme. It carries the Nanakian insight forward, and reads:

Air is the Guru, water the Father,
The great earth, the Mother of all
Day and night are the female and male nurses,
With the entire creation playing in their lap.

Apparently, there seems to be in the sloka a contradiction between the Singular One of the Mul Mantra and the several elements – air, water, earth; between the Beyond-gender Absolute and Mother and Father, female and male nurses; between the spaceless, timeless, birthless, non-dual reality and a creation playing in the lap of duality – of day and night. But these two statements, the Mul Mantra and the sloka, in fact fulfill each other. As Guru Arjan (Nanak V) says in a hymn in the Granth, "ikkasu te hoio aanta nanak ekasu mahi samae jio – from the One issue myriads and into the One they are ultimately assimilated." Unity becomes plurality, and plurality eventually becomes unity.

In the epilogue to the Japu is the presence of equivalent female and male images. One gender is not appropriated over the other, and the

feminine principle in the Sikh vision of the Transcendent finds an equal expression with that of the masculine. The line that concerns us most is the second one :

Mata dharti mahatu
The Great Earth is the Mother of all.

The line is pregnant with meaning, and it offers a wealth of significance for all cultures.

I will explore how powerful and significant the female figure in Sikh literature is. In fact, there is a sense of the primacy of the female nurse over the male, for dai (female nurse) precedes the daia (male). The male thus appears to be her consort rather than the other way around. Regrettably, it has been more usual in sacred art and literature for women to be shown as merley the consorts of the male. The millions of Hindu goddesses (with the exception of Durga and Kali) are imaged as consorts to the gods. The sloka imagery is radically different from this norm. My objective is to analyse the rich imagery relating to the Mother in Sikh scripture and thereby counterbalance the male exegesis. Whenever one image is isolated and prized over the rest, there is an implicit reversion to idolatry. To continue the one-sided androcentric hermeneutics would surely be a distortion of Guru Nanak's seeing of the Transcendent One.

I will therefore proceed to analyse in some detail the very verse ignored by Sikh scholars – "maa dharti mahat." Clearly, it is a celebration of "Mother," the Infinite Matrix, exploring the theme of Mother in both her female gender and her feminine dimension in the context of the Sikh tradition. While "female" refers to her gender, her biological being, "feminine" refers to qualities conventionally associated with women, both essential to comprehending the full import of the maternal reality in Sikh sacred literature.

The "Mother" engenders several questions: How does Nanak's image of the Mother form the Infinite Matrix? How would this female image then inform our worldview? How would that in turn transform our ethical values towards our neighbours and our planet? How would our ethical ideas enable us to perform in our everyday interactions? How would those relationships conform to the values of our sisters in the West? While these issues constitute the backdrop of the chapter, the theme of Mother as the Infinite Matrix have been explored in terms of three categories:

* Ontological * Epistemological * Soteriological

Under this threefold rubric, we shall analyse the images pertaining to Mother employed in the Sikh scripture, coming across images such as garbha (womb), joti (light), kudarati (nature), mati (wisdom), and nadir (grace). Images are valuable, for they integrate the intellectual component with aesthetic, axiological, and emotional components.

In the woman's womb resides the embryo. Images of garbha (womb) and agni (heat and warmth) have been used

interchangeably in the Guru Granth, both underscoring the principle that sustains the fetus for nine months. Such images boldly affirm the glory of womanhood – something at the heart of all contemporary feminist thinking in religion. In a hymn in Raag Asa, Guru Nanak reiterates twice how by the Divine Will life initiates in the womb :

Yahilal pahrai raini kai vanjaria mitra
Hukmi paia garbhasi ...
Kahu nanak prani pahilal pahrai hukmi paia garbhasi
In the first stage of life, o friend,
You by the Divine Will lodged in the womb ...
Says Nanak, in the first stage of life, the creature
By the Divine Will lodged in the womb.

In another hymn, the world garbha is substituted by the agni which generates life: "agni bimb jal bhitari nipje – in the warmth [of mother's womb] are we inseminated". Conception and birth are from women. In Asa di Var Guru Nanak says: "bhandi jamaia bhandi nimiai - Of woman are we born, of woman conceived." In the Sikh worldview the female is thus crucial to the origin of life. She is the matrix out of which everything that originates and evolves.

The crux of the mother-child relationship is harmony : it is a state where there is no opposition, no conflict, no suggestion of fear, or possibility of hostility. Guru Nanak does not equate the Transcendent One with the Mother alone (for the One is both Mother and Father, Sister and Brother...), yet he sees perfect harmony between the Transcendence of the One and Its manifestation – kudarati. This harmony between the Transcendent and kudarati provides a theological foundation for our society which the Divine, humanity, and nature are linked together rather than tiered into hierarchical levels with humans in the middle distorting and oppressing the life-support system.

The cosmos originates from the Infinite Matrix; it is a spontaneous unfolding and blooming of the Infinite, of which it is the finite form. There is no hypothetical or contingent relation between the Transcendent and Its kudarati: they are one, totally non-dualistic. The life-energy circulating amongst the beings' of the world is communicated by each to all within the comprehensive Oneness of the Metaphysical Reality. The result is the healing and harmonious mother-child relationship. Just as a mother would care about his or her needs and requirements, "the Transcendent ponders over Its Kudarati and sustains it – kudarati bicare dharan dhare.

*matia mati pita santokh.
Mother is wisdom; father, contentment.*

The identification of *mati*, wisdom, with the mother the female, in the above line by Guru Nanak seems to me to be the quintessential characteristic of Sikh epistemology. But scholars and commentators have not paid sufficient attention to this. This aspect of Sikhism has suffered neglect in the western traditions as well.

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Dawn of Creation

Japji
Resounds

Eyes
Surrender

Sound
Penetrates

Forehead
Warms

Japji
Pulses

I witness

Sun
Moon
Orbit

Flora
Fauna
Kowtow

Japji
Leads

Chi
Awakens

Countless
- Continents
- Constellations
- Universes

Emerge

Countless
- Goddesses
- Demons
- Sages

Materialise

Japji
Soars

I flutter
Bewildered

Enchanted

Ushered
Into

A Kingdom

Language
Intelligence

Futile

I experience

A silence
Within
A silence

Silence
Awakens
Memory

I am
Japji's
Child

Innate
Embedded
Intimacy

Cradled
Fostered
Cosseted

Lucid
Blissful
Beholden

Grasped
My origin

All begins
All ends
In Japji.

Inni Kaur