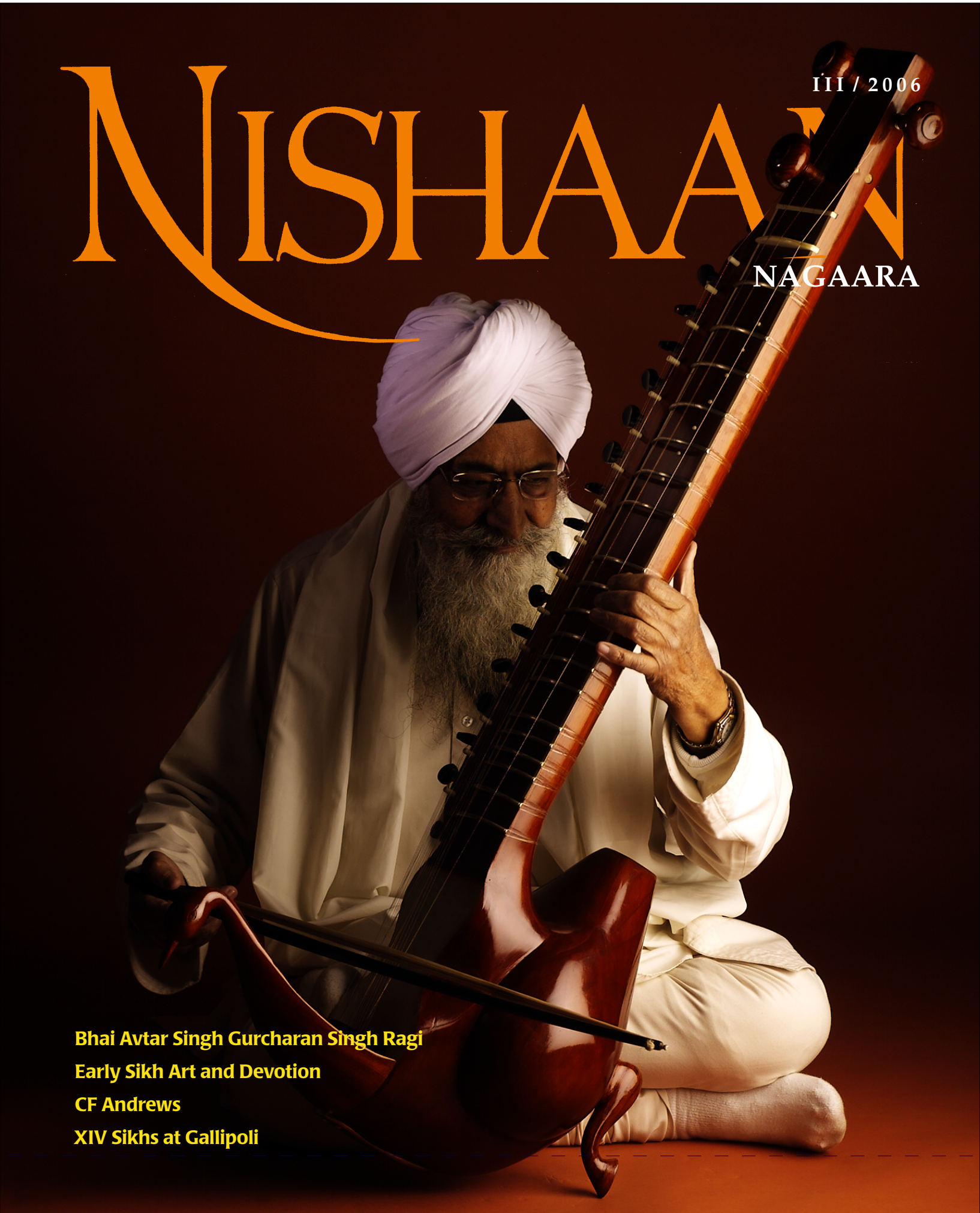


NISHAAN

III / 2006

NAGAARA



Bhai Avtar Singh Gurcharan Singh Ragi
Early Sikh Art and Devotion
CF Andrews
XIV Sikhs at Gallipoli

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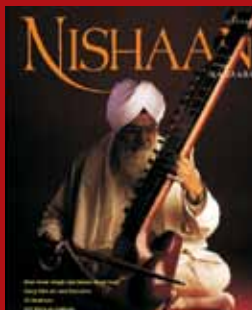


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Editorial

Kirtan: The Supreme Spiritual Vehicle

The Sages have said, "He who hears music feels his solitude". It is only secondarily, that the sound of music can be considered sensual. It must make sense first. However, sense generally follows reflection. Poetry, as a verbal air is essentially reflective. It can communicate a message. Music, on the other hand, is immediate; it slips straight into one's being. Kirtan, which is a combination of the two, poetry and music, is the spiritual vehicle that carries a consecrated message directly to our soul. Music is supremely suited for meditation because it has certain spiritual characteristics of its own. These include its inherent (aesthetic) qualities, its dialectic disposition and its essence of infinity. No wonder then that kirtan has been considered a cherished means of expressing devotion.

When a mystic sings, he neither sings a song nor a dirge; he rather sings of his experience of the Absolute. This has been affirmed by Guru Nanak Dev in the following words:

ਗਾਵਹੁ ਗੀਤੁ ਨ ਬਿਰਹੜਾ ਨਾਨਕ ਖ੍ਰਮ ਬੀਚਾਰੇ ॥

Sing not songs of love or pangs of separation.

Sing of your reflections on the Absolute.

SGGS p.581

The Gurus and the Bhaktas were not only poets and musicians, they were primarily accomplished mystics as well. Hence, the songs they composed and sang were real fragments of Shabda Brahman.

The tradition of meditation through kirtan has been ubiquitous in Indian religions. Such of its sub-traditions as stutigan, stotragan, Vedagan, mantragan have been prevalent from times immemorial. Various stylistic traditions of kirtan including bhajangayan, kalkshep abhang, Hari katha etc. have long been popular with devotees of most denominations.

The art of kirtan evolved even further under the aegis of the Sikh Gurus. They paid full attention to both its raga (musical) and its bhava (meaning) aspects. They also held that while a musician practices only ahat (struck) shabda (word/sound), a practitioner of kirtan must practice ahat as well as anahat (unstruck) shabda simultaneously. For

the Gurus, music was primarily the medium for communicating the shabda. Their preference was shabda-shruti yoga in which dhuni and dyana have a mutually responsive role. Guru Nanak Dev says:

ਧੁਨਿ ਮਹਿ ਧਿਆਨੁ ਧਿਆਨ

ਮਹਿ ਜਾਨਿਆ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਅਕਥ ਕਹਾਨੀ ।

*The meditation is in the music,
and mystical knowledge is in meditation.*

*This is how the un-discursable discourse
is uttered by the Guru*

- SGGS p.879

Meditation through music is thus the preferred spiritual vehicle in the devotional system of the system of the Gurus.

Music should not be considered as only delightful entertainment. One must appreciate that music primarily is the vehicle of cosmic creation and divine immanence. It is cosmic energy revealed as pervasive harmony. Guru Nanak perceived the vibrations of this Primal Harmony and sang his ecstatic composition Sodar in which he recounts his experience of everything in the world, as also the entire corpus of the world, emitting that subtle, Primal music:

ਵਾਜੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਨਾਦ ਅਨੇਕ ਅਸੰਖਾ ਕੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਵਾਵਣਹਾਰੇ ॥

ਕੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਰਾਗ ਪਰੀ ਸਿਉ ਕਹੀਅਹਿ

ਕੇਤੇ ਤੇਰੇ ਗਾਵਣਹਾਰੇ ॥...

ਹੋਰਿ ਕੇਤੇ ਤੁਧੋਨੇ ਗਾਵਨਿ ਸੇ ਮੈ ਚਿਤਿ ਨ

ਆਵਨਿ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਕਿਆ ਬੀਚਾਰੇ ।

*The Sound-currents are Your instruments and
countless musicians are playing on them*

There are so many Ragas with their harmonics

And so many minstrels singing hymns of You.

So many others to sing of You,

but they come not in my mind.

How can Nanak think of them all?

SGGS p.8-9

Three types of Yoga Raja, Jnana and Bhakti have traditionally been identified as major spiritual pathways. Of these, Bhakti Yoga provides its soul to kirtan. A raja yogi attains nirodha samadhi i.e. samadhi attained by control of the senses. A jnani

attains bodha Samadhi i.e. samadhi attained through sublimated intellection. A bhakta, a man of devotion, attains bhava samadhi i.e. samadhi attained through feeling and emotion, primarily the emotion of love. And love, in its ecstasy, is most inclined to sing. Kirtan, thus, is the God-inspired musical effulgence of devotional ecstasy.

Every performance of kirtan ought to be dedicated to the Divine Presence. It is such dedication alone that enlivens the tala (rhythm), sweetens the nada (sound), mellows the raga (melody) and consecrates the shabda (hymn) of kirtan. The presence, on which love and devotion have to be is not just outside us; it is very much within us too.

Mystical expression is ineffable. Words fail to express it, arithmetic loses its prowess, logic flounders fully and the senses become impotent. Music alone can aptly express such an experience. Real kirtan is that which emerges out of mystical experience and reflects the union between jivatma (individual human soul) and Parmatma (the Transcendent Cosmic Soul). Bhakta Namdev, in his own words, tells how he sings when he perceives the Supreme Presence:

ਜਬ ਦੇਖਾਂ ਤਬ ਗਾਵਾਂ ।
ਤਉ ਜਨ ਧੀਰਜੁ ਪਾਵਾਂ ।

*When I see Him, I sing His praises.
Then I, His humble servant,
get wrapped in patience.*

SSGGS .656

The Gurmat kirtan that the Gurus practiced and patronised has its own distinctive aesthetics symphonic as well as harmonic. Though it accepted much of the classical Indian musicology for its basis, it also digressed from it in some significant ways. For example, it made no use of exciting ragas such as Dipak because excitation is immiscible with devotion. The Gurus evolved some new ragas as well. These include Asa, Maru and Tukhari. Guru Nanak, not only introduced Raga Asa but also employed it as possibilities adapting it to sixteen different tone-centres (ghars).

The first location where kirtan was established by Guru Nanak before he set out on his historic odysseys, was at Sultanpur. Mardana accompanied him and played his rabab? when the Guru sang. After his return from his extensive travels, he settled down in Kartarpur and there, Mardanas sons were his minstrels. With the successive Gurus,


the primary centre of kirtan shifted successively to Khadur, Goindval, Amritsar, Kiratpur and Anandpur. Alongside of rababis, two other traditions, those of ragis and dhadis, who came to emerge out of those centres. Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the Guru Nanaks successors was himself a great musicologist. He is said to have introduced the khayal style of singing in kirtan.

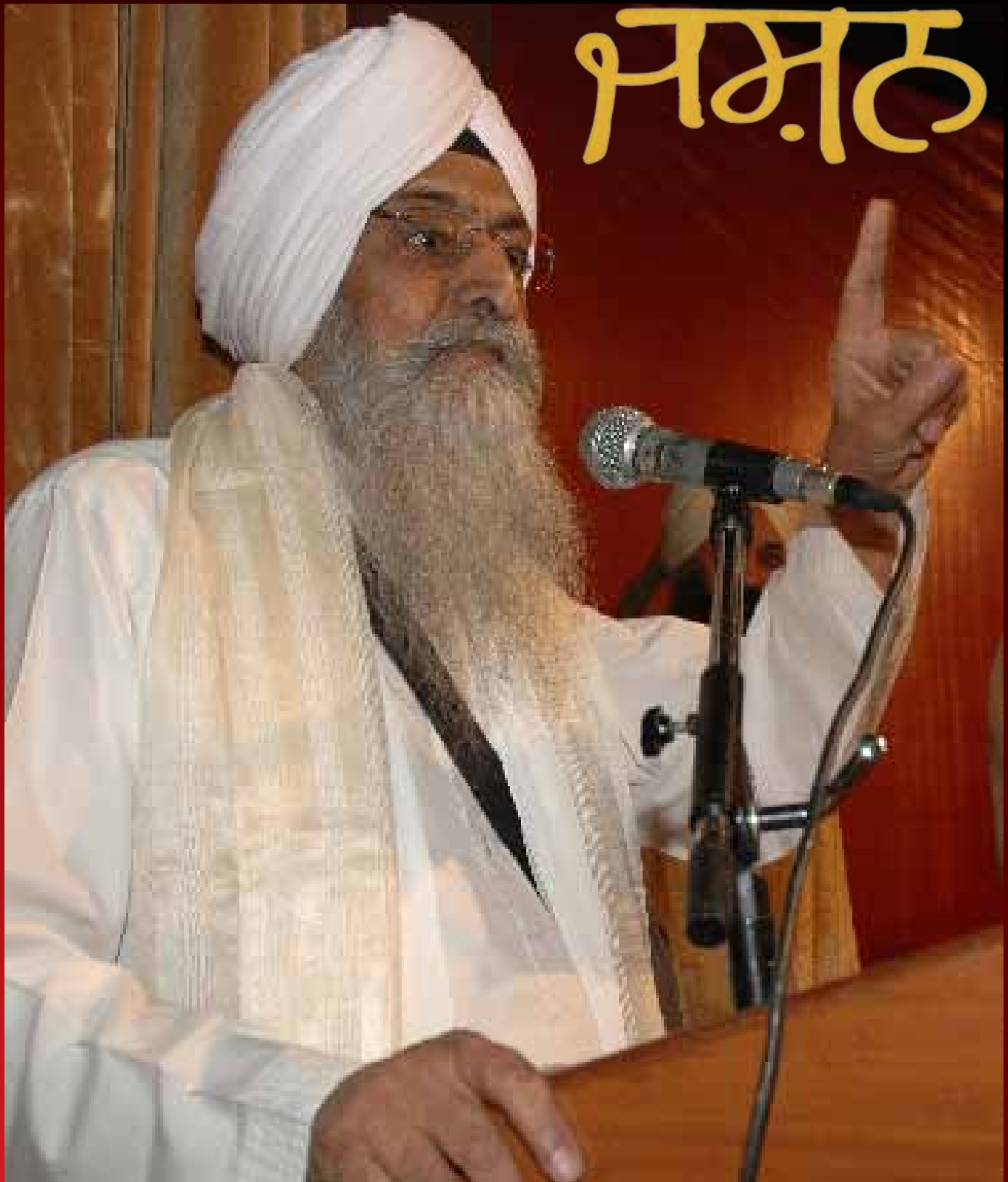
An organic symbiosis essentially prevails between the meaning of the hymn and the spirit of the raga in which it has been prescribed to be sung. This symbiosis would essentially have been fortified by the innovative skills of the Court-minstrels of the Gurus who aimed at attaining the Gurus approval and appreciation for every meaningful and significant innovation.

The patterns of symbiosis thus emerged through the direction, and possibly also active intervention, by the Gurus themselves. The salutary results of such experiments must have been transmitted from generation to generation by the rababis and ragis of those times.

One such family that seems to have taken pains to transmit the salubrious stylistic of Gurmat Sangeet on to its successive generations has been the Semdhi family. It first became noticeable during the pontificate of Guru Amar Das. One of its later successors, one Sahib Singh (other than the one who was among the Panj Piaras), is known to have received Amrit from Guru Gobind Singh.

In the twentieth century, Bhai Jawala Singh, a descendant of that family, became reputed as a stalwart ragi who possessed profound knowledge of the traditional ritis (styles) of the Gurus times. His son, Bhai Avtar Singh devotedly took pains to receive as much out of his fathers cumulative acquisition as possible. On that count, and with further personal efforts, he became a venerable ragi in his own right. He not only remained one of the foremost ragis for several decades but had also been considered a reliable consultant in traditional Gurmat Sangeet. His demise recently has caused a wide gap in the field of traditional kirtan. His departure has been felt woefully by connoisseurs of Gurmat Sangeet. Fortunately, as per valued family traditions, he did pass on much of his learning to his worthy relatives. For that, he deserves the gratitude of the entire community of kirtan-lovers.

This issue of Nishaan has befittingly been dedicated to his benign memory. 



Celebrating the Contribution of
Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh Ragi

Jashan

In a fast changing environment in which cultural and traditional values are receding as if to make space for apparently more impellent material needs, it is rare to have occasions to re-evaluate our heritage and express gratitude for those who gave invaluable contributions during a lifetime of dedication to music and spiritual values.

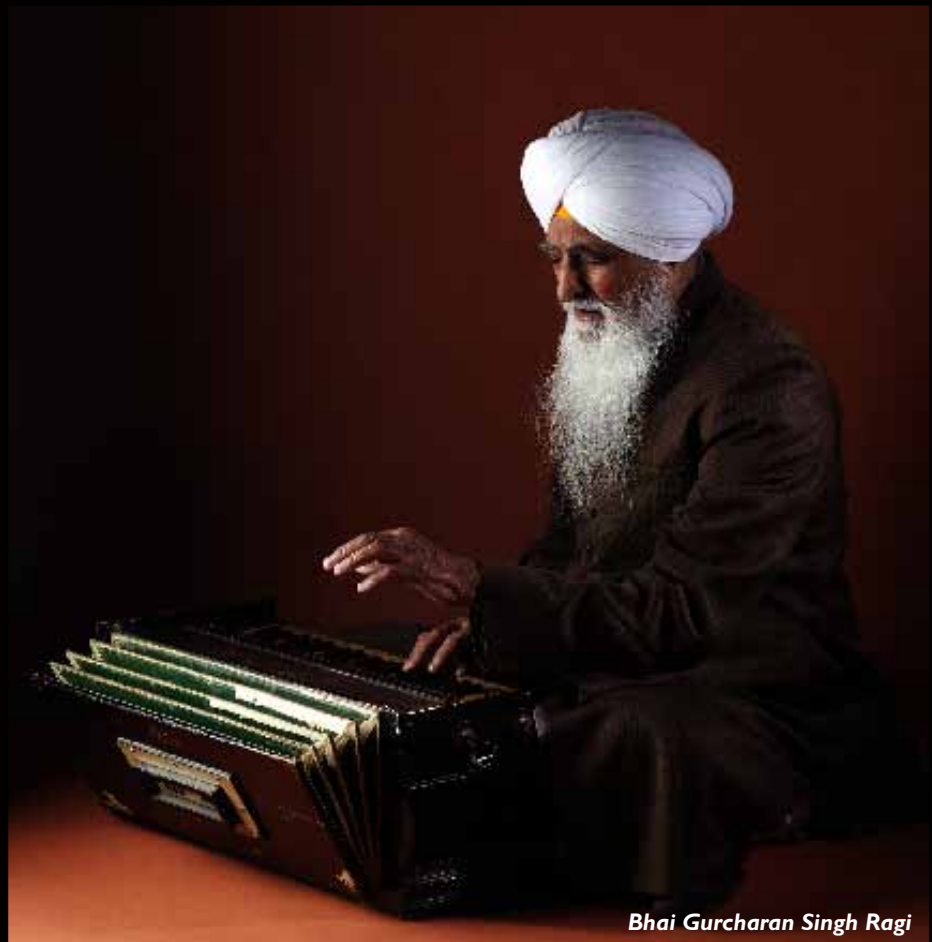
It was one of these rare moments when, on 16 October at New Delhi's India Habitat Centre, *Anad Foundation*, a non-profit organization dedicated to the preservation of cultural and artistic heritage, held a function to honour Bhai Avtar Singh Bhai Gurcharan Singh Ragi. The name JASHAN, chosen for the programme, indicated the spirit of celebration that Anad Foundation intended to give to this occasion. It was indeed a celebration for the 13 generation old tradition of Gurbani Kirtan, brought forward for the last four hundred years, as also for their representatives.

Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh Ragi were present at this special evening, although their unstable health conditions had been a concern for family members and organisers, to receive the first Anad Sanman, the award offered by the Anad Foundation to eminent musicians or artists for their contribution to traditional art forms.

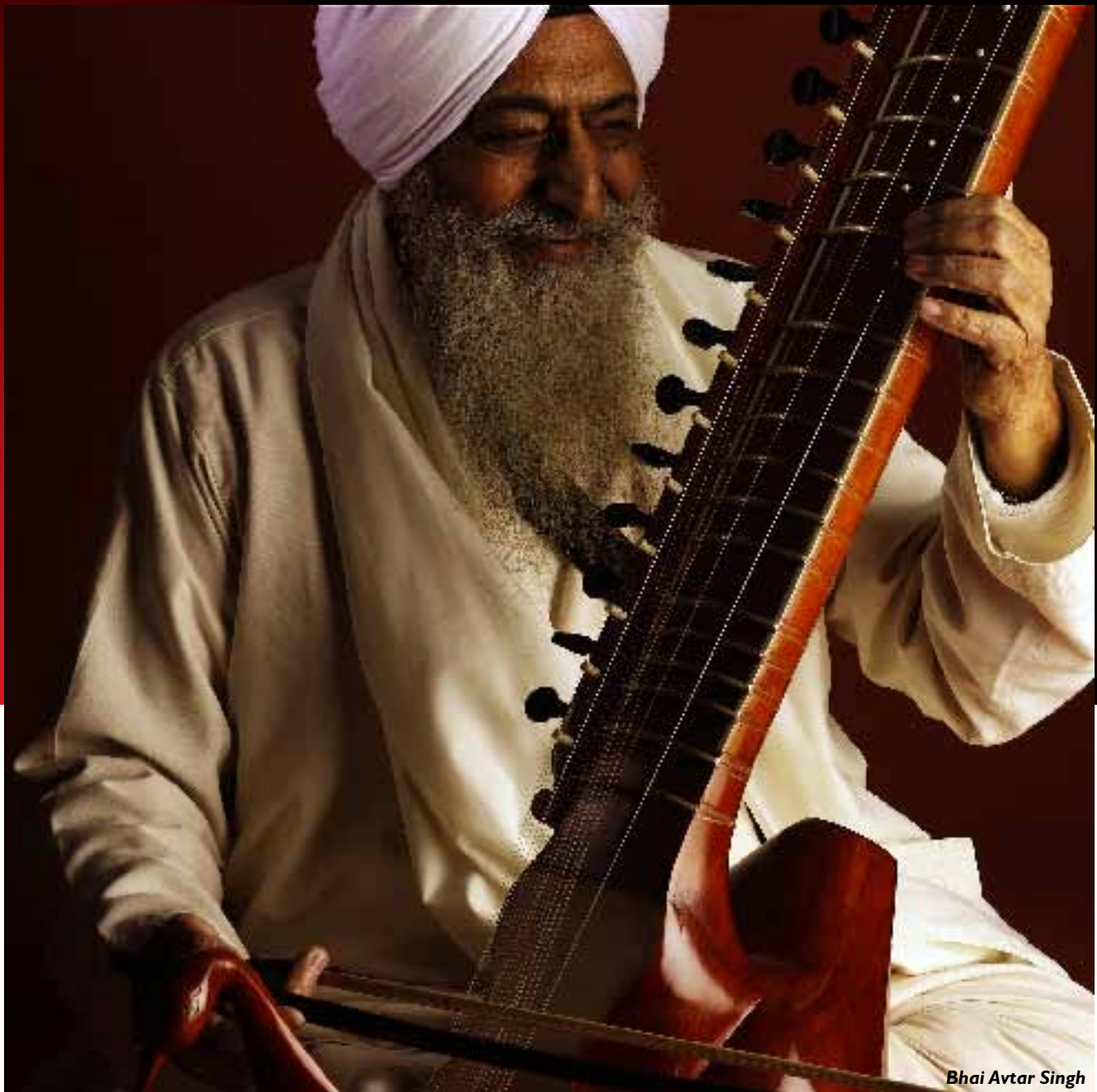
The programme was attended by an incredibly large audience: close family relatives and friends, lovers of Kirtan and music in general, artists from different artistic fields, eminent personalities including Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki, Baba Sarabjot Singh Bedi, Bishan

Singh Bedi, Dr. Manohar Singh Gill, Dr. S A Ali, the Ambassador of Italy Mr. Antonio Armellini, the Italian First Counsellor Mr. Paolo Trichilo, the Italian artist Tarshito, the Sarna family and Mrs. Anita Singh, just to name a few, who came together to celebrate sixty years of devoted singing and adherence to a precious spiritual heritage of Bhai Avtar Singh Gurcharan Singh Ragi, and their accompanist on Tabla, Bhai Swaran Singh.

The melodious Raga Misra Bhairavi on the Algoza by Shri Mehrdin invited the audience to join in the celebration. His short but enchanting performance was followed by an invigorating Pakhawaj solo performance by Shri Ravi Shankar Upadhyaya, who represents his family tradition that hails from Gaya, and is one of the finest exponents of this art form.



Bhai Gurcharan Singh Ragi



Bhai Avtar Singh

After the welcome by the Algoza and the Pakhawaj resonance that accompanied the entrance of Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh to the auditorium, Senior Advocate of the Supreme Court of India K.T.S. Tulsi, a founder Trustee of the *Anad Foundation*, addressed the audience. He spoke about the Foundation, its objectives and the upcoming *Anad Conservatory: An Institute of Sikh Aesthetics and Culture*. He also informed the audience about the successful setting up of a world-class audio restoration studio in New Delhi by the *Anad Conservatory*.

Following the introductions, Janab Sakar Khan and Shri Gaivar Khan took the stage. They played compositions in raga Asa, Majh and Maru, melodies also used in Gurbani Kirtan, thus underlining affinities between the folk tradition and the sacred music tradition of the Guru Granth. The playing of Sakar Khan in the presence of Bhai Avtar Singh, Bhai Gurcharan Singh and Ustad Fahimuddin Dagar enabled the audience to witness an extraordinary conversation between two grand traditions of India: the Deshi and the Margi. The Kamaicha is in fact the



Bhai Baldeep Singh

bowed Dhrupadi Rabab, as recently discovered by Bhai Baldeep Singh, and was played until the 1980s without any percussion accompaniment, as the strike of the bow provided for its rhythmical development in different variations and patterns.

Shri Rama Krishna, one of the finest exponents of Nagara in the twentieth century, and his younger brother Shri Nathu Lal, gave a solo performance on the Nagara in Tintala (16 beats) and Dipchandi (14 beats). A ceremonial drum, whose playing marked different occasions from auspicious celebrations to martial settings, the Nagara, along with the Daph and the Damaru/Dhadh, have greatly contributed to the Indian percussion traditions, as the technique and the syllables used in the compositions were later adopted and played on other instruments as Pakhawaj, Jori and Tabla. Shri Rama Krishna's performance evidenced the link between the technique used in the Nagara playing and the percussion tradition of the Jori, the precursor of Tabla, in the Kirtan accompaniment.

Anad Foundation then presented Bibi Nirvair Kaur accompanied on the Pakhawaj by Parminder Singh Bhamra, both students of Bhai Baldeep Singh, Managing Trustee of the *Anad Foundation* and grandnephew of

Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh Ragi, now depositary of this tradition of Gurbani Kirtan. Bibi Nirvair Kaur, an American Sikh who is the Director of the Khalsa Montessori Schools in Tucson, Arizona and a student of Kirtan, offered a short composition in Raga Bihag, set in Tintala, as an example of the traditional music training, while Parminder Singh Bhamra matched her improvisations with crisply yet tenderly played rhythmical compositions.

Bhai Sikandar Singh of Bagrian introduced the award ceremony that followed, in which Bhai Swaran Singh and then Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh were conferred with the *Anad Sanman* on behalf of *Anad Foundation* by Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki, formerly Professor of Psychiatrics at the AIIMS and Director PGI, Chandigarh, a distinguished Punjabi poet and religious philosopher.

Kind words of wisdom were spoken by Dr. J.S. Neki and by both the awardees, which regaled the audience with their dignified presence and warmth of their feelings. Owing to unforeseen circumstances, Bhai Kultar Singh, Bhai Balwant Singh and Bhai Sukhdev Singh Namdhari could not participate in the programme.

The One Voice

Beyond the world's narrow walls of politics, geography, ethnicity, religion and fear, Bhai Avtar Singh's voice of spiritual longing and courageous openness of heart flows like a clear stream reflecting the spiritual longing of all humanity, raising from its depths the universal cry of even the unremembering heart's desire to experience the Divine. His purified, intention less sound calls poets' and visionaries' dreams down from their intangible flight and, where the Greater Dream has gone unseen, his music opens Heaven to human sight.

With tireless devotion stretching its arms over decades toward the One, he has reached what must come from within to make Gurbani Kirtan the "True Hymn". In every shabad, every note, and every breath he reveals that his is not merely an art form, but an art of formlessness that begins as music then takes the heart, mind and soul in unison past the empty illusions of the finite, past the dark cycles of material attachment and across a bridge of awakening to the realm of our true identity.

Song after song he gathers into a single current of salutation to God, so our false hymns might be swept away, our egos diminished enough to see that in honoring the original music of the Gurus the voice of our soul is not limited but freed and our understanding led toward that Mind which moves eternally. In garlands of sounded and unsounded tones interwoven with struck and unstruck beats, he passes on an essential truth; that to life surrendered in these sacred songs, the Light that waits in all of us comes; a Light that knows our inseparable connection to all men, all life cannot be undone and realizes our infinite human capacity to create, to live, and to love as the One.

Guru Nanak said, 'Some have the power to sing and define God's power. Some can sing and describe the grace of God, His virtues, excellences, and most unattainable knowledge. Some can sing God who forms the body, who gives it breath, and reduces it to dust. Some can sing God who takes away life and re-infuses it as He sees just. Some can sing God who seems far away and yet face to face keeps all in view.' Some rare few have, in the seed of their becoming, been given a quenchless yearning to sing, with the values and aesthetic of the Gurus, songs of wisdom and transformation that renew and refine the purpose of life. Bhai Avtar Singh is such a singer whose music brings distinguished grace to our existence, and whose ornamented notes of remembering God guide the soul of man closer to the face of the Infinite. He humbly lives the "Unbeaten Music" that transcends maya and from silence resounds, and inspires us all to sing and live where the Essence of life is not promised, but found. His music is not a wild and sudden dance born for one time, one fate, or one chance. His voice will still resonate, light the souls of the universe and open hearts closed by pain and sorrow, long after the stars pass away and the sun is but a glimmering wave outlining the morrow. 🙏



"Let all my songs gather together their diverse strains into a single current, and flow to a sea of silence in one salutation to Thee." Rabindranath Tagore

Adesh Atma Kaur



Bhai Baldeep Singh



Bhai Avtar Singh, Bhayee Sikander Singh, Bhai Baldeep Singh, Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki



Bibi Nirvair Kaur and Parminder Singh Bhamra

Jashan was therefore concluded by Bhai Baldeep Singh's moving rendition of Gurbani Kirtan, illustrating different compositions in a variety of melodies and rhythmical patterns (Raga and Tala) and emphasising his gratitude for the beautiful gifts of sacred music handed over to him by his teachers and mentors, Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh. In that half an hour's performance he relived his twenty-six years long and intense association of learning with his granduncles. His first rendition, a reminder to his teachers of the first composition he heard as a child, "Ek pita ekas ke ham barik" that remained as if engraved in his being, was most heart moving. He also recounted the moments in which he was taken into the deeper realms of the Sur Sadhana, Santhea, through imbibing the precious Shabad-reet heritage of the Gurbani Kirtan Parampara.

The metaphoric conversation that happened on this occasion between Bhai Baldeep Singh and his teachers gave the audience a rare opportunity to witness the deep meaning and value of the traditional Guru-shishya-parampara in which the light of knowledge is transmitted and shared with utmost love and fulfilling gratitude, in the sacred space of selflessness.

The sincerity with which the honoured Ragis dedicated themselves to their family tradition and the purity of intent that characterised their attitude towards their music and their faith had a very tangible result in the amazing participation



Janab Sakar Khan and Gaivar Khan rendering the grand traditions of India.

and concern shown by so many people who cooperated in many different ways, according to their capacities, to make *Jashan* a memorable event.

Jashan was concluded by Bhai Baldeep Singh's moving rendition of Gurbani Kirtan, illustrating different compositions in a variety of melodies and rhythmical patterns



The Ambassador of Italy, Dr. J. S. Neki, Sarabjot Singh Bedi, S. Anup Singh

The Managing Trustee, on behalf of Anad Foundation, gave a vote of thanks for all the contributions received on the occasion, with the hope to have in future more occasions to bring together its many friends in creative endeavours and in sharing such meaningful moments. 🙏

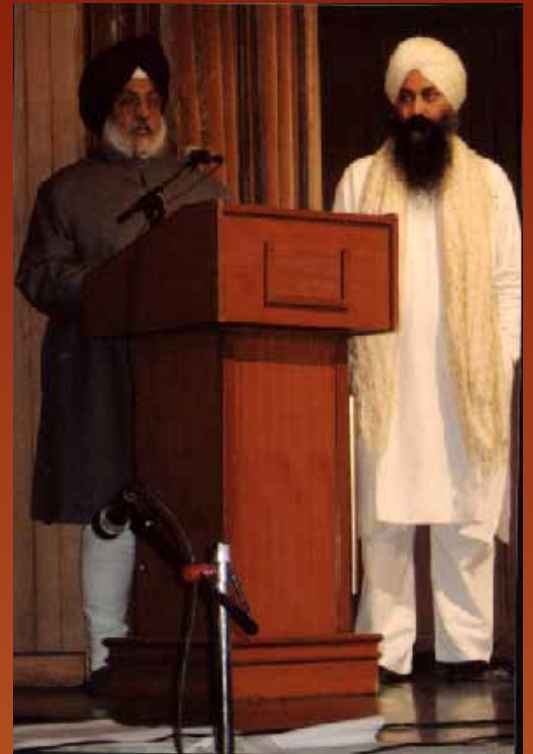
Maria Maurizia Costanzo

(A scholar and Kathak exponent, presently working at the Embassy of Italy in New Delhi).



Bhai Avtar Singh and Baba Sarabjot Singh Bedi

*An Enchanted Evening
in New Delhi
16 October 2006*



Bhai Avtar Singh Bhai Gurcharan Singh

The Lord Almighty Akal Purakh has His unique ways of communicating His will, His directives, His message to mankind. To Moses he gave in writing, striking the stone with fire and lightning, leaving behind the tablets with commandments. To Prophet Mohammed it came as Ilham which he dictated to give us Quaran Sharif. Through Satguru Nanak the divine mandate was transmitted to us in form of Bani. Bani is divine revelation in which the word (*shabd*), music (*dhun*) and time cycle (*kaal*) are integrated or fused. This, Satguru Nanak sang to the accompaniment of Bhai Mardana's rabab. Thus began the tradition of shabad kirtan as the sole mode of worship for the Sikhs.

The divine songs that the Gurus and their musicians sang came down in guru shishya parnali over the centuries. We call these shabads reets (like kriti's of South Indian traditions). One such potential kirtaniya sat in the presence of the fourth Guru and imbibed the spirit and soul of this music. This association with guru ghar continued through many generations and the tradition got richer and richer. Family history tells us that one Bhai Sahib Singh served in the court of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, having taken amrit at the historic Baisakhi of 1699. This association continued through the centuries. These were the elders of Bhai Sahibs Gurcharan Singh and Avtar Singh whose sixty years of performing kirtan was celebrated this day. To their family, the panth is indebted for giving us the glimpses of the Guru's intent of shabd singing.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a rich treasure of music. Thirty-one raags with variants, folklores such as *anjali*, *alahniya*, *sudd*, *vaars* in various raags, etc. All this and more is the rich musical heritage of the Sikhs in particular and Punjab in general. The tradition that Bhai Sahibs have preserved and practiced with total integrity to the guru shishya parampara and the repertoire that they have inherited contains almost all aspects of music mentioned in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

In the late sixties, senior raagis of the era got together at the insistence of Punjabi University. When the question of the true structure of some of the raags in Sikh kirtan was sought to be authenticated, the venerable Bhai Samund Singh ji told them that only the family of Bhai Jwala Singh ji (father of the Bhai Sahibs) were in a position to present the true ethos of raags of the Sikh tradition.


Bhai Gurcharan Singh and Bhai Avtar Singh, sons of the legendary Sikh kirtaniya Bhai Jwala Singh, are the 11th generation flag bearers of the original *ang* (style) of shabd singing of Sikh gurus in the medieval Punjab. The compositions they sing date back to the Guru period. For sixty years they have been performing kirtan, accompanied on the tabla or the jori by their nephew Bhai Swaran Singh, himself an accomplished artist.

They are among that rare and vanishing class of musicians of their tradition who are fully conversant and apt in singing all the raag variants, lores (*dhunian*) and the other variants of the music forms incorporated in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. At least for the last half century their kirtan has been regarded as a standard against which Gurmat Sangeet of shabad reet parnali (traditional compositions/kritis) singing is to be measured.

Gurmat Sangeet, or shabd kirtan, is not mere singing of gurbani in raags. Rather it is a unique style with fusion of shabd, raag and taal. Shabd-reets are kritis (compositions) of Guru period, some of them are the originals sung by the Gurus themselves. This is the heritage that has been entrusted to the Punjabi University by the two brothers.

Besides their other achievements and contributions to this art form, the two brothers have done the greatest service to the world of musicology by recording 500 of their original medieval compositions (48 hours) and annotating them before donating the same to the Punjabi University, at Patiala. The two volumes, Gurubani Sangeet--Pracheen Reet Ratnavali, were published in 1976. This was a unique gesture as no Indian artist of repute would normally share the core of his art with outsiders, leave alone documenting and giving the same to an institution.

They have extensively disseminated their art in the U.K., North America and Canada, both within the community and outside. In fact, there seem to be more admirers of this tradition of *keertan* outside India.

Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh are perhaps the only kirtanias today who reflect the original intent of the Gurus in their kirtan. Their music is a frozen heritage of sacred music of North India from the period stretching from the 15th to the 18th centuries. 

Bhai Sikandar Singh of Bagrian



The blessing of Continuance

My mother Sukhjit Kaur, lovingly called 'mithi auntie', was a talented dholak player, gifted with a beautiful voice. I can remember, as a toddler, sitting comfortably in her lap, slipping in and out of sleep to the constant pulsing of her breath at my back, to the gentle massage from her arms that kept the rhythm on the dholak and her sweet voice resonating from above. That was the dawn of Keertan for me.

One evening in the year 1980, listening to the daily Keertan broadcast from Jalandhar Radio, a unique rendition of 'Ek Pita, Ekas ke ham barak' completely mesmerised me. That was the first experience of the chords resonating within. An unusual magnetism was compelling me towards that singing. Then suddenly my mom entered the room and exclaimed, 'That's Chachaji!'

Inevitably the history of Keertan for me went to my granduncles' generation.

Enslaved, evening after evening I would sit glued to the radio, hoping and often praying to hear the singing of my granduncles, whom I knew only through a few time-transcending shabad-reet renditions that were played over the radio.

ਸ਼ੋਭਾ ਉਲੇਖ

ਭਾਈ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਚਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਉਹ ਵਿਰਲੇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖ ਪ੍ਰਾਣੀ ਹਨ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਜਲੋਅ ਸਦਕਾ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਅਪਣੀ ਅਨੰਤ ਤਤਾ ਦਾ ਸਦੀਵੀ ਆਭਾਸ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ ਦੀ ਇਲਾਹੀ ਥਾਣੀ ਦੇ ਸਾਂਤੀ ਤੇ ਆਨੰਦ ਦੇ ਸੁਨੇਕੇ ਨੂੰ ਸੀਨਾ-ਬ-ਸੀਨਾ ਚੱਲੀ ਆਂਵਦੀ ਕੀਰਤਨੀ ਧਰੋਹਰ ਸਦਕਾ ਸਾਰੀ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਚ ਪਹੁੰਚਾਇਆ ਹੈ। ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਸੁੱਚੀ ਰੀਤ ਪਾਲਦਿਆਂ ਅਜੋਕੇ ਵੇਲੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਲੋੜਾਂ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰਦਿਆਂ ਆਉਣ ਵਾਲੀਆਂ ਪੁਸ਼ਤਾਂ ਵਾਸਤੇ ਲਿਖਤ ਤੇ ਬੋਲਤ ਨੂੰ ਦਰਜ ਕਰਨ ਦਾ ਯਾਦਗਾਰੀ ਕਾਰਜ ਨਿਭਾਇਆ ਹੈ। ਅਪਣੀ ਸ਼ਿਲਪਕਾਰੀ, ਸਮਤੋਲ ਬਿਰਤੀ, ਮਿਹਰ-ਭਰੀ ਨਿਰਮਾਣਤਾ ਅਤੇ ਨਿਰਸਵਰਥ ਸੇਵਾ ਚ ਲੀਨ ਭਾਈ ਸਾਹਿਬਾਨ ਦਾ ਜੀਵਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਘਰ ਦੇ ਆਵਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਜਗਿਆਸੂਆਂ ਲਈ ਵਿਰਾਸਤ ਬਣ ਚੁੱਕਾ ਹੈ।

ਸੰਗੀਤ-ਸਾਧਨਾ, ਪ੍ਰੇਰਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਰੱਤੀ
 ਤੁਸਾਂ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ-ਭਰ ਦੀ ਘਾਲਣਾ ਨੂੰ ਚਿਤ ਵਿਚ ਵਸਾਇਆਂ
 ਅਨਾਦ ਫਾਉਂਡੇਸ਼ਨ
 ਅੱਜ ਸੰਨ 2006 ਈਸਵੀ ਦੇ ਅਕਤੂਬਰ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਦੇ 16ਵੇਂ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ
 ਦਿੱਲੀ ਵਿਖੇ ਤੁਸਾਂ ਨੂੰ
 ਭਾਈ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਚਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ
 ਅਨਾਦ ਸਨਮਾਨ 2006
 ਕ੍ਰਿਤੱਗਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਭੇਟਾ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ

ਅਨਾਦ ਸਨਮਾਨ

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਦੇ ਦਰਬਾਰ ਦੇ ਰਤਨ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੇ ਅਪਣੇ ਪੁਰਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਗੁਰੂ
ਕਾਲ ਤੋਂ ਚਲਿਆ ਆਇਦਾਂ ਵਿਰਸਾ ਸੰਭਾਲਿਆ ਅਤੇ ਉਮਰ ਭਰ
ਗੁਰੂ ਘਰ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਗੁਰ ਸਥਦ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਵਾਹ ਕਰਕੇ ਕੀਤੀ ॥
ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਵਿਚ ਗੁਰੂ ਆਸ਼ਾ ਦੇ ਸਥਦ ਰੀਤਿ ਗਾਇਨ ਦੀ
ਝਲਕ ਪ੍ਰਤੱਖ ਹੁੰਦੀ ਹੈ ॥
ਹਾਰਦਿਕ ਧੰਨਵਾਦ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਰੱਤੀ ਭੇਂਟ
ਅਨਾਦ ਫ਼ਾਉਂਡੇਸ਼ਨ
ਦਿੱਲੀ 16 ਅਕਤੂਬਰ 2006

Two years later, at a major festival at the gurdwara in Sector 34 in Chandigarh, two towering personalities entered the divan, walking with grandeur and dignity. There was something in them that conquered me. I realized only too late that I was love-stuck. My happiness was short-lived as it dawned upon me that I had been reserving this love for 'the chachajis'. Had I betrayed that love? Their magnetism was such that the moment they stood again like tall unassailable mountains, I reached a compromise with the betrayal and hoped that they could actually be the chachajis.

Soon after a very respectable looking gentleman, who I found out years later was Bhai Sahib Ashok Singh of Bagrian, stood up to introduce the two elderly special guests that I had recently fallen in love with. He spoke and spoke of their achievements, contributions and eventually introduced them to the gur-sangat as Bhai Avtar Singh Bhai Gurcharan Singh Ragi! My joy knew no bounds. As they sang in manner I hadn't witnessed before, my mind and soul danced in an experience never felt before. I had discovered my Granduncles. We had langar together as my proud father told them of my prowess on the tabla. I got their blessings.

In 1985, steeped in a craze for aviation, I made my first ever solo trip to my ancestral village to meet my grandfather in order to procure the Punjab domicile certificate. My grandpa, Gyani Bhagat Singh (1901-1986), was in much happiness when he learnt that I played a bit of tabla and went to his young cousin's

ਸਭ ਉਲੇਪ ਭਾਈ ਸਵਰਦ ਸਿੰਘ

ਭਾਈ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ, ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਚਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਦੇ ਨਾਲ ਭਾਈ ਸਵਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਨੇ ਮੁੰਢੋਂ ਕੀਰਤਨ-ਬੰਦਗੀ ਵਿਚ ਨਿਰੀ ਤਬਲੇ ਅਤੇ ਪਖਾਵਜ 'ਤੇ ਹੀ ਸੰਗਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਕੀਤੀ, ਸਗੋਂ ਅੱਧੀ ਸਦੀ ਭਰ ਤੋਂ ਜੀਵਨ ਸਾਥ ਵੀ ਨਿਭਾਇਆ ਹੈ।

ਸੰਗੀਤ-ਸਾਧਨਾ, ਪ੍ਰੇਰਣਾ ਅਤੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ-ਰੱਤੀ ਕੀਰਤਨ-ਤ੍ਰਿਮੂਰਤੀ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀ-ਭਰ ਦੀ ਘਾਲਣਾ ਨੂੰ ਚਿਤ ਵਿਚ ਵਸਾਇਆਂ

ਅਨਾਦ ਫ਼ਾਉਂਡੇਸ਼ਨ

ਅੱਜ ਸੰਨ 2006 ਈਸਵੀ ਦੇ ਅਕਤੂਬਰ ਮਹੀਨੇ ਦੇ 16ਵੇਂ ਦਿਹਾੜੇ ਦਿੱਲੀ ਵਿਖੇ ਤੁਸਾਂ

ਭਾਈ ਸਵਰਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ

ਅਨਾਦ ਸਨਮਾਨ 2006

ਕ੍ਰਿਤੱਗਤਾ ਨਾਲ ਭੇਟਾ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ



house to fetch the tabla. Then he sang as I tried to keep pace with him. He taught me the first shabd-reet in raag Gauri. Subtly, the seed of Gur-Kirtan had been sowed that was to outgrow all love and passion I had to be a fighter pilot and over an astronaut. The history of Keertan was now as old as my grandfather.

It was only in 1987 that I finally knocked at the residence of Bhai Avtar Singh in Gurdwara Mata

CITATION

Bhai Avtar Singh and Bhai Gurcharan Singh are of those rare ones who through their radiance remind us of the vastness of which we are a part. They have traveled the globe to carry the Guru's message of joy and serenity through sacred music that flows from their rich oral intangible heritage. Steeped in tradition, they have remained open to the needs of the changing times and have responded with a monumental collection of recordings and published documentation. With artistic craftsmanship, unwavering stability, gracious humility and selfless service, they have lived as representatives of the Guru's darbar, and have left a legacy to ensure that the treasures they have cared for will remain for the generations of seekers who follow.

With heartfelt gratitude for a lifetime of service to humanity through your music, inspiration and love

Anad Foundation presents
ANAD SÁNMAN 2006

To

Bhai Avtar Singh Ragi and Bhai Gurcharan Singh Ragi
This 16th day of October, 2006
Delhi, India

Sundri. My grand aunt Bibi Amar Kaur opened the door and took me to the portrait of my great grand uncle Baba Jwala Singh and to the taus of Baba Sharda Singh that stood next to it. I also saw the two volumes of Gurubani Keertan: Pracheen Reet Ratnavali, 497 shabd-reet (compositions) that my grand uncles had written for the Punjabi University, Patiala, a voluminous undertaking perhaps never attempted before by exponents of any tradition.

The history of Keertan was now as old as my great-grand-uncles' generation.

By then I had become intensely curious to know more about the family history and my ancestors but all questions directed at my grand uncles were referred to my grand mother who, they said, being much older was the family's grand repository. Bibi Sant Kaur (1900-2000), my grand mother, would begin at midnight with Sukhmana, her panj padarthi nitnem. She became my storyteller. She told how our ancestors were given the title 'Chaudhary' by the third guru, Amar Das. They were the architects and constructors of all works from the third till the tenth gurus' times. She emphasised to me that, as

Keertan was the blessing of Guru Arjan to our family ancestors, I must take special care of this priceless treasure. She also spoke of the times in the 18th century when my ancestors had a khanda in one hand and a dhaal in the other, yet kept a saranda slung at the back. In spite of the dire circumstances, persecution and even when facing extinction, the Khalsa never lost the cultural, spiritual and temporal riches endowed upon them by the gurus.

The awe of history was now complete...

The 90's came after my renunciation of flying as a career. The chance of studying with living legends became a reality as my real journey now took off. From reviving the lost instruments by instrument making, learning jori/pakhawaj in order to revive the near extinct school of percussion, reviving the grammar of raag-naad, documentation and preservation activities were more enriching than ever expected. One by one, at the

feet of my granduncles Bhai Gurcharan and then Bhai Avtar, I began imbibing the shabd-reet from guru-times, learning in the process how the Guru sang a particular dhrupad, chantt, vaar, dhuni, ghorian, allahunian, sadd, to the manner Guru Arjan sang sultaal, and the way Nanak the Guru sang raag asa, tukhari and even gauri-poorbi-deepaki.

Looking back, I am humbled and bow with enormous gratitude towards the One who thus wrote the script. To learn the art of percussion, Bhai Gurcharan sent me to his teacher, Bhai Arjan Singh Tarangar; Dr. Sumati Mutatkar referred me to Ustad Fahimuddin Dagar for voice culture; Gyani Harbhajan Singh appeared one day in 1993 and taught my hands, already adept in designing and building aeromodels, to make musical instruments that had been extinct for decades. I have been further enriched with the love and compassion received from so many other wondrous bearers of excellence: Maharaj Bir Singh Namdhari, Bibi Jaswant Kaur, Gyani Darshan Singh, Maharaj Thakur Singh, who chose to live in anonymity for over 40 years, and Ustad M Hafiz Khan of Lahore, to name just a few.




The Bhai Sahibs: Swaran Singh, Avtar Singh, Gurcharan Singh Ragi



It seems that the community, and the nation as well, is still sleep, unaware of the rich oral and intangible heritage that makes every civilisation and way of life unique. Even those who wake up and realise their heritage often remain intoxicated with the relentless pursuit of money and power, whereas the quest for mere excellence in inner virtues and in various art manifestations, which seldom leads to capitalistic success, is overlooked as poverty and deficiency. Year after year, the elder masters,

considered phenomena in their prime time, have passed away in anonymity. Such forgetfulness by society has meant that the young continue to be deprived of role models and continue to degenerate into beings without the knowledge or tools to be procreative benefactors to serve the nation and society.

Two masters are fast walking towards dusk. They never became consumerists of the sacred art forms they served, but are leaving behind a legacy of, what is, an unparalleled contribution. They have never sought attention for themselves and, with unwavering enthusiasm and pride, have celebrated the vidya that they have lived for over six decades. Unfazed, unadulterated and uncorrupted by the Kaliyuga, they walk with the same pride, sense of dignity, commitment, wisdom, contentment and humility that adherence to the timeless legacy of a priceless heritage can only bring.

My eternal salute to them... 

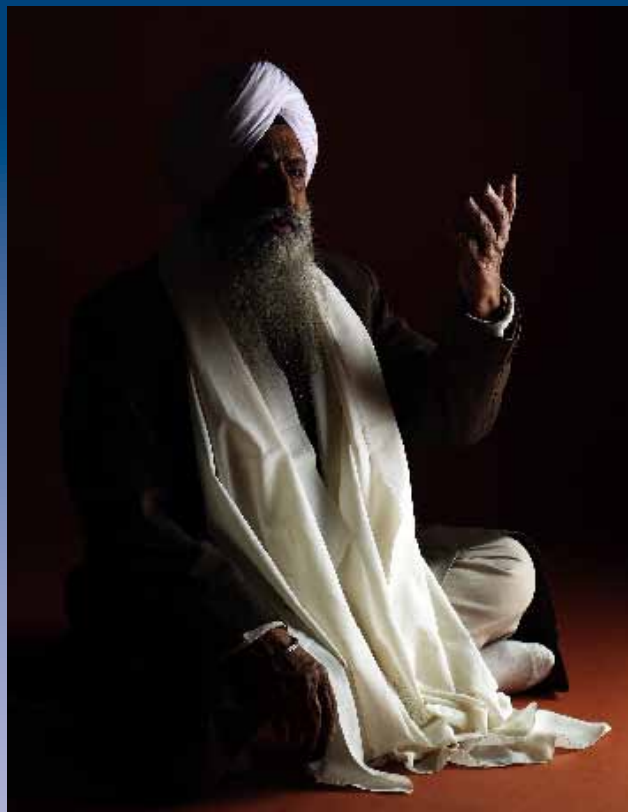
Bhai Baldeep Singh
[Managing Trustee of Anad Foundation and
organizer of Jashan]

Bhai Avtar Singh Ragi, born at Saidpur in the erstwhile state of Kapurthala, passed away in the early hours of 25 November 2006, after a brief illness in Delhi. He and his brother Bhai Gurcharan Singh were the sons of the legendary Sikh kirtania, Bhai Jawala Singh, the 11th-generation flag bearers of the original style of shabad singing by Sikh Gurus in medieval Punjab.

The compositions they sang date back to the period of the Gurus and some of them were sung note by note as the Gurus sang them. For 60 years they performed keertan. They were accompanied by their nephew Bhai Swaran Singh, an accomplished artist of the tabla.

Bhai Gurcharan Singh, the elder brother, is with us but has not sung keertan for over a decade. With the younger brother's demise, another generation has passed into eternity.

The brothers were apt in singing all the raag variants, lores (dhunian) and other variants of music forms incorporated in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. For the last half century, their keertan was regarded as the standard against which gurmat sangeet of shabad reet parnali (traditional compositions/kritis) singing was to be measured.



The legend passes into eternity

Gurmat sangeet, or shabad kirtan, was not just the singing of gurbani in raags, rather it was a unique fusion of shabad raag and tal. Shabad-reetes are compositions of the Guru period. Some of them were the originals sung by the Gurus themselves.

Besides other achievements and their contribution to this art form, the two brothers did great service to the world of musicology

by recording 500 of their original medieval compositions (48 hours) and annotating them before donating the same to Punjabi University, Patiala. The two volumes, Gurubani Sangeet-Pracheen Reet Ratnavali, were published in 1976.

The tradition has been passed on to the next generations in the family. Kultar Singh, the son of Bhai Avtar Singh and a mechanical engineer by profession, joined Bhai Avtar Singh's jatha in 1999. Since then he has been practicing the family tradition with this father and carrying it forward. Bhai Baldeep Singh, rooted in the family tradition and a grandnephew of the senior Bhai Sabib, is an accomplished musician, researcher, preservationist and a musicologist in his own right carrying the priceless heritage into the 13th generation. 🙏

Bhayee Sikandar Singh

Multiple honours for Dr. Manmohan Singh



India's Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh giving his acceptance speech after being conferred with Honorary Doctoral Degree by Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, Chancellor of Cambridge University, in London on 11 October, 2006. The Vice Chancellor Prof. Alison Richard is on the right.

In his address at the Senate House of the University of Cambridge on his being awarded the honorary degree of *Doctor of Law* on 11 October 2006, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh called for 'inclusive globalisation' as a way of ensuring that the gains from economic openness were more widely shared by both rich and the poor. Expanding on the themes he had raised at the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Havana in September, Dr Manmohan Singh said that 'achievements of the era of globalisation should not blind us to the new anxieties that globalisation has brought in its wake'.

There was also a personal touch in the Prime Minister's remarks. Speaking before a select audience of dons and students at the ornate Senate House, Dr Manmohan Singh recalled his days as an undergraduate of St John's College. 'My memories of the days in Cambridge are deep. I was taught by

teachers like Nicholas Kaldor, Joan Robinson, Maurice Dobb and Professor R.C.O. Mathews. I have vivid recollections of the economist Piero Sraffa working at the Marshal Library'.

The eminent economists whose names he took – most of whom were either Marxist or heavily influenced by Marxism, social-democracy or Keynesianism – themselves conveyed a sense of how much the university, the world and even Dr Singh have changed since then with new orthodoxies about the free market replacing the paradigm of state intervention. 'Today the world appears radically altered', he said. 'A new age of freedom has harnessed to it new technologies that have transformed production and communication ... Prometheus has truly been unbound. And yet, the failure to address the growing gap between the rich and the poor and to provide quality services in health and education to all is causing resentment and alienation ... and putting pressure on the practice of democracy'.

The degree ceremony was presided over by Prince Philip, the Chancellor. Shortly after the Chancellor entered the hall in formal procession, the senior proctor – speaking in Latin – announced commencement of the proceedings with a ceremonial flourish of his hand.

The University Orator then made a short speech presenting Dr Manmohan Singh to the Chancellor, again in Latin. He noted that among the great democracies, of which India was one, it was very rare indeed for the position of Prime Minister to be entrusted to one who was not a professional politician. Tracing the academic career of Dr Manmohan Singh, as well as his association with Cambridge, the Orator doffed his morar board when he said that ‘you may note the colour of his turban’ – ‘mitrae colorem uideritis!’ – a reference to the university’s blue which the Prime Minister himself said was one of his favourite colours ‘and is often seen on my head’!

The Orator said, ‘Millions look to this man: they see in him someone of conspicuous integrity; he is, in the words of the Greek poet Simonides, cool and calm, well aware of the justice that serves the state, and a man of healing virtue’. Dr Manmohan Singh, wearing the burgundy gown of a Cambridge Doctor of Law and with his blue turban, then stood alongside the Orator in front of the Chancellor, took a ceremonial bow and was awarded the honorary degree.

The reception afterwards allowed the Prime Minister to mingle with students and fellow academics. Among those he warmly greeted was Professor Ajit Singh, the eminent Cambridge economist and onetime student of his from his days as a young academic in the Punjab. To all the young Indian students who came up to greet him afterwards, the Prime Minister had one line of advice: ‘Study hard, and come home’.

“A scholar and public servant of great distinction”


English translation of the speech made in Latin by the University Orator as part of the honorary degree ceremony:

‘Among the great democracies – and you, the People of India, are not the least among them -- it is very rare indeed for the position of Prime Minister to be entrusted to one who is not a professional politician. Manmohan Singh is a scholar and public servant of great distinction. He grew up in times so perilous that for a long while when India and Pakistan were breaking apart his father went missing and he himself could not discover his own examination results; yet he pursued his studies as far as Cambridge (you may note the colour of his turban) and read economics with such brilliance that he received the only First of his year and was also awarded the Adam Smith prize. One of his teachers says of him, ‘He was the best student I ever had’.

His classic work, still valid, is entitled ‘India’s Export Trends and Prospects for Self-Sustained Growth’. You will find argued in it many of the basic ideas which have realised to dramatically the potential of the Indian economy.

He spent much time as a university professor and much time also advising the Indian Government and others on matters financial. When those government leaders begged and besought him themselves, it was impossible for him to refuse his help: he became Governor of India’s Reserve Bank. Then he was asked to become Minister of Finance; he accepted that too. By undoing red tape and removing petty regulations he liberated his fellow citizens’ talent for entrepreneurship in business.

Finally came the request to serve as the country’s Prime Minister. He accepted, observing: ‘You cannot sustain a democratic polity unless those on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder feel they are partners in the process of change’.

Millions look to this man: they see in him someone of conspicuous integrity; he is, in the words of the Greek poet Simonides, cool and calm, well aware of the justice that serves the state, and a man of healing virtue. I present to you, Manmohan Singh, M.A., Prime Minister of India and Honorary Fellow of St John’s College’. 



New York's Rubin Museum of Art: A Journey into Sikh Art

The Rubin Museum of Art (RMA) in New York has been putting together rare and insightful exhibitions on Himalayan Art since it opened to the public in 2004. From September 18, 2006 – January 29, 2007, the RMA is showcasing works of art from the 16th century through the 19th century that identify core Sikh beliefs and reflect the socio-cultural structure of its times. Aptly titled – *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion*, the 100 works include paintings, drawings, metalwork, textiles and photographs.

Whether the exhibition is an aesthetic experience or a spiritual one for the individual, its impact is undeniable. It places Sikh history, its religion, its culture and people in a broader context – compelling the West to look at what lies beneath the turban, focusing on the ‘Saint’ within the ‘Soldier.’ The effort is the first of its kind in New York, the cultural capital of and home to the most polyglot society in the United States.

The RMA has also provided a platform for Sikhs to be involved in many unusual ways. The Third Annual *Spinning Wheel Film Festival* of New York,



Sardar Ishar Singh Bindra with Ambassador Ronen Sen, Member of Parliament Sardar Tarlochan Singh and Consul General Neelam Deo at the inauguration of the exhibition.



Gracing majestically in the centre of the museum lobby.

celebrating Sikh films was held at the museum where 25 films on Sikh themes were shown during a two-week period. The museum is hosting special Saturday family programs such as a turban tying demonstration, Punjabi wedding songs, a Diwali celebration with saakhis of Guru Hargobind and decoration of diyas, and many more workshops are in the pipeline as well.

The exhibition is supported by the *Sikh Art & Film Foundation* and the *Sikh Foundation*. It was inaugurated on 16 September 2006 by Indian Ambassador Ronen Sen, Member of Parliament,



Sardar Tarlochan Singh and Congressman Gregory Meeks, and was followed by a gala reception attended by over 800 guests.

Inni Kaur of the *Sikh Art & Film Foundation* (and *Nishaan USA*) talks about the exhibition, its magic, the saakhis it gives form to, the poetry embedded in its hues and as she says, "the fragrance of Guru Nanak's message that the paintings carry."

Q *How did the Sikh Art & Film Foundation collaborate with the Rubin Museum of Art on this project?*

A The Sikh Art & Film Foundation came into being because of this exhibition. Dr. Narinder Singh Kapany and Tejinder Singh Bindra decided to take up the offer of the Rubin Museum to sponsor the exhibition. Tejinder made a few

persuasive phone calls to Sikhs in the Tri-state area (Connecticut, New Jersey and New York). Funds were raised in record time; the enthusiasm of the sangat was admirable. I too called on many Sikhs for guidance and support, and they gave so generously. I was taken aback by their generosity of heart and spirit. At every step I felt the energy of 25 million standing alongside me...this energy of the Khalsa Panth, how does one put that into words?

Q *How did you get involved in this exhibition? Has helping put together this exhibit influenced you/ your perceptions?*

A I was intrigued from the moment I heard the title – I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art & Devotion. I see no stranger, a tuk from Guru Arjan Dev ji's bani, 'Na ko beri, na ko begana,' and then the devotional side of this exhibit was the hook that pulled me straight in. I went through moments of doubt initially for I am no art historian or critic but somewhere along the line my role developed into coordinator and liaison with the museum. Working on this exhibition has been a soul-searching emotional roller-coaster ride. I have always believed that the Guru chisels and believe me there was a lot of chiselling going on and it was painful. But the end result is a greater understanding of Sikhi in its purest form and for that I am extremely grateful. Yes, I went through internal turmoil and worked long hours but what I received in return is immeasurable.



Ardaas being recited before the opening.



Drums of the Punjab welcoming the guests.



Dr. Caron Smith joins in the dancing.



The Singh Twins with a guest at the gala event.

Q Can you give us an example of what constituted a part of this “chiselling” process?

A The image ingrained in me of Guru Nanak is the one done by the popular artist Sardar Sobha Singh. To see Guru Nanak with Muslim and Hindu overtures was a bit disconcerting. While I understood these paintings intellectually, the heart was slow to follow. Why was the image so important? That was something I had to wrestle with; after all in Sikhi it is always the message that is of paramount importance. Was I stuck in a time frame where I still wanted to put a face to ‘The Shabad?’ You know, the hardest battles are not fought with swords on battlefields, but they are fought in everyday routine within us. ‘Sabh may jot, jot hay soin’ sounds wonderful, but to put it into daily practice is a monumental task and yet that is what is required to walk this path.

Q What is the role of Art in a religion like Sikhism?

A Take this particular form of art for instance; one is intrigued as to how it came into being. The palette that was created for the ‘janamsakhis’ by the existing workshops must have its own story. Who commissioned these paintings – was it to appease the Sikhs or were they done for and by the Sikhs? The cultural drama of the early days of Sikhism is definitely seen through this art. The influence of the two dominant religions - Hinduism and Islam - comes out loud and clear. Yet, Sikhism survived and flourished. I feel its toughest detractors were not only in times of war but also in times of peace. Superstition, age-old stubborn rituals, habitual customs, distorted perceptions of Sikhism based on ignorance, Sikhism and Sikhs have survived them all and continue to do so. These paintings are a reminder of that fact.

Q How is early Sikh Art and specifically this exhibition, relevant for modern-day Sikhs?

A These paintings, though done in the 18th century have a unique place in Sikh cultural history. Not only are they an indication of the socio-economic environment of their times but the message of Guru Nanak comes out loud and clear through the janamsakhis. When I see the painting of Guru Nanak at Achal Batala, I connect immediately to the place; it is where I believe the dialogue between Guru ji and the Siddhas took place. I too was searching and hungry for answers; I too, had the same questions. Does it matter which school or style they are painted in? Not to me. These paintings have connected me to our past, educated me on the principles of Sikhi and touched my inner core in ways I never imagined. To me both, this connection and education are vitally important because it is only when you have a clear idea where you come from that you know where you are going – as an individual and as a community.



Dean of the Liberal Arts School at Hofstra University, Dr. Bernard Firestone with his wife and Gurpreet Singh.

Q In your opinion what challenges do the Sikhs face in representing themselves well and accurately to the public?

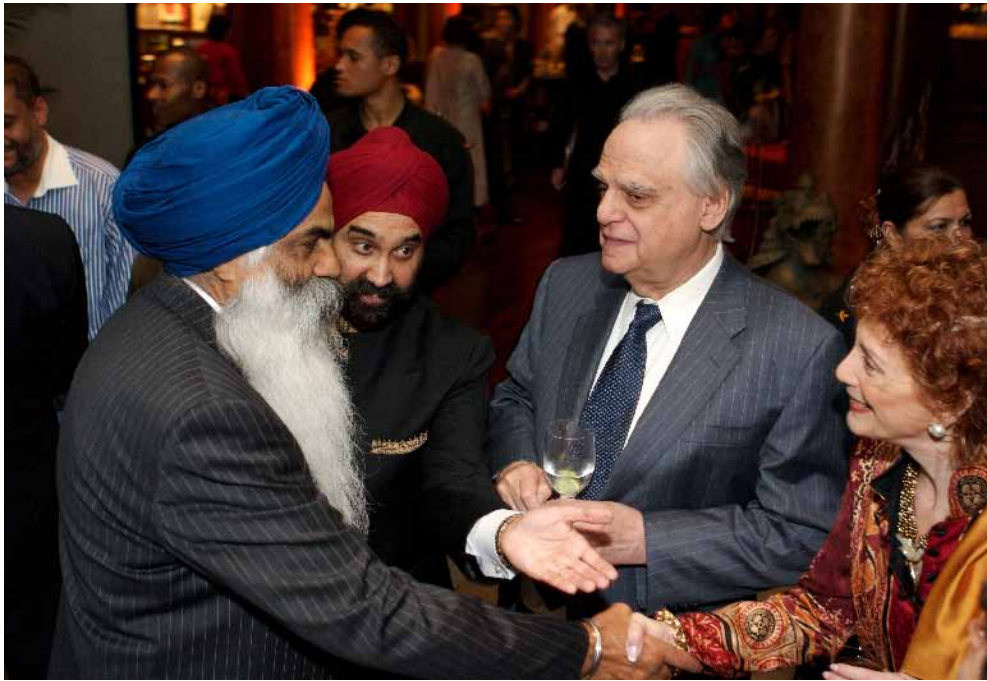
A The challenge lies within oneself. The more comfortable you are with yourself and your faith, the easier it gets to represent it. Recently, the backlash we Sikhs suffered post 9/11 occurred due to misconception and ignorance. That we have not been able to be correctly portrayed in American society is something we too must take responsibility for. Art is a wonderful medium; this seems to me an apt opportunity to educate ourselves and the public about Sikhi and Sikhs. I think if we all can learn to see the world according to the Guru there is no challenge, until then there are many and each one will deal with them in his/her way.

Q Earlier, you mentioned the spirit of the Khalsa Panth... Can you give us an example?

A The enthusiasm and success of our volunteer guide programme caught me by surprise. The younger generation of Sikhs have risen



Dr. & Mrs. Narinder Singh Kapany with Dr. Caron Smith.



Tejinder Singh Bindra introducing Didar Singh Bains to Don and Shelly Rubin.

to the challenge and are doing an outstanding job. In response to the museum's request, we now have Sikh volunteers on the exhibition floor ready to answer any questions related to Sikhi – they are there on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. They wear Guide buttons and interact with the public. They tell me that answering the public's questions on Sikhism has made them more aware of the principles of the faith. Apart from undergoing training, they have been doing a lot of independent reading as well. To experience their enthusiasm is wonderful.

Q *Most of the paintings that are close to your heart are picked from the first section "Searching for answers." What is the reason for such a deep connection with this part of the exhibition?*

A At some point in my life, I was told that you only start to live when you begin 'to search the meaning of life;' till then you just exist. I didn't quite know the depth of what was being said. It was when my inner restlessness took over that I fully appreciated and realised what I had been told. Section One reminds me of my own search except, Guru

Nanak had the answers and was sharing them while I was searching for mine.

Q *How do you view this exhibition?*

A Well, the only way I know how to describe this exhibition is, I look upon each painting as a Haiku. Now a Haiku not everyone understands or appreciates but for me the exhibition is a collection of Haikus; each image stands on its own and as a collection, it is a meditation. While on the surface it says

one thing, but if you dig deeper the message of Sikhi comes out loud and clear. It is as if a veil has been removed and you leap into the world of Guru Nanak.

For more and current information on the exhibition, log on to www.sikharts.com

**Sanmeet Kaur Kirat,
Toronto.**



I see no Stranger – Early Sikh Art and Devotion

A selection by Inni Kaur

Sikhism is a way of life, a journey that begins without but takes you within. It is an endeavour to connect with the Formless, the Enduring, the Divine, through the Guru's grace. The journey is the destination. Even though there is no religious art in Sikhism, no visual that reflects its ideology, there is however, art inspired by Sikhism. The exhibition comprises a series of such art, which is motivated by Sikh saakhis, devotion and a way of life. The artists may or may not have been Sikhs, may not have understood Sikhi in its most basic mode, nevertheless they

strove to capture the mysticism of an intensely spiritual faith on their fragile canvasses. I am grateful for their efforts for they take me back to my childhood, to my grandfather's saakhi-telling sessions, to lessons first learnt and subsequently re-learned, a reminder of the ideology the saakhis portray – for me these paintings and sketches carry the fragrance of Guru Nanak's message and their simplicity is their ever-lasting beauty. Let me share with readers some of the art as I perceive it...

The exhibition is divided into five sections:

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This section of the exhibition brings together paintings and drawings that depict episodes in the life of Guru Nanak. They are drawn from a genre of literature known as Janamsakhis, literally "eye-witness stories of a lifetime."

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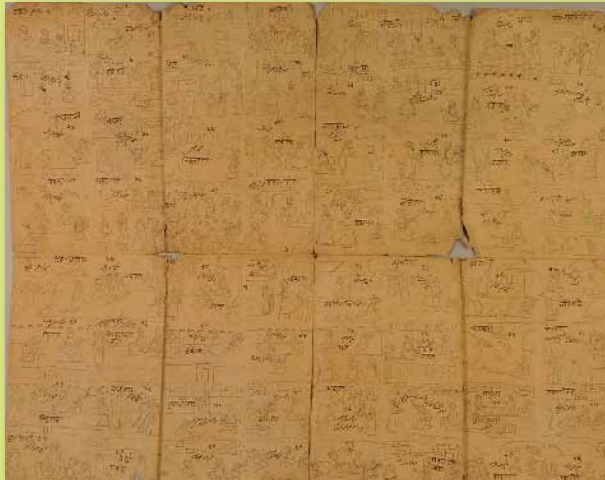
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Guru Nanak dressed in an Inscribed Robe 2.4

There is a gentleness in the painting. It says to me, 'Koyee bole raam raam, koyee khudaye, koyee sayvai gusiyaa, koyee allaahe.' I love the way Guru Nanak's head is tilted and his expression one of 'pure compassion.' The front of his robe has verses of the Quran, the sleeves and part of the hem have his wonderful composition, the Jap ji. I feel the artist's love for the message of Guru Nanak and he has done his best to incorporate it in his way of thinking.





Janamsakhi template 1.26

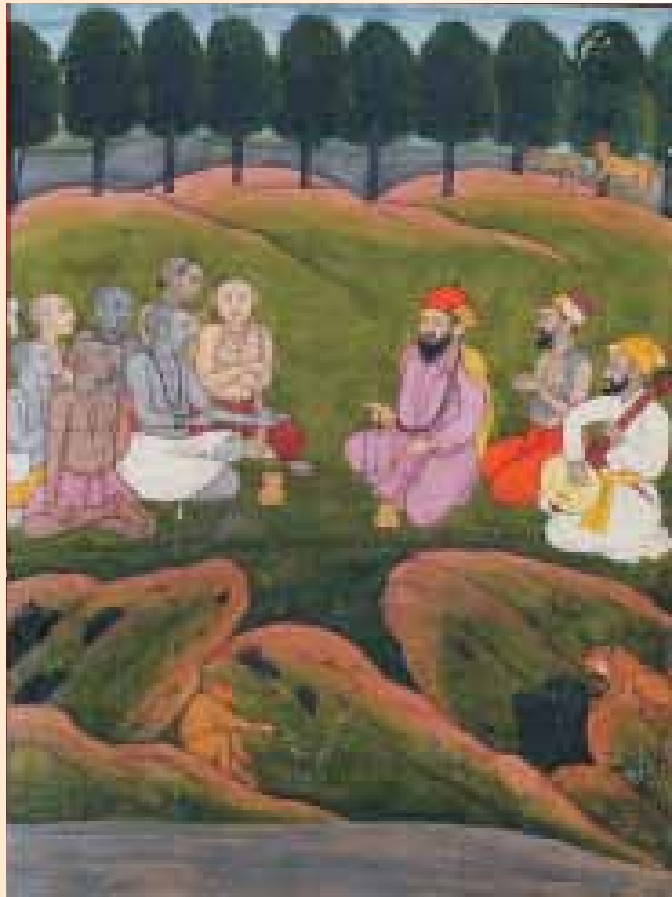
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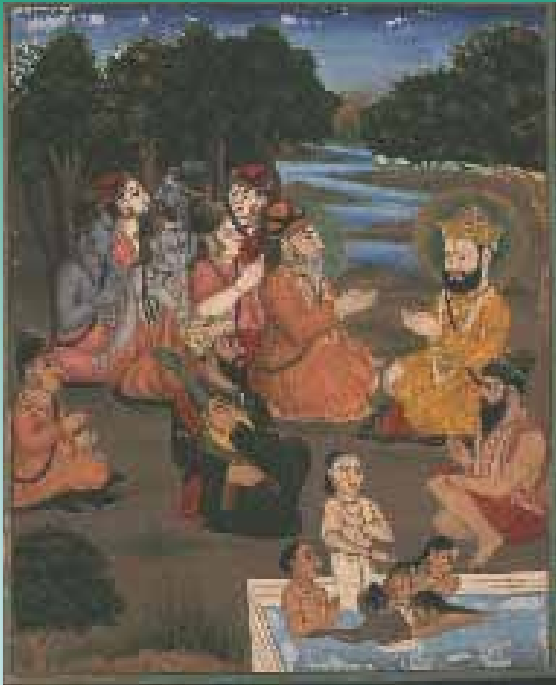
Guru Nanak with a Group of Sadhus I.1

Here is Guru Nanak sitting on a river bank in a purple robe with Mardana. My thoughts tune in and I wonder what he is discussing with these sadhus. Is he telling them that "Yoga is neither in the patched coat, nor in the yogi's staff, nor in smearing oneself with ashes, nor in wearing the earrings, nor close-cropping the head, nor in blowing the horn; only if one remains detached in the midst of attachments, one attains to the true state of yoga. One becomes not a yogi by mere talk. If one looks upon all creation alike, he is acclaimed as a true yogi." Page 733 GGS.

I love the way the monkeys are sitting so still in the foreground. To me the artist is trying to convey the sacredness of this meeting; everything around Guru Nanak is still while he speaks.



Guru Nanak addresses yogis at Achal Batala 1.26



Guru Nanak is shown here in conversation with yogis devoted to Shiva and of the kanphata (split-ear) sect at a festival held in honour of Shiva. I would love to have been there to hear the conversation; once again, my senses blend into the painting and Guru ji's words flow in my head:

"One bathes oneself at the pilgrim-stations and worships stocks and stones, but being imbued not with Naam, one remains impure." Page 904 GGS

I think this is the place where the beautiful in-depth dialogue titled Sidh Gosht took place. I can only imagine how charged the atmosphere must have been. Sidh Charpat asks:

"How does one cross over this treacherous and impassable ocean of life?"

Charpat Sidha says, "O Nanak, think over and give the true answer".

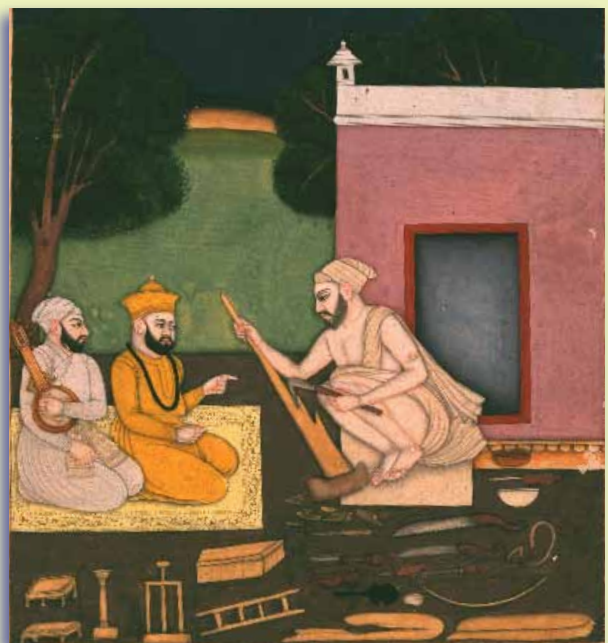
And the answer: *"Like a lotus flower floats above water and a duck swims through water without getting wet, you can cross this world ocean by riding your consciousness on the Word of God and connecting to Naam, the Divine Consciousness."*

Is there anything more beautiful than this? How can I help not falling in love with this art? When I look at it, I am transported into a world of wonder and bliss.

Guru Nanak at the carpenter Lalo's home 1.3

We all know and love the saakhi of how Guru Nanak refused to go to eat at the feast thrown by Malik Bhago and preferred the simple food served by Lalo; for the food at Lalo's home was earned through honest means – it was *kirat kamayee*. Guru Nanak was always with the people. He broke down all caste barriers by this simple action.

I ask myself, if I was presented with the same choice what I would do? Truthful living is highlighted in this painting. Lalo continues to work while he listens to the Guru's shabad. Lalo's expression is one of complete submission, I wonder if it is because, "The serenity is intoxicating, I am in bliss, My search is over, I am a Sikh."



Guru Nanak and the priests of Kurukshetra 1.4

In this painting Guru Nanak is shown at the fair in Kurukshetra. As the saakhi goes Guru Nanak decided to challenge the extreme orthodox views that had turned vegetarianism into a rigid fetish, by cooking the meat of a deer gifted to him by a devotee on their most auspicious day. I can only imagine the distress that must have caused the Brahmin priests - they must have been beside themselves.

To top it off Guru Nanak says:

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There is great drama and activity around Guru Nanak but he remains calm. In the painting he is physically separated from the confrontational yogis by a patch of green and the pilgrims bathing have been painted at a distance from him too. I feel this calm.



The Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, Gift of the Kapany Collection

Guru Nanak sleeping with his feet toward the Ka'aba at Mecca 1.6

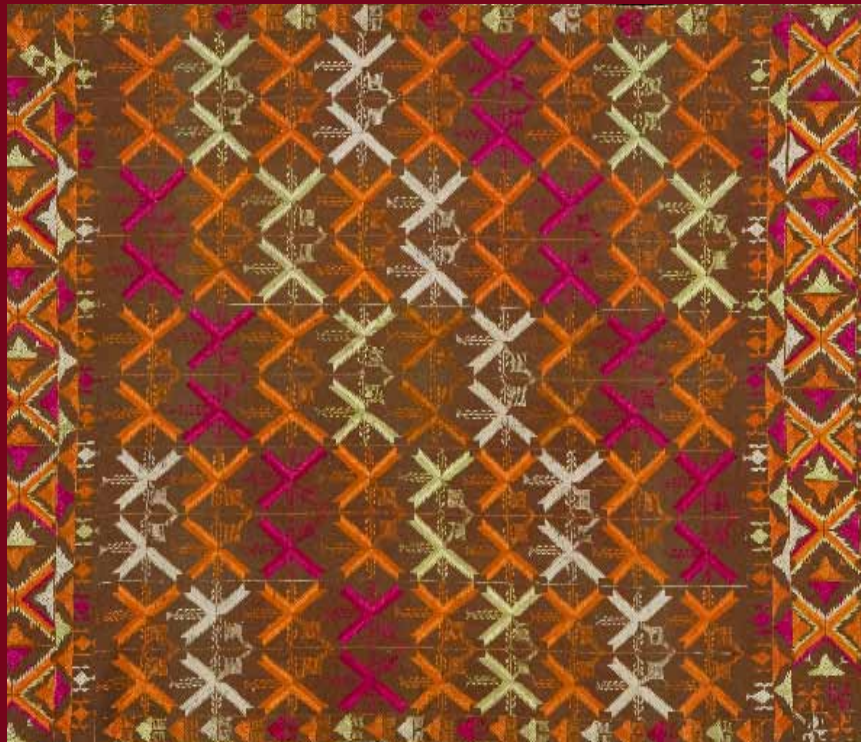
This painting portrays what is probably the most recited and loved saakhi. Guru Nanak tired from his travels falls asleep with his feet inadvertently pointing towards the Ka'aba. The Arab priest kicks him and demands to know why his feet are pointing towards God. To this, Guru Nanak replies, “Turn my feet in a direction in which God is not.” The priest seizes Guru Nanak's feet and turns them in the opposite direction. As the saakhi goes, the entire Mecca turned to follow the direction in which Guru Nanak's feet were turned. The message : there is no place, nook or cranny in which God does not reside.

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Wonderful Phulkaris 5.19

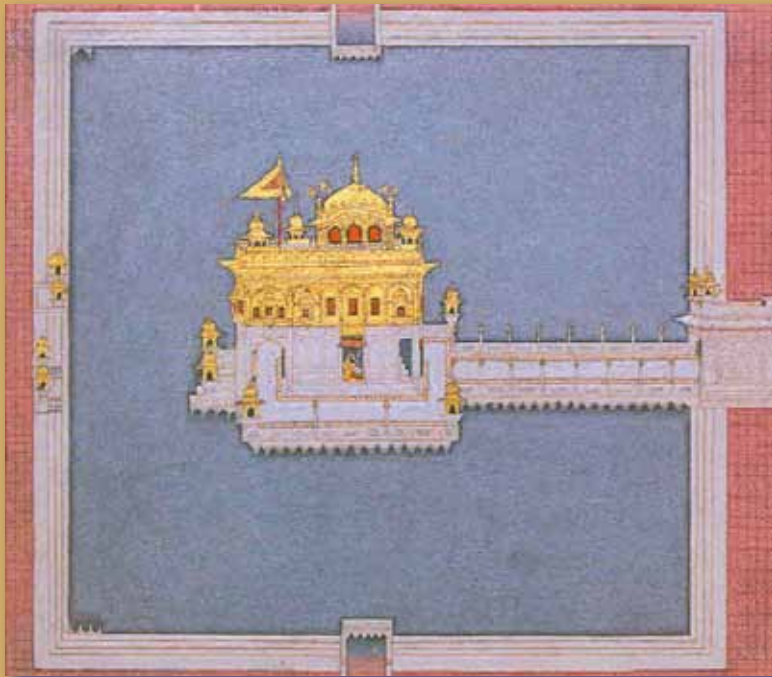
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way I am? I know we are living in a mechanical era; things are happening at a speed of light but once in a while I feel we need to slow down and look around to see what we are losing. The other day, I was listening to some Punjabi folk songs and one particular line touched my heart, 'Mera naa dha phul na painie tu apni phulkari tey.' I was transported into a world where young hearts connected via the phulkari. I look at them and I am reminded of what we lost in 1947.

We lost our land, our roots and we also lost a way of life.

Harmandir Sahib, the Golden Temple at Amritsar 2.1β



On any given day the parkarma of Sri Harmandir Sahib is thronged with devotees, walking towards the Darshani Daudi, to take ishnaan, doing seva, sitting, meditating. The snug interiors of the structure are filled with devotees and from it the sweet strains of kirtan flow incessantly. In spite of all the constant activity, one is enveloped in a sustained sense of calm and the spirit is at once still when one enters the hallowed premises.

I am revisited by this tranquility when I see this painting. To me the structure amidst the still blue seems like a glittering, precious jewel and I long to mount it in my heart and soul. The artist has captured the Golden Temple in all its magnificence. He seems to have compressed every grand detail into its neat compact borders.

The Manji Sahib

The exhibition also has a Manji Sahib to create awareness of the devotional aspect of Sikhie. It sits majestically and fittingly so. As much as I love the paintings the object that holds my heart is the Manji Sahib – the Beed Sahib is not present, yet the presence of the Manji Sahib in the centre of the exhibition is breathtaking – the serenity it lends the surroundings and the reverence that it invokes in the people is humbling and awe-inspiring at the same time. The feeling that ‘Pothe Parmeshar ka sthan,’ is apparent; I am not surprised



that Holland Cotter of The New York Times wrote so beautifully about the Guru Granth Sahib after viewing the exhibition: “(The Guru Granth Sahib) became and remains an object of incalculable charisma, almost a sentient being, enthroned on cushions, swathed in rich fabrics, and handled with tender, punctilious deference. Reciting or singing from it is the defining act of the Sikh worship. So intense is its sanctity that, while a throne has been prepared for it in the show, the Guru Granth itself is physically absent.” ☪

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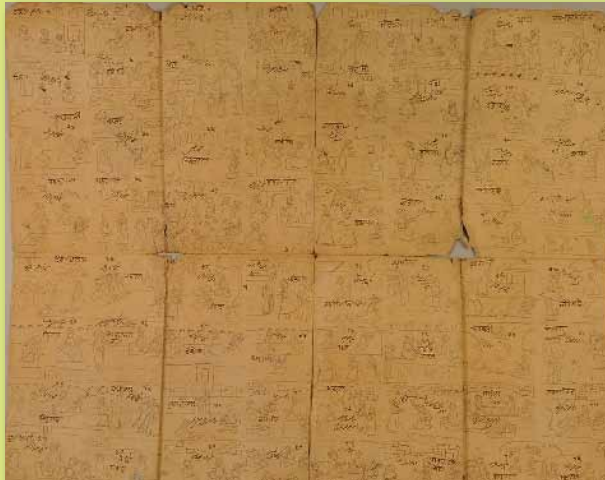
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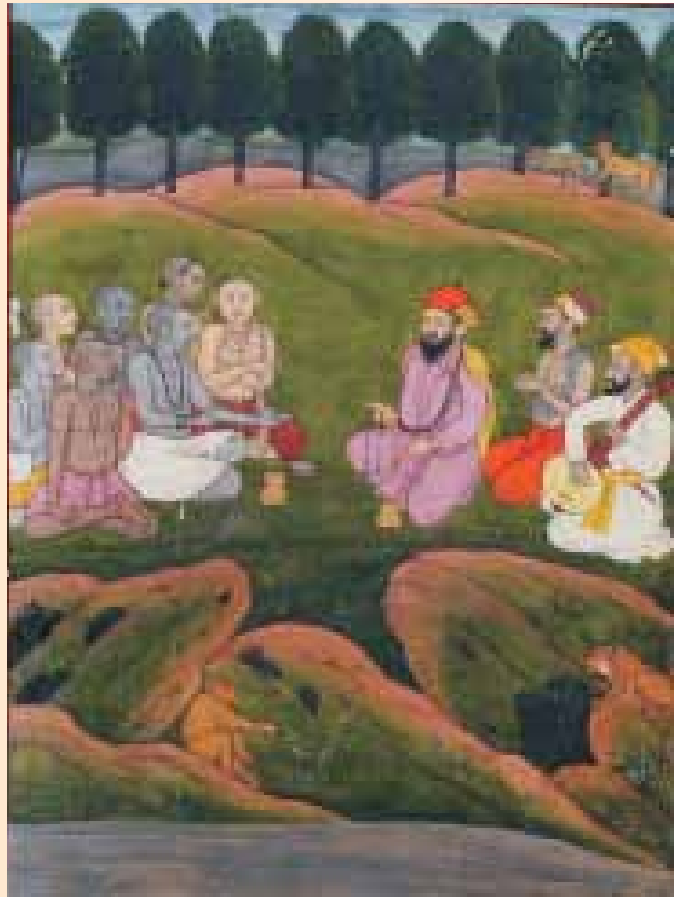
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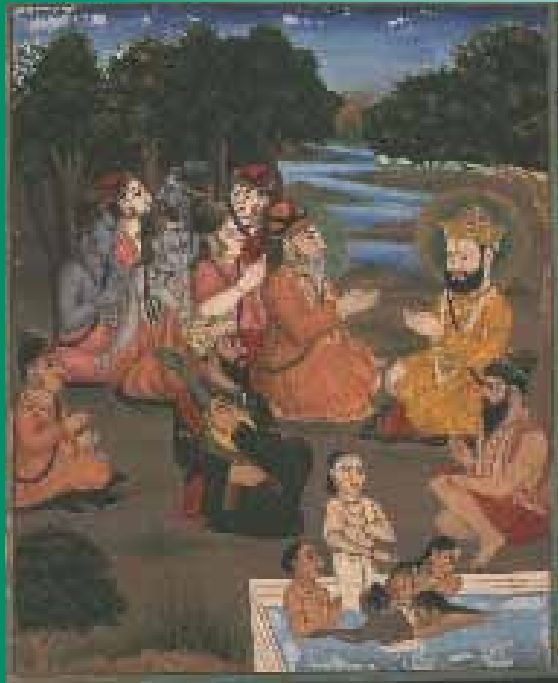
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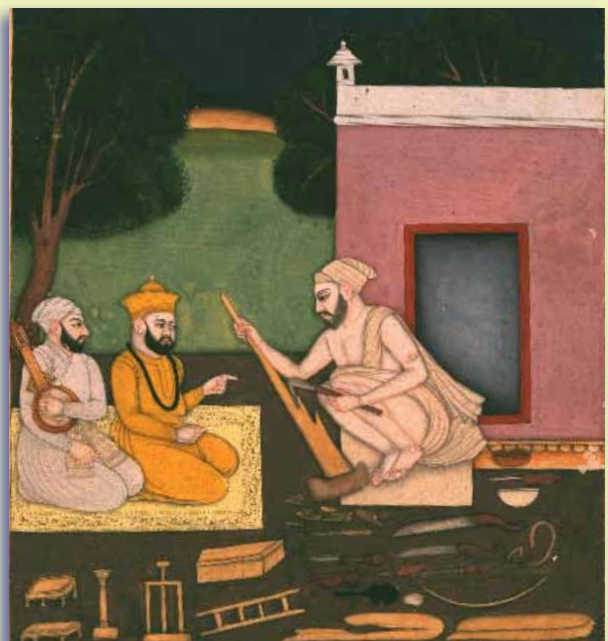


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Guru Nanak sleeping with his feet toward the Ka'aba at Mecca I.6

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Possibly Guru Nanak approached by a princely figure 3.6

It is still being debated whether or not the figure in this painting is that of Guru Nanak. But for me that is not important. What I focus on is the wealth of the princely figure, his elaborate style of dress and his servant behind him and then my eyes rest on a simply clad saintly figure barefoot. The contrast is so vivid and a Shabad comes to mind: "Who is rich, who is poor? Rich is he in whose heart resides Naam." Wealth is bowing to Naam and it has always been that way and I pray that it will continue to be that.

My mind travels to a child laying in a manger and the three wise men bowing to him. This is what this painting says to me – bow your head at the feet of the true, for it is they who possess actual wealth. I am not distressed at the way Guru Nanak (?) is depicted; the message that this painting conveys is so powerful.



Wonderful Phulkaris 5.19

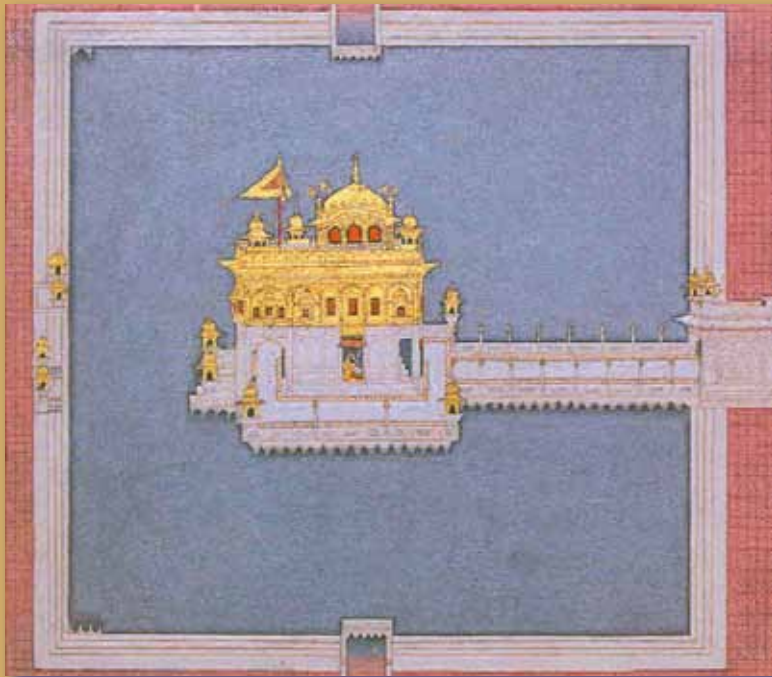
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Harmandir Sahib, the Golden Temple at Amritsar 2. I B




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The Wonders of Sikh Spirituality

Sikhism, the world's fifth-largest organised religion has more than 20 million adherents. Many thousands live in New York City. We can spot Sikh men on the street by their turbans and upswept whiskers. And many of us will recall that two decades ago Sikhs were at the centre of the news when the Indian Army stormed the Golden Temple at Amritsar, killing hundreds of Sikh separatists, and thereafter the Punjab remained in turmoil for many years.

But what about Sikhism itself? Few Westerners have even basic information. How many people are aware that it was conceived as a universalist, open-door religion?

Or that its view of society has always been radically egalitarian? Or that its holy book, the Adi Granth, far from being a catalogue of sectarian dos and don'ts, is a bouquet of poetic songs, blending the fragrances of Hindu ragas, Muslim hymns and Punjabi folk tunes into a medley of spiritual brilliance?

This is precisely the information delivered by the small and absolutely beautiful show titled *I See No Stranger; Early Sikh Art and Devotion* at the Rubin Museum of Art in Chelsea, NY. Vivid but concentrated, it presents, mostly through paintings, a culture's version of its own origins, the image of history shaped essentially by hard work, pluralistic politics and mysticism - and far from any militancy.

Sikhism was founded at the end of the 15th century in northern India, when a young, high-caste Punjabi named Nanak had a revelation. It led him to believe that God was a formless spiritual force shared by all religions, and that social ranks based on faith, class, caste, gender or race were illusory. Unity was the

reality: 'I see no stranger, I see no enemy, I look upon all with good will', is how the Sikh scriptures phrase it.

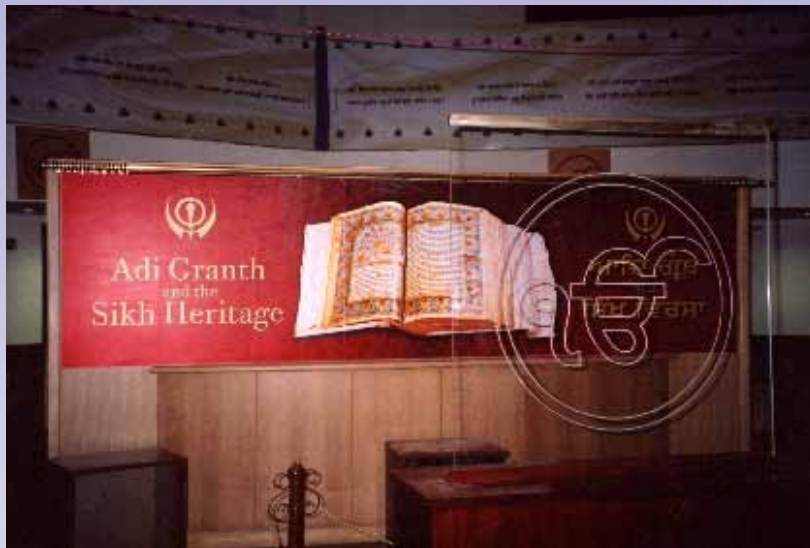
Eager to share his vision, Nanak took to the road, accompanied by a Muslim musician named Mardana, who played the stringed instrument called a rabab. Together they travelled, according to official accounts of Nanak's life. From Sri Lanka to Afghanistan, and west to Baghdad and Mecca, composing and singing devotional songs as they went.

They lived at a high devotional moment. The mystical brand of Islam called Sufism was in full flower, as was the corresponding Hindu movement call Bhakti. Saints of all sorts and sects wandered over northern India, bumping into and

bouncing off one another, turning a subcontinent into a kind of giant love-in. Orthodox thinking was turned inside out. Hierarchies were up-ended. Students taught and teachers learned. The name Sikh comes from the Sanskrit word for disciple.

The exhibition, organised by the art historian B N Goswamy of the Punjab University, and Caron Smith, chief curator of the Rubin Museum, conveys something of the flavour of all this through scores of miniature paintings in Hindu and Mughal court styles illustrating the life of Guru Nanak. In them he emerges as a figure of commonsensical wit, unassuming peity, superhuman power and increasing physical bulk.

He is trim, and soft-faced schoolboy like in one 18th century painting, standing in class and holding out a writing board to a teacher. Already by this time Nanak has been lecturing his parents on the Bhagavad Gita and writing metaphysical verse. Some of these poems,



we are meant to assume, are on the writing board. And we know his confounded teacher will have given him an 'A' for 'Amazing'. Another picture shows the adult Nanak asleep on the floor of a mosque in Mecca, with his feet pointed, in a scandalous breach of religious etiquette, toward the Ka'aba, the God's house, the holy of holies. When an outraged mullah tries to drag him around into reverse position, the Ka'aba turns too. The lesson: no direction is unhallowed because God is everywhere. In a third painting, Nanak, now in stout middle age and wearing a sort of aviator's cap sits with his book of hymns under a tree. Mardana, tuning up nearby, stares into space. From the left a princely figure, stiff-backed and poker-faced, approaches on horseback to pay homage. Clearly the meeting is a significant one, but nobody seems very into it, or even aware that anyone else is there.

The painting is paired in the show with the workshop drawing, produced by a master artist, that served as its model. The contrast is striking. In the drawing the prince far from being restrained, practically levitates from his saddle with ardour and leans toward Nanak as if drawn to a magnet. Mardana plays and sings with fervour of a contemporary bhangra star. It is in the drawing, rather than in the painting, that the *Nanak Effect*, so evident in poems and songs, comes through. Guru Nanak had nine successors, and each built upon what he had begun. The fourth guru, Ram Das, established Amritsar as the pre-eminent Sikh pilgrimage site. The next Guru Arjan Dev completed the Golden Temple there, built on a platform in the centre of an excavated lake. He also assembled Nanak's poems, along with others by Hindus and Muslim saints, to create the Holy Book.

Up to this point, at the very beginning of the 17th century, Sikh history had been peaceful enough despite internal frictions. The site of Amritsar was a gift from the Mughal Emperor, Akbar, a spiritual seeker and social philosopher who ruled most of India and was admiring of Sikhism's multicultural character. But after Akbar's death, rapport with the Mughals disintegrated. In 1606 Akbar's son Jahangir, an intolerant Muslim, imprisoned and killed Guru Arjan Dev. When the next guru was also jailed, the Sikhs adopted a stance of defensive militarism and a new social ideal: the Saint-Soldier. The Tenth Guru Gobind Singh, formalised this collective identity in 1699 when he established a ritual of Sikh initiation and codified a set of communal symbols that included for men, keeping their hair unshorn, one of

the five 'Ks' and assuming the surname Singh ('lion') and for women, using the surname Kaur ('princess').

Guru Gobind Singh also took the crucial step of designating the Adi Granth, the holy book, as the final and eternal guru, under the honorific title of Guru Granth Sahib. The book became and remains an object of incalculable charisma, almost a sentient being, enthroned on cushions, swathed in rich fabrics, and handled with tender, punctilious deference. Reciting or singing from it is the defining act of Sikh worship. So intense is its sanctity that, while a throne has been prepared for it in the show, the Guru Granth itself is physically absent.

Absence can of course have a presence of its own, as modern Sikh history does in this exhibition. An earlier show, 'The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms', organised in London in 1999, focused on Sikhism from the British colonial period onward, tracing the entwined political and religious developments that led to, among other things, the calamities of 1984 in India. The Rubin Museum has later material too, including a splendid set of British-influenced 19th century drawings of craftsmen at work, and a series of formal portraits of Sikh warrior-chiefs. Unlike Nanak these leaders carry weapons rather than hymnals, which points to reconceived ideals of spiritual and temporal power, though these ideals and how they came about are only suggested here.

All-apparent, however, are the poetry and music that pervade and orchestrate the Sikh view of the world. Traditional hymns play softly in the gallery. A rabab is on display. Certain paintings have the gentle, doleful lilt of evening ragas; other jump and twitch with a bhangra beat. And running through everything, like the harmonium's beginning-less-endless voice, are the words from the holy book.

*Wonderful is sound
Wonderful is wisdom
Wonderful is life
Wonderful its distinctions
Wonderful is praise
Wonderful is eulogy
Wonderful the Presence
One sees in the present
O wonder-struck am I to see
Wonder upon wonder*

Holland Cotter

OUR HOLY IMAGES

Story of the original portrait of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji

The National Museum of Natural History at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC has developed an exhibit highlighting the culture of Sikhism. The museum, on the National Mall, is strategically located between the White House and the US Congress, and is visited each year by about 5 million visitors, making it the most visited natural-history museum in the world. The writer visited the museum and met with Dr. Paul Taylor, director of the museum's Asian cultural history programme and curator of the Sikh exhibition. He explained to me that the gallery not only contains about 100 rare Sikh artifacts, but also a research and conservation effort to save and protect Sikh artifacts, which are susceptible to damage with time. Some items, especially watercolour paintings, are light sensitive and flash photography is prohibited. These artifacts are rotated every six months and go through a preservation process for the remaining six months of the year. Additionally, old texts including Janam-Sakhis require conservation measures to stabilise the hand-painted miniatures. I was most impressed by the efforts of the museum to preserve such Sikh paintings and other artifacts.

The US National Anthem is based on a particular flag during the war of U.S. independence. The writer has seen the preservation efforts of the US Government on the flag, a four-year long project on which they are spending \$16 million to bring it back to its original glory. They have preserved the small fort Alamo in San Antonio, where Americans fought a war with Mexico. The Wailing Wall of Jerusalem has been preserved for two millennia. The old Christian missions in California are being maintained in their original form.

Unfortunately, there are no concentrated efforts among Sikh organisations to preserve the priceless treasures of our history. There was an article published in the *Tribune* about the passion of a Sikh gentleman in Amritsar District to collect ancient

historical books and images. He has collected and maintained a library at his house. His efforts are commendable. However, the fact remains that he doesn't have the resources to preserve those rare books and many of those pictures have become discoloured and faint. History is disintegrating owing to lack of proper management of these artifacts of great significance. Sikh organisations need to come forward to save our history. There is a need to rejuvenate the interests in Sikh history in the new generation, which has little clue about our rich cultural heritage. I would now like to bring the reader's attention to another priceless treasure, the original portrait of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur was our ninth Guru. He attained the "Gur-gaddi" in 1664. By that time, the Sikh sangats were already established all the way from Kabul to Dhaka. The Guru traveled to far-off places to sanctify the Sangat. I would like to focus on his travels to Dhaka and the chronicles of his original picture.

It is a historical fact that Guru Tegh Bahadur went to east India, including Bihar, greater Bengal and Assam in the 1660s. While Guruji's family stayed at Patna, Guruji journeyed to Dhaka and sojourned there for more than a year at the house of one of his Sikhs, Bhai Balaki Dass. Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna and this news reached Guru ji at Dhaka (some historians have written that Guru ji got that news at Dhubri). Bhai Balaki Dass kept a cot and bed at his house and used to pray everyday that Guru Sahib should come to his house someday and sit on this cot. Guru Sahib responded to his prayers and sat on his cot when he reached his place where he stayed for some time (two years according to some history books). There used to be congregations at his house. Guru Sahib inspired the Sikhs to build a Dharamsala for the congregation. Shaiesta Khan, the Nawab of Dhaka at that time, was affected by Guru Sahib's striking personality and issued a "phirman" not to collect any taxes from this Dharamsala. (The copy of that phirman is still lying at Dhaka Gurdwara).

When Guru Sahib decided to leave Dhaka, the old mother of Bhai Balaki Dass started crying and lamenting as how could she continue the same darshan? Guru Sahib consented to her request for a painter to make a portrait of him. Bhai Balaki Dass was an influential person of Dhaka and had access to Shaiesta Khan, who brought the royal painter, named Ahsan. The painter made an outline of Guru Sahib but when he reached his face (in the picture); he just could not depict the glowing face of the Guru. On seeing this, Guru Sahib took the brush in his own hand and completed the face himself.

Many writers in historical books have penned this account of Mehma Parkash which contains the biography of all our ten Gurus, written in the 18th century, sometime after Guru Gobind Singh ji. The author's name is Bhai Sarup Dass Bhalla, who was a direct descendent of Guru Amar Dass. Bhai Sarup Dass's real brother, Bhai Tola Singh wrote *Guru Ratnavali*. Bhai Sarup Dass's son, Bhai Kirpa Dial Singh wrote *Fateh-nama Guru ji De Panth Da*. One descendent of Bhai Sarup Dass, Bhai Sadhu Singh, wrote *Guru Sikhia Parbhakar* and *Sri Mukh-vakea Sidhant Jyoti*. But *Mehma Parkash* is the most popular among all these books because this was the first book in which an attempt was made to write the complete biography of all ten Gurus.

The narrative of this painting in Dhaka is acknowledged in Mehma Parkash thus:

"Bada likhari leai mai

(Mai, mother, brought bada likhari, renowned painter)

Satguru hazur tasvir likhai

(Made picture in hazur, front of Satguru)

Sagal ang bastar subh likha

(All body parts and clothes were painted)

Mukh kamal Prabhu nahin likh saka

(But couldn't draw his face)

Dekh Dial kalam hath lina

(On seeing this, Guru took brush in his own hand)

Nij hath sudhar sampuran kina

(Guru completed the picture with his own hand)

Tab mai ko murat Prabh dina".

Then Guru ji gave his moorat picture to mai, the old lady.

This happening has also been mentioned in another ancient book, *Gur Partap Surya Granth*, which was completed by Bhai Santokh Singh in 1842. *Gur Partap Surya Granth* is a tremendous effort by the writer to compile the entire history of the ten Gurus and encompasses 6,412 pages. Bhai Santokh Singh spent 20 years of his life in collecting ancient books of Sikh history and then writing it in his own verse. He divided his book into "Raas" and "Ansu", which can be compared with chapters and sub-chapters of modern books. The writer has written the narrative of this Dhaka picture in Raas 12, Ansu 5 on page 4,243 in 10th volume (re-published by Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab in 1993). The narrative on this picture is written thus:

"Ham karne aab kaaj ghnere, tav aaais te jai agere.

(I have many jobs to do, that's why I must embark on my next mission)

Leo likhae meri tasveer, hai aab jatha sacheer shareer (38)

(You can make my picture, exactly like how I am)

Sun ur harkhi turat sidhai, jai chitere ko le aai (40)

(The old lady went out immediately after listening to this and brought a painter with her)

Bahu dhan de kar kehat sunai, jatha jog pikh likho banai.

(She gave money to the painter and asked him to paint the picture exactly like Guru ji)

Chatur chitera kar chit chao, baith nikat bandat dhar bhaoo (41)

(Wise painter, who had a lot of passion, bowed before Guruji and sat very close to him)

Ang so basat saje hai jaise, dhare prem ko likh kar taise.

(The painter drew all the clothes, which Guruji was wearing)

Badan parphulat kamal samana, ruchir bilochan kirpa nidhana (42)

(Guruji's face was like a flower and his eyes were full of grace)

Na likh sakio rahio pachhtai, tab so kalam gahi gat dai

(The painter couldn't draw his face and eyes and repented, then Guruji took the brush in his own hand)

Aapan hath te mukh ko likhio, ur bismai jin jin pikhio (43)

(Guruji drew his own portrait with his own hand, whosever saw it, was sanctified)

Nij kar te birdha ko dai, bhari anand so sunder lai."

(Guruji gave this picture to the old lady with his own hands, It was a stunning portrait, with great aura).

Since *Gur Partap Surya Granth* was written a couple of centuries ago, its language is different from the language as spoken today. The great Sikh philosopher of 20th century, Bhai Vir Singh studied this granth for 8 years (1926-1934) and wrote the footnotes on this book to explain the meanings. Wherever he didn't agree, he wrote disagreeing footnotes as well. However, he agreed with this account of the Guru's picture, which is very clear in his footnotes in the book.

Another great Sikh scholar of the early 20th century, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, researched for 15 years to write the Encyclopedia of Sikhism, the *Mahan Kosh*, which he completed in 1930. He has mentioned this portrait in *Mahan Kosh*. On the basis of Gurbani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, that there are four types of "Darshan", namely Sargun, Nirgun, Dream and Portrait (picture).

Gur moorat si-o laa-ay Dhi-aan, eehaa oohaa paavahi maan. ||3||. [SGGS: 192]

Satgur moorat ko bal jaa-o. [SGGS: 1202]

Jo chit laa-ay poojay gur moorat so man ichhay fal paavai. [SGGS: 303]

In Dhaka, there are two historical Gurdwaras. Gurdwara Sangat Tola which was built in the ninth Guru's memory and Gurdwara Nanak Shahi in First Guru's memory. There was another Gurdwara related to Guru Nanak Dev in Dhan Mandi, which East Pakistan authorities levelled in 1960 and built residential complexes. A well known Muslim writer Sayed Aulad Kasam visited Gurdwara Sangat Tola in 1904 and has written that he saw the original picture of Guru Tegh Bahadar in the Gurdwara.

Many local people of greater Bengal became Sikhs after visits of the First and Ninth Gurus who visited and sanctified that area. There were about 20 Gurdwaras before 1947 in present day Bangla Desh. Almost all Sikhs had left for India during the partition. Mata Kanchan Devi remained behind and took care of Gurdwara Sangat Tola but she also migrated to Calcutta during the Pakistan Army crackdown in 1971. One brave Sikh, Bhai Swaran Singh, took care of Gurdwara Nanakshahi till 1971, but Pakistani Razakars killed him three days before the Pakistan Army's surrender to Indian Army led by Gen. Jagjit Singh Aurora. After the victory, Gen. Aurora immediately arranged for a Sikh delegation to visit Dhaka under the leadership of late Captain Bhag Singh, one of the co-founders of *The Sikh Review* of Calcutta. Captain Bhag Singh became the first Secretary General of Bangla Desh Gurdwara Management Committee. He brought the Ninth Guru's picture to India and gave it to the Victoria Memorial Museum in Calcutta for restoration. The copies of the original picture are both at Gurdwara Nanakshahi and Gurdwara Sangat Tola at Dhaka.

The history of these Gurdwaras (including images of the portraits) can be assessed at

<http://allaboutsikhs.com/gurudwaras/bangla-nanakshdacca.htm>

<http://allaboutsikhs.com/gurudwaras/bangla-sangattolla.htm>

The present building of Gurdwara Nanakshahi was renovated in 1988-89 with the efforts of S. Harbans Singh, IAS who was then Director ILO/UN at Dhaka. He wrote an article in *The Sikh Review* in January 2000, in which he not only gave the history of this rare picture but also its current state at the Victoria Memorial Museum in Calcutta.

Prof (Dr) Harnam Singh Shan, former chairman of Guru Nanak Chair and head of Punjabi and Sikh Studies at Punjab University, Chandigarh visited Dhaka in 2003 to participate in the 17th conference of International Association of Historians in Asia, where he presented a paper on Cultural Heritage of South Asia and also saw copies of the original pictures in those Gurdwaras.

Prof. Kulraj Singh also wrote an article in *The Sikh Review* in December 1996, in which he mentioned that while other portions of the picture have worn off, the face, which had touch of the Guru's hand, is still resplendent.

This is an extremely rare picture of Guru Sahib that we have, but is not the only one. Damdama Sahib is one of the five Takhts where Guru Gobind Singh stayed for more than nine months and also completed compilation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib by adding the ninth Guru's hymns. When Guru Sahib left for the Deccan he made Baba Deep Singh incharge and currently there are many sacred relics kept there, the prominent among those being a portrait of the tenth Guru, Sri Sahib (Sword), a matchlock, a pothi (book transcribed by Baba Deep Singh), and a sword of Baba Deep Singh. The history of the Gurdwara (including the list of the sacred relics) can be read at

<http://allaboutsikhs.com/gurudwaras/gd-talwandisabo.htm>

An artist at Anandpur Sahib painted the tenth Guru's picture in 1703 and this was published by Akali Kaur Singh, a known Sikh scholar, in one of his books in the 19th century. Another portrait of the tenth Guru was painted by the royal artist Sidh Sen, the ruler of Mandi. When Guru Sahib visited Mandi, he preferred to stay outside the town, while his family members stayed in the royal palace. The royal family maintained the shrine inside the palace. Gurdwaras were built at both places. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh subjugated Mandi, he appointed Sardar Lehna Singh Majithia as Governor of the constituency. Sardar Lehna Singh obtained the Guru's original portrait, which he brought to the Maharaja. Sardar Lehna Singh then brought craftsmen from the hill areas to lay marble slabs in the inner parkarma around the Harmander Sahib. Some people say that the Maharaja asked Sardar Majithia to inscribe a copy of the same picture inside the Golden Temple, which is now located at the wall of the Harmander Sahib, next to a staircase leading to the floor above.

Old portraits of Guru Nanak Dev ji drawn on silk and tankhas (painting on cloth which can be rolled up like a map) have been found in Lhasa (Tibet) and Sikkim. Guru Nanak Dev ji went on his second Udassi to Tibet and Kamroop (Assam) area in circa 1517.

Western countries take pride in preserving their religious and historical artifacts but it is most unfortunate that Sikhs have not yet made any organised effort in this area. The pictures mentioned above are extremely rare and are of great historical significance. Unfortunately, some may already have been lost.

Much research has been done in western countries on the topic of education through pictures. An English proverb "A picture is worth a thousand words" has been proven correct by scientific research. The education system in western countries is committed to prescribing books to students which contain illustrations.

The writer has been working in the engineering research area for a decade. A few years back, he got an opportunity to work with a world-renowned visual science professor at the University of California, Berkeley. He showed many research articles which analysed human visual detection performance. We conducted human factor studies in eye movement and eye position monitoring and used computer displays to present visual stimuli. Our findings suggested that what humans understand through symbolic medium can help them figure out a different, unfamiliar medium, one they might not otherwise understand. It is now well established that pictures help the reader grasp the subject in quicker and a more understandable manner.

Unfortunately, we are losing our younger generation to western culture and its spin offs. Many of them have little idea about the Guru Sahibs and don't have much interest in reading our religious books. Lately, some good movies have been produced to show the life history of Guru Sahibs, efforts worthwhile and commendable. We have accepted the idea of Guru Sahib's pictures in movies, and need to show the real portrait of Guru Sahib. Sikh organisations should work to preserve these with reverence and distribute copies widely among Sikhs so that the current generation can visualise what the Gurus looked like, a great service to history in general and the Sikh religion and its culture in particular. ☯

*Gurpreet S. Hansra,
Sacramento, CA*



The Message of Guru Nanak

Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of Sikhism, was born in Punjab, an area now divided between northern India and Pakistan. After a revelatory experience at the age of 37, Guru Nanak traveled extensively to spread his word. Guru Nanak's message was simple. "There is one God and one human race." He was a poet, a mystic, a philosopher and a greatly gifted singer. His philosophy centered on belief in one God for all of creation, a God that is formless, omnipresent, compassionate and attainable through prayer, humility, service, meditation, and virtuous living. He denounced ritualism, discrimination against women and against those of lower socio-economic status. This philosophy became the foundation of Sikhism which is the fifth largest religion in the world. *Guru* is a term used in reverence, for the supreme teacher in the Sikh tradition. Nanak's followers became known as Sikhs, which means "seeker of truth or disciple".

The three basic tenets of Guru Nanak's teachings are *Naam Japo* – constant meditation on God's name,

Kirat Karo—earning livelihood through honest means, and *Wand Chakko*- sharing one's earnings out of love and compassion for others. Guru Nanak taught that human life is an opportunity for spiritual union with the Supreme Being and that such stage of enlightenment can be achieved by God's Grace. Any person of whatever intellectual or economic condition is enlightened through a life of single-minded devotion to God. As all creation has the same origin and end, humans must live in harmony with God's creation by conducting themselves through life with love, forgiveness, compassion, simplicity, and justice.

Guru Nanak preached total equality for all people of whatever race or gender. He denounced the idea that spirituality was only for those of the male gender. He perceived that there could be no enduring democratic culture unless it was grounded in unreserved recognition of the full equality of woman with man.

Guru Nanak instituted three practices to promote equality and alleviate suffering. *Sangat* was an

invitation to people of all backgrounds to meditate and pray together. Irrespective of their social background, race or religion, people were asked to sit and eat together to create a sense of equality, called *Pangat*. He also started a tradition of free distribution of food to rich and poor alike, termed *Langar*. These customs instituted by Guru Nanak continue to be observed by Sikh communities throughout the world. He preached that one of the requisites for the betterment of individuals was *Sadh-Sangat* (keeping the company of spiritually-oriented persons) and righteous conduct towards one's neighbours.

Guru Nanak repeatedly emphasised humility. He said, "This body is the field, the mind the ploughman, modesty the irrigating channel, contentment the leveler. Pulverise the crust of pride into true humility, sow the seed of love of God and Divinity will flourish."

Guru Nanak's religion is for the householder. He was a teacher of positive approach and his teachings are a call to life. He did not accept the idea of retreating from one's family and relatives in search of God. He strongly disapproved a life of withdrawal and encouraged full participation in family and workday life and responsibility in society as the framework within which to seek God. According to him salvation and spiritual enlightenment is not incompatible with joy be it laughing, eating, playing, or dressing well.

There can be no understating the importance of love and service in Guru Nanak's teachings. According to his doctrine, the Beloved is within all people and therefore, serving people is serving God.

He encouraged his followers to live normal, compassionate lives in tandem with the larger society. Seva (service to the wider community) and volunteerism, not just within the Sikh community but throughout the community of man, is a key goal set for all Sikhs.

Guru Nanak was opposed to any exclusive claim on spiritual truth. This indicates a pluralistic acceptance of the legitimacy of all faiths and therefore, an acceptance of all groups and individuals. He did not attempt to convert followers of other faiths, but rather urged them to rediscover the internal significance of their own beliefs and rituals, not forsaking their chosen paths. He collected the hymns of spiritual men of other faiths, some of whom were

shunned by society because of their caste and social status and included them in the Scriptures for his own followers. This collection later formed the basis of Sikh scriptures. Interfaith dialogue and cooperation has been a part of Sikhism since Guru Nanak's time. Guru Nanak's groundbreaking example of interfaith acceptance 500 years ago is even more resoundingly pertinent today, in a world fragmented by religious strife. He showed that respect, and not just tolerance, for those of other faiths is the cornerstone of a democratic society.

Ardas, the prayer recited at the end of Sikh religious services, among other messages, requests the lord "May the whole world prosper by your Grace."

Guru Nanak's teachings are simple and straightforward. His sole mission was the spiritual revival of mankind in the modern world. Equality, liberty, social justice, love and compassion for all, and community service are cornerstones of his message. Guru Nanak's status is that of a universal leader whose teachings offer the entire human race the serenity that gives spiritual strength to face the sufferings of this world by accepting them with calmness, love, and devotion, and by working to alleviate them.

Those who know one God and shun duality are merged in God.

Acts of kindness, virtue, and inner enthusiasm in serving others results in mind's immersion in God.

Spiritual wisdom comes from inner searching. It is diminished by arguments and competition.


When you taste the ultimate nectar of God (love and God's presence in your heart) all vice and negativity crumble to dust.

True education makes one a benevolent and compassionate person.

When I become Yours, O Lord, the whole world I see as mine.

When ego departs, You manifest and I see everything connected in You.

It is useless to ask for happiness all the time;

Happiness and sadness are outer garments of each person's life. 

Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE)

The key to spiritual bliss

The Sikh faith has a firm ethico-spiritual base, the Founding-Prophet, the glorious Guru Nanak, setting the highest standards of rightful conduct and ethical behaviour. He incessantly preached love for Truth and Truthful living.

'Sach Ore Sab Kar. Uppar Sach Achar'.

'Truth is high, but higher still is truthful conduct'.

Guru Nanak laid emphasis on the purity of thought and action. Purity and righteousness is reflected in right human conduct.

Says Guru Nanak:

*As man sows, so does he reap...
Man himself obtains the fruit of
His good and bad deeds.*

God is the embodiment of Truth and moral excellence, with moral presence in all human beings, protects those who practice truth and punishes the evil-doers.

Through precept and example, Guru Nanak fervently preached the love of God, meditation on His Name, a dedicated, practical family life of a house-holder, principled conduct and honesty. He was totally against asceticism and meaningless rituals shorn of reason and logic. His focus was rational spiritualism, pragmatic and progressive.

Nam Japna, Kirat Karna, Vand Chhakna

"To earn ones living by honest labour, to share with others one's earnings and meditation on God's Name", are the basic postulates of the ethical conduct of life preached by Guru Nanak.

*O' Nanak, thus runneth the writ Divine
The righteous path let it be thine.*

'True bliss comes from truthful acts', declared Nanak. Once spiritual bliss is realised, it merges the ethical individual with the Infinite Being. He is transformed into an ideal man of the world, a Gurmukh or a Braham Gyani, endowed with enlightenment and high morals. Such spiritual experience brings him a vision of divine presence in all human beings and he begins to love and respect all people, whatever be their religion.

"Loving God, His creation and doing good deeds is the true religion" Guru Nanak repeatedly emphasised. When asked who was greater of the two, Hindu or Muslim, Guru Nanak's reply was "Without good deeds, both would come to grief". A revolutionary spiritual reformer, Guru Nanak showed a practical and rational way to live in religious harmony.

Nam Simran (recitation of God's Name) is central to Guru Nanak's teaching. Sikhs address God as

'Waheguru' (Wondrous God). His Name is Ek-Onkar, the One God who is Satnam, the Truth, the Creator, Omnipresent and Omnipotent. He is the Father of all creation and of all mankind. He is to be remembered, revered and praised constantly.

Guru Nanak sought to remove lust, wrath, covetness and pride which are the evils that breed ego (humai). The control over egoism is a cardinal virtue of an ethical or an ideal individual.

Says Guru Nanak.

Truth is not attained by asserting ego or 'I'

*Give up the sense of ego.
O' man, remove thy ego.
Contemplate and welcome virtues alone.*

Humility is the other most important virtue of a moral life which Guru Nanak practiced and preached. The great Guru took pride in identifying himself with the humble and the low-caste. He expressed himself as the 'lowliest of the low'.

Guru Nanak is the symbol of humility.

*The sweet modesty, O'Nanak, is the essence of
virtuous qualities.*

Resigning oneself to God's will is the fundamental imperative of Guru Nanak's teaching. The ideal man is one who resigns himself to the Divine will. It is a panacea for removing the affliction of egoism.

*He, who recognises the Divine, Nanak, Never shall
asset ego again.*

Guru Nanak had all praise for the individual blessed with sweet disposition and speech.

Wherever we may be Let us speak decent words.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, sacred scripture of the Sikhs, enshrines the ethical doctrines of Guru Nanak and the Sikh Gurus. The religion that emerges from the holy Granth is the universal religion of man. It's ethico-spiritual doctrines and concepts are catholic and practicable, and tolerant of other people's beliefs and faiths. The great ethical doctrines of life pave the way for spiritual bliss and universal uplift.

The eminent British author and historian, M.A.Macauliffe, writes : "It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system. The values taught by Guru Nanak are as relevant today as in the 15th century. The world needs this faith of hope and optimism that preaches the welfare of all.

The Sikhs owe it to the world to share their rich heritage with the rest of mankind". ☪

Onkar Singh

Guru-Ka-Bagh



True non-violence: the Guru-ka-Bagh morcha

Eye-Witness to Sikh History

The life and times of C. F. Andrews

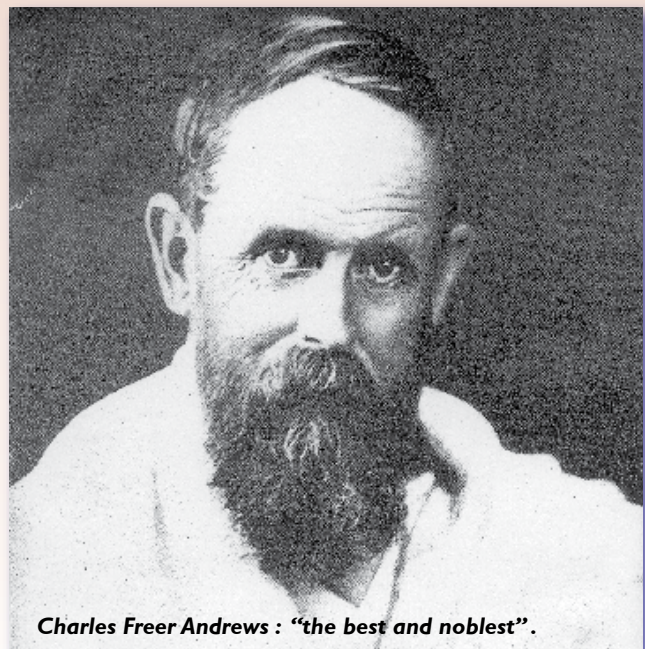
The period straddling the mid-19th century and middle of the 20th was one of the most packed with significance in the annals of humankind including, specifically, the history of the Sikhs, that of the Indian sub-continent, and even of the vast British Empire itself.

Charles Freer Andrews could certainly be rated as one of the most extraordinary people who lived during the era and had an impact on, again, each of those constituencies - the Sikh nation, the sprawling Indian sub-continent, the far-flung British Empire, and even the world at large.

But I won't be telling you anything new, I am sure, by stating that very few people even recognise the name of C F Andrews today. Of those who have heard of him or know of him, what they know - but for a very few exceptions - is very limited and mostly deals with some isolated aspect of his life.

Through some quirk of fate, I became aware of him as a young teenager. I was drawn to early 20th century history, and during the course of my readings,

I came across this extraordinary man. The more I read about him-and there wasn't much available-the more intrigued I became. I pursued and found some of his



Charles Freer Andrews : "the best and noblest".



CF Andrews in Vancouver 1929

writings and quickly realised that there was much more to him than met the eye.

But I experienced the same difficulty then that I have experienced recently in researching him for this lecture. He is a man who has been allowed to disappear into the footnotes of history. I believe it is a grievous loss, and one that needs to be corrected.

I did a bit of a survey- unscientific and informal, I readily admit - over the course of some weeks this summer. I asked over 60 people whom I had encountered during the course of other dealings but who either hailed from the sub-continent or were Sikh or otherwise knew quite a bit about India. One person, that is, just one out of approximately 60, recognised his name. When I questioned him further, he knew him as one of the founders of St Stephen's College in Delhi, and a friend of Gandhi-Mahatma Gandhi that is-and little else.

Having now revisited his life and work more extensively, I have come to the conclusion that there are two reasons why he has been lost to this generation. First, I think his memory has been overshadowed by the memory and aura of Gandhi himself. It would have been most inconvenient for India and Indians to recognise Andrews' role in the same period of history. So, they conveniently let him go.

Secondly, it was his role as the "Conscience of the British Empire" that led to his obliteration in the British memory. It was convenient in Britain as well to let his memory dissolve within the pages of history. Like any good conscience, he was - at times - prickly.

Pity, because it is a black-hole of a loss.

For those of you who think you have never heard about this man, let me remind you that you actually

may have, but ... and you'll soon see how and why he has been overshadowed. Most, if not all of you, have seen- I'm sure - the wonderful Richard Attenborough film, *Gandhi*.

Let me jog your memory.

You will recall an early scene in the film, when a young Anglican priest visits a young Gandhi at his home in South Africa and offers his support for the local struggle. That Anglican priest was C F Andrews.

There is another scene in a church. Andrews is in the pulpit and he chides the British people and urges them to look at the Indian situation through truly Christian eyes. Many in the congregation are shown expressing their disapproval by storming out during his sermon.

Then there is the scene between Andrews, Gokhale and Gandhi during a garden party held shortly after Gandhi's return from South Africa. The scene acknowledges that Andrews was instrumental in drawing Gandhi into the Indian Independence Movement.

Again, we see Andrews, with Gandhi and his wife, Kasturba, on an overcrowded train, which has a number of labourers perched on the roof of the speeding train. The precariously placed passengers, noting the Englishman's curiosity, coax him into joining them. He accepts the challenge and clammers perilously to the top.

In yet another scene, Andrews visits Gandhi in jail. In this remarkable scene, Gandhi encourages Andrews to go off to Fiji on a mission, stating that it is time for him to leave the Indian struggle to the Indians.

Significantly, Andrews does not appear in the film again.

I have culled only a few significant clips. You can see him in various other scenes, as a direct player or in the background, reflective of his intense and crucial involvement in the very forefront of everything that was going on in the geopolitik.

Would it surprise you if I told you that a considerable portion of the *Gandhi* film is fictitious and not supported by history? Shortly, I will give you a few striking examples of how wide a poetic license Attenborough took in building the Gandhi saga. But, I must hasten to add that - vis-à-vis Charlie Andrews - the film does give us a flavour of his omnipresence during those eventful decades. The final scene in which

the film depicts Andrews, especially of Gandhi sending him away by asking him to leave the independence movement to Indians, is pure fiction. It fits into Attenborough's creation of the Gandhi mystique, but the fact is that Andrews did not leave the setting that early in the story. In the film, he is never seen again. In actual life, he stayed on as a central figure until 1940, when he died of an illness in Calcutta and was buried there, in the land that he loved so much.

But Attenborough couldn't completely write-off Andrews' ongoing role. True, you do not see Charlie Andrews again after the last scene I have described. So, Attenborough invents a second character, because he simply cannot avoid showing one of the highlights of Andrews' involvement on the sub-continent. You will recall, I expect, the role of a journalist played by the actor, Martin Sheen, and it is through this largely fictitious role that Attenborough captures the further and ongoing adventures of CF Andrews.

But, before I go any further, let me briefly revert to the real ... Charles Freer Andrews.

Born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1871, to a Catholic Apostolic Church Minister and his second wife, Charlie was the second of 12 children from their union, the fourth in a larger family of a total of 14 children. From an early age, he is described as a special child and his mother's favourite.

From the age of 6, he grew up in Birmingham where Charlie's father became renowned for his 'healing powers' and his 'gift of prophecy'. With the strong influence of both of his parents, it therefore comes as no surprise that Charlie grew up with two gravitational pulls.

The first, to a life of prayer, and the second, to a life of serving the poor and the downtrodden. These two strong currents, always interconnected, remained the dominant forces in his life. No matter where he went, whatever he did, these were his defining pre-occupations. They shaped everything he did, everything he said, everything he wrote. Even when they brought him into direct conflict with the most powerful figures of the Empire, or into direct disagreement with those he loved and supported.

Upon his father's urging, he joined the Catholic Apostolic Church, but his years of studying theology at Cambridge helped him formulate a simple and clear understanding of his own spirituality. He rejected his father's deeply ritualistic practices, and turned to Anglicanism. In 1897, at the age of 26, he was ordained an Anglican priest.

Someone who knew him well during this early period describes him as "simple, resolute, intense, self-denying... self-forgetful."

During this formative stage of his life, as the Victorian era ends and a new century begins, a number of key trends and traits have become entrenched in Charlie Andrews' young life. Some people around him have noted his deep spirituality and relentless energy and have begun to admire him in superlatives. Others, at the same time, feel threatened by the very same characteristics and quickly become vociferous critics and detractors. Andrews begins to exhaust himself physically to the point of getting ill at periodic intervals. At the same time, as he discovers causes ... and they discover and claim him ... he discovers the vagaries of emotional depression.

He is already very politically aware of the world he lives in, and does not hesitate in expressing his admiration for the work done by the Empire. He also indicates a "deep respect" for the monarchy.

A College being run by the Cambridge Mission, with which he is somewhat associated - St Stephen's College in Delhi, India - is in urgent need for an "exceptionally strong and able man" to take over as Principal.

Charlie Andrews is conscripted for the position. At the age of 33, he sets sail for India and arrives in Bombay on March 14, 1904.

Andrews describes the country he found thus:

"The scene in India ...resembled that of the Roman Empire 1900 years ago. There was the same vast, unbroken, imperial peace in external affairs and a settled order outwardly maintained. But within this area of apparent calm a surging, heaving ferment had suddenly begun to appear."

But for short trips back to England or the extensive travels he undertook regularly to different parts of the world to fight for various causes, India would henceforth be his home for almost four decades, until his death in 1940.

It was love at first sight for Andrews. And it didn't take long either for India to fall in love with this man. But, like all love affairs, this one too had its ups and downs, its learning curve, its moments of doubt and moments of epiphany, its challenges galore. But the passion and the commitment remained throughout, unabated, undiminished, unwavering.

Since the very moment the two met, this 33-year old Anglican priest from England and the age-old civilisation looking for a new future, neither would be the same again. Each would not only transform the other but actually become the catalyst for the fulfillment of its - or his - destiny.

In quick succession and progression, Andrews took on new skills and new roles. With each new vocation, he added it to his repertoire, without shedding any of the earlier responsibilities.

He had come as a priest. And became a teacher, writer, journalist (columnist, newspaper-correspondent, editor), translator, educationist, labour leader, mediator, activist, spokesman, leader.

And conscience. Not only of the Raj but for India and Indians as well, questioning every tactic and strategy and demanding that all parties walk the straight line and do the right thing.

It didn't make things easy for him, because he opened himself easily to detractors: British authorities found him to be a thorn on their side - an Englishman constantly questioning their motives and their methods. Some saw him as betraying his land of birth, even the very Faith he had been sent to preach.

It didn't help any when he offered to resign from his Church and priesthood.

On the other hand, many Indians worried if he was a British spy. You will recall the scene in the Gandhi film in which Andrews quips, in the presence of Gandhi and Gokhale, that he is off to file a report with the Viceroy.

From the very outset, it was not difficult to find a cause to espouse or support in India at this stage of its history.

Andrews began by attacking the very methods of Christian proselytisation in India and don't forget that he was a priest sent to India to help convert the masses!

He began to question the western and Eurocentric view of Christianity, and demanded that it embrace humanity, not just what he himself called the 'white races'.

He then fought for the equality of Indian Christian clergy and demanded that they be treated as equals with British Christian clergy.

It didn't take long before he went to the next step and introduced the revolutionary idea that all Indians were to be treated as equals, with the rest of the



St. Stephens College, Delhi.

citizens of the Empire! After all, he argued, they were British subjects, weren't they?

When the Empire was revolted by the idea, Andrews came to the conclusion and henceforth began to publicly sell this idea, that the only way Indians would ever achieve equality would be through independence—that is, complete independence from Great Britain.

Now, you have to look at this in the context of the 1920s. Gandhi—yes Mahatma Gandhi—and his colleagues reacted AGAINST this concept. At this early juncture, they found it difficult to imagine a scenario where Indians could or would ever be treated as equals. More political power and a greater role in local decision-making is what they thought was possible and that is the limit of what they then thought was in reality achievable.

But Andrews was not a politician. No one had taught him that politics was merely "the art of the possible" and he was never guided or limited by such a definition. To use a modern term, he was able to think 'outside the box'.

And was relentless in haranguing Gandhi and Gokhale and Tagore and Patel, and later, Nehru, that what they wanted was *Complete Independence*, not just *Greater Autonomy*. And he did not give up until he converted them over to this simple but the then novel concept ...

He taught Indians, for example, "the importance of substituting 'the concrete and the real' for 'dreams and speculation'".

But, while all of this was going on, he kept the British authorities on their toes by fighting for the rights of Indians in the colonies, in South Africa, Fiji, Mauritius, Guyana, even Canada. And in India, for the rights of women, the so-called backward castes .. and so on.

You and I have been taught about William Wilberforce who helped abolish the idea of slavery. Well, I believe that history books should also similarly sing about Charles Freer Andrews because he helped abolish the idea of 'Indentured Labour', which was then as much of a plague as slavery had been (and to a large extent continued to be in some parts of the world). Indentured Labour was then the mainstay of the economies of the West Indies and the East Indies, all the fruits of course going to the colonisers.

All of this I present to you only to give you a taste of a fraction of what Andrews did during his lifetime. He wrote and published daily ... he edited *Young India*; he became a correspondent with the Manchester-Guardian; a regular contributor to the Times of London. There is this one journal, *The Modern Review*. Over the course of 30 years, it is difficult to find many issues in which he doesn't have a substantial contribution.

Throughout all of this, he became a close confidant and advisor to both Gandhi and Tagore. And that dual role wasn't easy, because not only were needs of the two, great and all-consuming, but they also didn't see eye-to-eye with each other and were often at loggerheads in terms of the overall approach vis-à-vis the British. So Andrews was the mediator, the great reconciler, sometimes the only line of communication open between the two.

Andrews was distressed by some of the translations of Tagore that were being published in the West. Tagore had just won the Nobel Prize for Literature and was in high demand around the world. So, Andrews became his translator and editor. And travelled with him several times through Europe and North America.

Andrews led Tagore's great experiment at education, the Shantiniketan. And later, also led his new International University, the Vishwa Bharati University ...

I could go on thus for pages just listing for you the areas that Andrews touched and left transformed for ever.

And I haven't even got to his many books. Two dozen of them. His extraordinary biography of Gandhi, for example. Or his umpteen books of essays on India, past, present and future.

And ah yes, his spiritual writings. The accounts of his personal spiritual journeys. Some became classics and best-sellers the world over. They move you, and



you don't have to be a Christian to savour them. If you read "What I Owe to Christ", or "Christ in the Silence" or "The Sermon on the Mount", you realise how genuinely and completely he had gone past religion, into the realm of pure spirituality... a stage to which all religions aspire.

What first drew me to Charlie Andrews was his account, as published in the press, of historic events he personally witnessed in the Punjab of the 1920s. These were highly charged, violent, dramatic, dangerous, oppressive incidents involving the police and peaceful protesters.

What first moved me was that Andrews did not find himself there by accident. He was prohibited from going even into the Province of Punjab, but he managed to find a way to get in nevertheless. He suffered ... and I do not use the word lightly ... through witnessing these events. And then he wrote about them and published them and ensured that the world, especially all Britons, read about them. He wrote truthfully and daringly, at great personal peril.

Let me explain, first the context, and then the specifics, and you will judge for your self.

By 1919, things had come to a head in the Punjab. Oppression at the hands of the government authorities had reached a new high. Public whippings of those who opposed the Raj had become a daily occurrence. Yes, I am talking about 1919, not long after the Great War had ended. The very same war in which tens of thousands of Indians, primarily Sikhs, had given their lives fighting for Britain and the Empire.

On 13 April 1919, General Dyer marched into the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar, while a public and publicised, peaceful protest meeting was being held.

He was accompanied by a troop of soldiers armed with machine guns and an armoured car. They secured the only entrance and exit to the wall-enclosed park and Dyer ordered his troops to open fire. Over 400 innocent men, women and children were killed in cold blood. Hundreds of others were left shot and bleeding, in an action later described by General Dyer and his boss, Michael O'Dwyer, the Governor of the Province, as "an attempt to teach the people a lesson".

Tight censorship prevented details of this outrage from reaching the outside world, even though an inkling of the massacre had been carried around the world through the rumour mill.

When, months later, the details began to filter in, Andrews bristled at the news and desperately tried to enter Punjab. They banned him from entry. He tried over and over again, and was once even caught on a train and forcibly disembarked.

Finally, almost 6 months later, he was able to enter Punjab and visit the site and obtain eye-witness accounts. "I could not sleep", he later wrote, "or eat or even speak to anyone after what I saw. I wanted to go apart, and be alone."

Andrews made his way to the Gujranwala District where, he had heard, a Sikh former-non-commissioned officer had been accused of disrupting railway services. Though he denied the accusation and despite no proof whatsoever, he had been flogged and publicly humiliated, as an example to the populace. Andrews had heard of this and other humiliations being carried out in the Province and sought this man out. The proud Sikh refused to talk or complain.

Andrews then did something which caught the imagination of the entire nation: "He stooped down and touched [the ex-soldier's] feet, and asked him to forgive the British for their evil-doing."

The Sikh soldier, who was also the headman of the village, responded by embracing him.

Andrews explained it later by citing an old Sanskrit word *prayaschitta* which means both repentance and a gesture.

Gandhi, who was still in the nascent stage of developing a long-term strategy for his national movement, publicly responded to this event by stating: "The lesson that Mr Andrews' life taught them was that, though we would and must resist injustice and oppression ... we were to bear no ill-will toward the wrongdoer."

Later, as the tragedy of the massacre of Amritsar was commemorated around the country, leaders

proclaimed: "How can we hate Englishmen, if we love Andrews ... and others [like him]? We must conquer the English with our love."

This period in Andrews' life also proved to be its most intense.

He travels to Africa, speaking out against racial prejudice. He is repeatedly assaulted, physically assaulted-

each time by a European. Back in England, Churchill hears about it and denounces the crimes.

Back in India, Andrews enters into an intense dialogue with Gandhi. "Civil disobedience treads on the very brink of violence," Andrews argues. "I cannot find Christ in all this."

Andrews is asked to address the Congress. He does, but insists on wearing foreign, specifically English clothes.

Around this time, amidst the storms raging around him, Andrews begins to see further clarity in his personal spiritual quest. He confesses to Tagore that "stormy religious doubts and questioning have ceased to rage."

In September 1922, he sets out on a nation-wide, fund-raising journey for Tagore's new International University at Shantiniketan.

On the 12th of September, he finds himself back in Amritsar. And hears about Guru-ka-Bagh and the situation developing there.

"He stooped down and touched [the ex-soldier's] feet, and asked him to forgive the British for their evil-doing."

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The Sikhs in Punjab are in the throes of a struggle to regain control of their places of worship. Many of the gurdwaras - Sikh churches - have been taken over by corrupt Hindu priests, known as *mahants*, and are being used for anti-social, even criminal, activities.

The government authorities are content with the new status quo, because it is convenient for them if it keeps the Sikhs out of their places of worship, which in turn keeps them off-balance, and possibly out of mischief by weakening their participation in the independence movement. Why the Sikhs?

Well, the government is worried, because this is a community with a high sense of civic involvement. While only 2 percent of the Indian population, it was contributing to more than 80 percent of the arrests and sacrifices made to the Independence Movement. It was a community that, they felt, had to be kept in check.

The Sikhs, on their part, were pursuing a simple, non-violent approach.

They zeroed in on one blatant transgressor, the mahant at the Guru-ka-Bagh, a complex of two gurdwaras located at a distance of 12 miles from Amritsar on the road to Ajnala. The gurdwaras were historical shrines commemorating the memory of the two Martyr Gurus of Sikhism who had each taught the lesson of passive resistance to tyranny and oppression and had both given their lives in setting such an example.

When denied the right to enter the property-all public gatherings in the Province had by now been declared unlawful assemblies-Sikhs began to simply assemble and peaceably cross the property line. After all, it was their place of worship. The authorities responded by alleging trespass and arrested those who stepped onto the property.

Groups... known as *jathas*...of between 50 and 200 volunteers, young men and old, sometimes even women, would court arrest everyday by peacefully entering the property line. This had been going on through the month of August and into September. By the time Andrews arrived on the scene, more than 4000 had already been arrested and were languishing in jail. The jails were full.

The police were instructed to stop the jathas some distance away, and chose three specific bridges for this purpose. The new instructions to the police were that, instead of arresting the trespassers, the latter were to be beaten and

terrorised in order to discourage them from joining these marches.

The Sikhs responded by taking public vows of non-violence and continued to attend on the scene in large numbers.

Here's one description of what would happen on the scene:

"Finding the road blocked to them, the Akalis - [that was the name then given to the Sikh protesters, bearing no relation to the current political party using the name] - would generally squat down on the bare ground with joined hands as if in prayer singing hymns all the while. They would be asked to disperse and go back to their homes and on their continuing to sit and sing as before, they would be dragged about and beaten brutally with lathis, often on their private parts, till they became senseless. They were then lifted up and thrown on one side of the road, where they were attended to by the scouts and medical men who were always present for rendering first-aid and then carrying the men in ambulance cars to one of the three hospitals improvised for the purpose at Amritsar ... "

[“From *The Struggle for Reform in Sikh Shrines*”, by Ruchi Ram Sahni]

Charlie Andrews heard of all of this and, of course, made a bee-line for one of the bridges. He arrived at the Raniwala Bridge on the morning of 12 September 1922.

Now, Richard Attenborough recreates the scene Andrews witnessed that morning. But with some - no, considerable - poetic license. Here's what he changes: in the actual scene, all the non-violent protesters were Sikhs. In the movie, of the hundreds you see, only one is shown as a Sikh. In reality, the scene was in 1922, as part of the non-violent Sikh Gurdwara Reform Movement, and it later became the inspiration for Gandhi's independence movement. In the film, it is shown as an incident in the independence movement itself, directly precipitating independence. In reality, such an event never happened under Gandhi. The time-shift between the actual event and the imagined one is of at least two decades.

Also, in the film's depiction, it is worthy of note that there is no Charlie Andrews.... but he is there. The Martin Sheen character, the journalist Walker in the film, as I've said earlier, is largely a fictional role. In real life, it was Charlie Andrews reporting the incident.

Charlie Andrews' report was published on the 19th and 20th of September, 1922, a week after the incident. Here are a few excerpts from *The Tribune*:

En route to the bridge, Andrews comes across a *jatha* ...

"... There was a light in their faces as they spoke to me with betokened joy. I was especially struck by the look of devotion in the face of a Sikh lady of middle age who accompanied us. I can only describe it by saying that she looked, in her quiet devotion, like a picture of the 'Madonna'. The whole scene, the intense faith of my companions, the look of reverence in their faces, the solemn awe mingled with joy, moved me very deeply. It was the first event which really gave me the religious atmosphere of all that I was afterwards to experience in the later scenes. It put me in touch with the Akali reform movement in its spiritual aspects as perhaps nothing else could have done..."

Further down the road, Andrews encounters another *jatha* heading for the bridge....

"... We met on the route a band of hundred Akalis in black turbans, who had marched that morning from Amritsar after having taken the vow at the Golden Temple that they would not commit a single act of violence, either by word or deed. I was to see, later on, how faithfully they kept that vow. On subsequent days I had opportunities of witnessing the scene at the Golden Temple itself as they came out with religious joy written on their faces and a tiny wreath of white flowers placed on their black turbans which dedicated them to the sacrifice ..."

While doing his research for writing the report, Andrews discovered the following statistics: "one in three of the Sikhs in these *jathas* had been a soldier and had served during the Great War."

Andrews gets down from his horse-carriage, and proceeds on foot alongside a *jatha* ...

"... I was dressed in my English dress, with a sun helmet on my head, but even before they knew my name they returned my greeting without the slightest trace of bitterness in their faces. There was a halt to drink water and they got to know who I was and came forward. Then one who was serving water with a brass vessel came to me and offered the water to me also to drink. I put my hand forward to receive it, but he said to me, "Please take the vessel itself" and I took it in my hands and drank from it. The act had a strongly religious aspect to me. It was as if I

was sharing in a sacrament of consecration before the suffering was to begin..."

Finally, Andrews arrives at the Guru-ka-Bagh gurdwara ...

"...I was struck at once by the absence of excitement such as I had expected to find among so great a crowd of people. Close to the entrance there was a reader of the Scriptures, who was holding a very large congregation of worshippers silent as they were seated on the ground before him. In another quarter there were attendants who were preparing the simple evening meal for the Gurdwara guests by grinding the flour between two large stones. There was no sign that the actual beating had just begun and that the sufferers had already endured the shower of blows. But when I asked one of the passers-by, he told me that the beating was now taking place. On hearing this news I at once went forward. There were some hundreds present seated on an open piece of ground watching what was going on in front, their faces strained with agony. I watched their faces first of all, before I turned to the corner of a building and reached a spot where I could see the beating itself. There was not a cry raised from the spectators but the lips of very many of them taught to repeat the name of God and to call on God for deliverance. I can only describe the silence and the worship and the pain upon the faces of these people, who were seated in prayer, as reminding me of the shadow of the Cross. What was happening to them was truly, in some dim way, a crucifixion...."

C.F. Andrews proceeds to describe the actual beatings in graphic detail. The scene is captured well by Attenborough in Gandhi, and I will therefore not reproduce the relevant passages here. He, however, borrows this event to convey the power of personal sacrifice and to portray a seminal turning-point, not in the Sikh struggle to free the gurdwaras-as it actually was-but as part of the culminating days of Indian Independence Struggle itself-which it never was. Attenborough unabashedly and liberally dips into the intricate details, even the very language, of Andrews' report.

"... The brutality and inhumanity of the whole scene was indescribably increased by the fact that the men who were hit were praying to God and had already taken a vow that they would remain silent and peaceful in word and deed. The Akali Sikhs who had taken this vow, both at the Golden Temple before starting and also at the shrine of Guru-ka-Bagh, were as I have already stated, largely from the army.

They had served in many campaigns in Flanders, in France, in Mesopotamia and in Gallipoli. Some of them at the risk of their own safety may have saved the lives of Englishmen who had been wounded. Now they were felled to the ground at the hand of English officials serving in the same Government which they themselves had served ...”

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Later in the report, Andrews proclaims:

“... A new heroism, learnt through suffering, has arisen in the land. A new lesson in moral warfare has been taught to the world...”

These very words are echoed in Martin Sheen’s distressed telephone call in the film, reporting the outrage.

Andrews concludes his report thus:

“It was very rarely that I witnessed any Akali Sikh, who went forward to suffer, flinch from a blow when it was struck. Apart from the instinctive and involuntary reaction of the muscles that has the appearance of a slight shrinking back, there was nothing, so far as I can remember, that could be called a deliberate avoidance of the blow struck. The blows were received one by one without resistance and without a sign of fear.”

I have yet to tell you about Andrews’ spiritual life. I do want to give you at least a glimpse of the type of man he was, and hope to maybe encourage those who have the mandate to study his life and give him the place in history he so richly deserves.

You know how historians marvel at how the British left India, with not a shot fired at the British - a unique phenomenon in the history of Man. Well, maybe the answer lies in these words from Gandhi, written after Andrews’ death in 1940:

“If we really love Andrews’ memory we may not have hate in us for Englishmen, of whom Andrews was among the best and the noblest. It is possible, quite possible, for the best Englishmen and the best Indians to meet together and never separate till they have evolved a formula acceptable to both. The legacy left by Andrews is worth the effort.”

On the day Andrews died, Gandhi declared: “I have not known a better man or a better Christian than C.F. Andrews.”

In my readings on Andrews, I repeatedly came across people-in India, in England, in different parts of the world-who amazingly, over and over again, compared him to ...

St Francis of Assisi. Sometimes, even unabashedly, referred to him as an “apostle”.

But my favourite quote on Andrews is from Sir Gordon Guggisberg, who served as the British Governor of the Gold Coast, and later of British Guiana.

Meetings between Andrews and British bureaucrats were never easy. For the bureaucrats, that is.

Sir Gordon met with him, had discussions with him on various thorny issues, they had lunch together, and then, Sir Gordon saw him off at the door. As the taxi drove away carrying Andrews - an eye-witness describes this graphically - Sir Gordon “gazed after it with bowed head and fixed eyes... he breathed deeply [and said]: “I feel as though I had been honoured to give lunch to Our Lord.” ☪

That was Charles Freer Andrews.



Dr. T. Sher Singh

*From the Lecture delivered at
The National Army Museum, London, England,
on 18 September, 2006*

Just Four Years Earlier

XIV Sikhs at Gallipoli

As part of 29th Indian Infantry Brigade, the XIV Sikhs commanded by Colonel Philip Palin had sailed from Karachi on 3 November 1914 and were at the Suez a fortnight later. From the end of November 1914 till April 1915, the unit was involved in constant reconnaissance and search for Turks and in the course of one of those intensive searches, Jem.Narain Singh provided vital clue to an anchored mine and was awarded the IDSM for his commendable work. The Turkish advance to the

West towards the Suez Canal in the northern Sinai was checked at El Kantara, south of Port Said where the XIV Sikhs worsted the Turkish Army in night attacks.

In October, Russia had joined the Allies while Turkey became part of the German axis which now changed complexion of the war. At the behest of Russia, the British agreed to create a diversion both in the Mediterranean as well as in Mesopotamia and Palestine. Gallipoli provided a direct and short route from the Mediterranean to Constantinople;



the Dardanelles divides Asia from Europe which lends the Strait much strategic importance. The Turks challenged anyone attempting to get even a toehold on the Dardanelles and the Allies boasted that they would capture Constantinople within a predetermined time frame. As the situation developed, neither side was successful in its strategy.

The mouth of the Dardanelles into the Mediterranean is at Cape Helles, which is 4000 yards wide with open bands of four and a half miles on either side until they close again at the narrows. Above it again opens out to a width



Scouts of the XIV Sikhs at El Kantara during a reconnaissance in 1914.

of four miles up to the Sea of Marmara, above the town of Gallipoli. The jagged peak of Sari Bair forms dominating ground over the Dardanelles and the Mediterranean, its central crest called Chunuk Bair.

The Gallipoli operations started on an ominous note. A British naval assault on Gallipoli in March 1915 was aborted. General Ian Hamilton was then appointed to command an amphibious force of about three Divisions, being the Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) Division, the 29th British Division and the Royal Naval Division to be landed at Cape Helles, leading to the narrows. This was expected to open a sea passage up to the Sea of Marmara. The Turks, determined to oppose the landing, had deployed some 250,000 troops in echelons to contest every landing.

The beach landing on 26 April 1915, despite great losses, enabled General Hamilton to establish a toehold but this was counter-attacked vigorously, and what ensued was 'action, reaction and stalemate'. It was at this stage that the Indian Brigade with XIV Sikh, 1/5 Gurkhas (FF), 1/6 Gurkhas and 1/4 Gurkhas were detached from Egypt to reinforce General Hamilton's force. With this reinforcement, General Hamilton hoped to reach Achi Baba, the most dominating point, providing him the desired springboard for future operations.

Action of XIV Sikhs is best described in the history of the battalion as recorded by Colonel F.E.G. Talbot: "The distance from the summit of Achi Baba, two hundred feet above the sea to Cape Helles at the south-western extremity of Gallipoli peninsula is nearly six miles. On 1 May, the Anglo-French forces ashore in this area were holding a line astride the peninsula, from sea to sea, three miles in length. This line, barely entrenched, was under three miles distance from Cape Helles, or less than halfway between that point and Achi Baba. The French were on the right and the British on the left. The British 29th Division which was in the front line had suffered heavy casualties, and the only reserves at hand, in addition to the 29th Indian Brigade were three Battalions of the Royal Navy Division.

XIV Sikhs had moved into trenches facing Krithia, surviving the misery of the first night in wet and broken trenches, with the Turkish snipers in the area inflicting casualties. The

second battle of Krithia was fought from 6 to 8 May and gained about 600 yards, maintaining the front from 9 May till relieved. It is here that 1/6 Gurkhas captured Gurkha Bluff. XIV Sikh was employed for 'relief operations' and yet suffered 78 casualties as a consequence of devastating Turkish artillery and their prompt and numerous counter-attacks. All the British attacks were from the front and none succeeded in altering the front line by more than just some hundred yards.

Then began a period during which the front was advanced by digging a forward line by night, abandoning it by day, and reoccupying it on subsequent nights. This led to some of these being occupied by the Turks which had to be recaptured at considerable cost.

By the time serious action (the third battle of Krithia) was attempted on 4 June, the defence line of XIV Sikhs lay astride the gully ravine. General Hamilton wanted to gain ground in front of the Allied front. The half battalion of XIV Sikhs formed part of the first wave of the brigade attack along with half Gurkhas and the Lancashires Fusiliers, the Sikhs to maintain links between them. Rest of the XIV was in the second wave with the Royal Inniskillings. The assault was meticulously planned to the minute, but the end result was capture of a single enemy

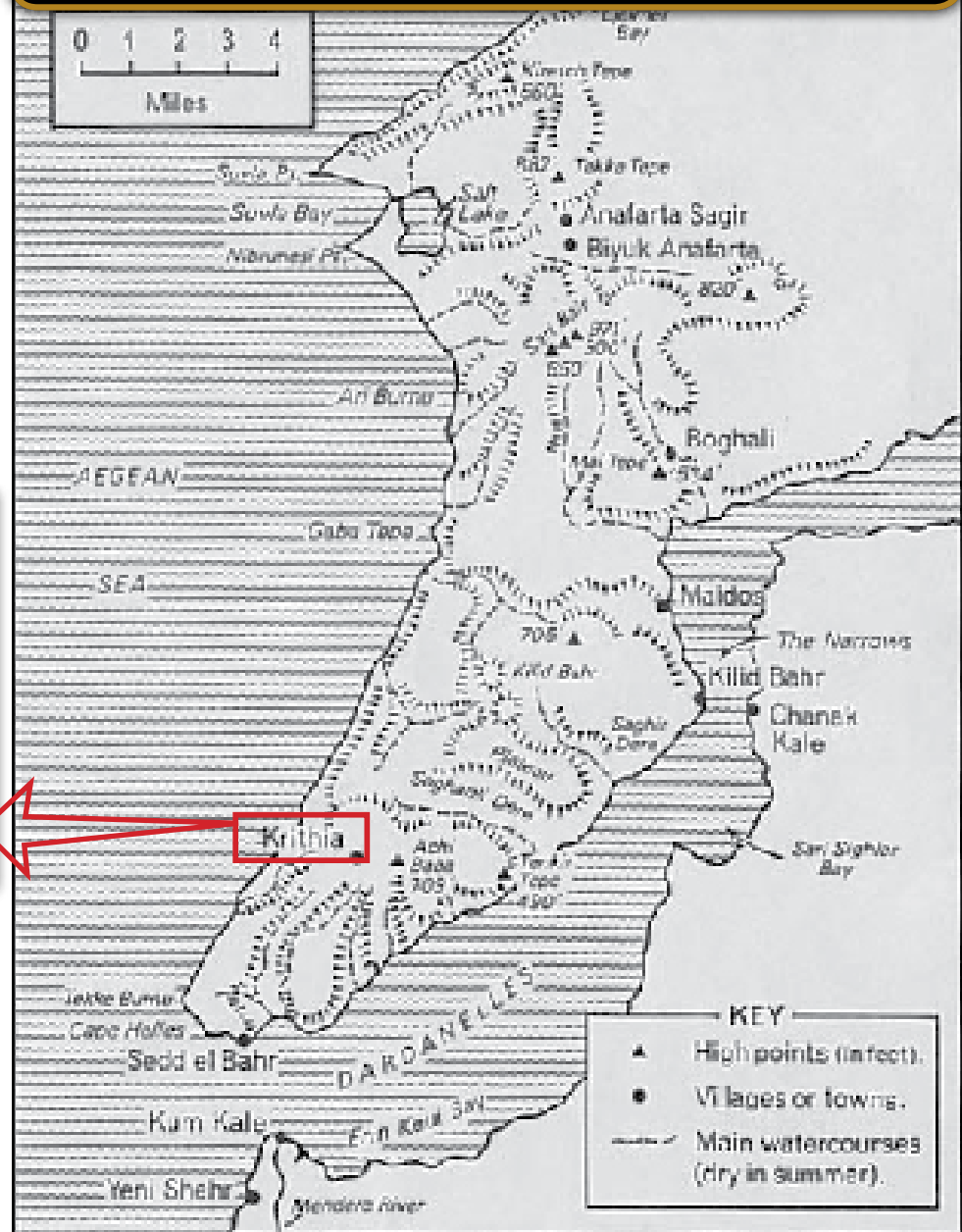
trench at the cost of 82 per cent casualties of their effective strength. With 12 BOs, 11 VCOs, and 371 men killed, it was the highest sacrifice after the battle on Samana Ridge. As Talbot summarised : ‘On both the allied flanks the attack was a complete failure ... the final result was a gain of two hundred and fifty yards of ground on the frontage of a mile. The French had 2,000 casualties; the British 4,500; the Turkish losses perhaps ran to 9000. It is however noteworthy that Colonel



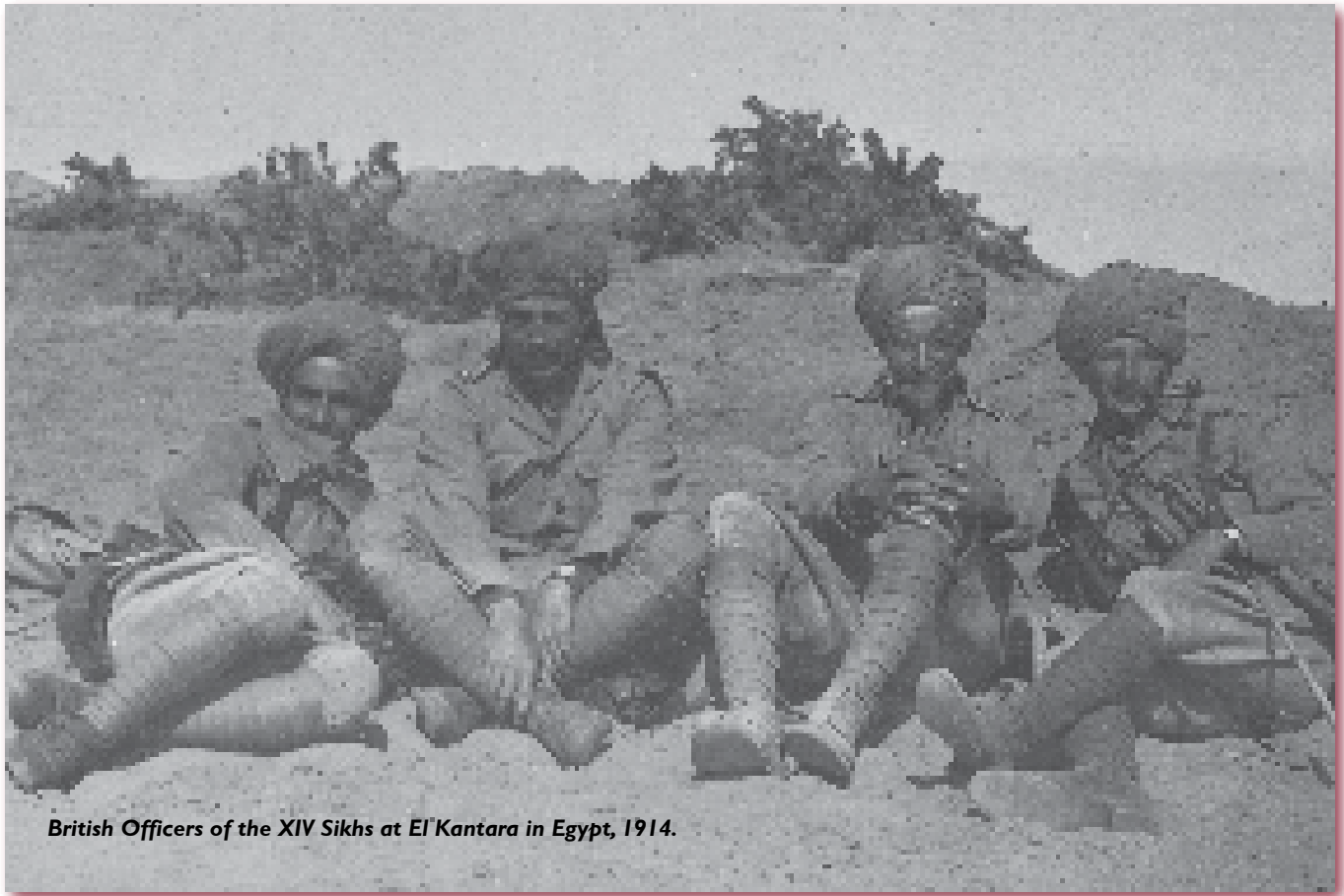
Palin and troops held on to their trench lines under murderous fire until ordered to retire”.

The Regimental History of XIV Sikh enumerates the action of a depleted battalion of 4 June: “On the morning of 4 June, own Artillery opened up but had little effect on the enemy. At 12 noon, the first wave dashed forward. Fusilers were mowed down by the enemy fire and their advance held up. The Gurkhas on the left gained a little ground, but were forced to withdraw to their original line”.

Gallipoli Peninsula: Physical Features



Action of XIV Sikhs is best described in the history of the battalion as recorded by Colonel F.E.G.Talbot: “with 82 percent casualties the highest sacrifice after the battle on Samana Ridge.”



British Officers of the XIV Sikhs at El Kantara in Egypt, 1914.

On the right, two Companies of XIV Sikhs rushed forward astride the Gully Ravine in the face of very heavy machine gun fire hidden on both sides of the Ravine. Two British Officers were killed but the Sikhs rushed on and captured the first line of the enemy trenches. Hav. Maghar Singh [later Sub.Maj.OBI] particularly showed courage and determination during the assault. The unit suffered very heavy casualties and was reduced to a fraction of its original strength in a very short time.

The second wave of the attack, comprising No.3 and No.1 Companies and Battalion Headquarters was launched at 12.15 p.m. This wave went through to the enemy's third line of trenches and held on to it till the morning of 5 June. The troops had to be withdrawn as they found they were being encircled by the Turks.

Although General Hamilton was unable to achieve neither the assured victory envisaged nor was able to beat back the frontal attacks, he was full of admiration for the Sikhs, "in the highest sense of the word, extreme gallantry has been shown by this fine battalion...."

This wave also suffered heavy casualties.

Recollections of 2/Lt. Reginald Savory (later Lt. General and Colonel of the Sikh Regiment) provide a graphic account of the battle: 'The orders were short and clear. At 11 a.m. on 4 June all guns were to bombard the enemy's front line trenches for twenty minutes. Then for ten minutes they were to stop while the Infantry were to cheer and fix their bayonets.... then the bombardment was to come down again. At noon we were to advance. It all sounded simple....' He narrates the story of his running across the no-man's-land with his messenger, killing a Turk in his trench, being hit by another and falling temporarily unconscious and then running

back again, but collapsing and then being lifted by the battalion wrestler, Ude Singh, on his shoulder and carried back to the trench line, all under a hail of bullets.

By 5 June the Commanding Officer, Medical Officer, and only 47 men were left unwounded, the regimental camp being guarded by the carpenters, armourers and boot-makers. Over the next two days the total number of survivors rose to three BOs and 134 VCOs/OR from the assaulting strength of 15 officers and 574 VCOs/ORs. It was sheer manslaughter, but there were words of great praise from General Hamilton.

suffered heavily, your ward is well and officiating as Commanding Officer.”

The next action took place just four weeks later with General Hamilton’s offensive from three axis at Helles, Anzac and Suvla. The plans were secret and the movement concealed. XIV Sikhs took part in the Battle of Sari Bair as part of the Indian brigade under Field Marshal Birdwood, commanding the Allied forces and forming part of the left assaulting column. It now had a double company of the Patiala Infantry under its command and was assigned to capture Hill ‘Q’ and Koja Chemen Tope. The element of surprise seemed to have been lost as the



No. 4 Double Company of the XIV Sikhs on a barge at Port Said before transfer to troopship for Galipolli: 2/Lt. R. Savory is seen in Sola topee.

A new offensive was launched at the end of June. The action at Gully Ravine fought between 28 June and 5 July achieved some success compared with the previous battles. XIV Sikhs, now reduced to skeleton strength, still acted as reserve to the 29th Division. The casualties continued unabated and when Colonel Palin, the commanding officer, temporarily took over command of 156 Brigade. 2/Lt. Savory succeeded him and was amused to receive his father’s mournful letter to which he replied that “though the unit had

movement plan could not be sustained, although two companies of Gurkhas reached Chanuk Bair but were not reinforced. Unfortunately, the effort of three weeks of fighting resulted in nothing more than more casualties and eventually the assault was called off.

Fortunately, it was over by the end of December 1915, when, having suffered an enormous number of casualties (27 BOs, 20 VCOs and 1,000 men) the XIV Sikhs moved back to Egypt. Given the number of

dead and invalided, the battalion would have been raised twice over.

Although General Hamilton was unable to achieve neither the assured victory envisaged nor was able to beat back the frontal attacks, he was full of admiration for the Sikhs, writing: *In the highest sense of the word, extreme gallantry has been shown by this fine battalion... in spite of these tremendous losses there was not a sign of wavering all day. Not an inch of ground gained was given up and not a single straggler came back.... ends of the enemy's trenches were found to be blocked with the bodies of Sikhs and of the enemy who died fighting at*

The XIV Sikhs left Gallipoli with great reputation and their gallantry and devotion to duty were recognised by the award of 35 Indian Distinguished Service Medals (IDSMS), a unique and unparalleled record.

On evacuation from Gallipoli on 14 December 1915, XIV Sikhs reached the Suez Canal ten days later where they remained till April the following year. By the end of April 1916 the unit left for Bushehr where they played an important part in the campaign against the Turks in Mesopotamia during 1918 in the operation to pursue them up




close quarters, the glacis slope is thickly strewn with the bodies of these fine soldiers all lying on their faces as they fell in their steady advance on the enemy. The history of the Sikhs affords many instances of their value as soldiers, but it may be safely asserted that nothing finer than the grim valour and steady discipline displayed by them on 4 June 1915 has ever been done by soldiers of the Khalsa. Their devotion to duty and their splendid loyalty to their orders and to their leaders make a record that their nation should look back upon with pride for many generations.

to the Tigris, which won them many more awards, two DSOs, four MCs, three IOMs, and eight IDSMS.

The gallantry of the units was also eulogised by Austen Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for India, in his moving speech in the House of Commons.

A special memorial service was held for the Sikhs in St. Paul's Cathedral in memory of the British and Indian officers and 'all those wonderful men who fell fighting that day'.

'It is difficult when one reviews the deeds of the Indian forces in this war to select for illustrating any particular instance, but the House will not forget and the Country will not forget such episodes as in France, the recapture of Neuve Chapelle in October 1914 by the 47th Sikhs...who lost in that attack 178 out of the 289 engaged and the Sappers and Miners lost 119 out of 300'.

Referring to the actions of the XIV Sikhs at Gallipoli he remarked, 'who is there who can read without emotion their action at Cape Helles, when the supporting troops on either side unable to get to them, fought their way and held on to the last, with the loss of nearly all their British and nearly all their Indian officers and with the loss of 130 men out of the 550 engaged. When, a day or two afterwards, the same ground was traversed again in a successful advance of our troops, the General who was in command had told me that every Sikh had fallen facing his enemy and most of them had at least one of their enemies under him'. 



Excerpted from the forthcoming book "Infinite Courage", An Illustrated History of The Sikh Regiment.



At the Sikh Regimental Centre, Ramgarh in 2006: commemorating the battle of Hai River where the 36th and 45th Sikhs were in heroic action nearly 90 years earlier.



Motor transport along the river Hai.

Religions for Peace

**WSC-AR
participates
in
World Assembly
at
Kyoto, Japan**



Over 800 religious representatives from over 100 countries attended the VIIIth World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Kyoto, August 2006.

Three representatives of the World Sikh Council-America Region (WSC-AR) travelled to Kyoto, Japan in the last week of August 2006 to participate in the VIIIth World Assembly of Religions for Peace on the theme "Confronting Violence and Advancing Shared Security", WSC-AR representatives also attended the World Youth Assembly, 21-25 August in Hiroshima, and the World Women Assembly, 24-25 August in Kyoto.

Over 800 religious representatives of all major world religions from over 100 countries across the world participated in this gathering which is held every 5 to 7 years by the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP). The WCRP is the world's largest coalition of religious representatives and their communities working together for peace.

The Chairperson of WSC-AR, Dr. Manohar Singh, was elected by the world assembly to its international Governing Board to represent the Sikh community worldwide. The WSC-AR youth representative, Ipninder Singh, was elected as Co-Convener of the North American Interreligious Youth Network, while the WSC-AR lady representative, Mrs. Raj Kaur, was elected to the International Women Working Committee.

Dr. Manohar Singh, Chairperson of WSC-AR remarked that "The Sikh community is pleased

to be represented on this highest decision making body of the world's largest international multifaith coalition focusing on peacemaking." He added that "the recognition of representative and elected Sikh organisations as a voice for the Sikh community is commendable, and we look forward to working with our sister national and international religious organisations in promoting peace with justice."

The Sikhs attending the Assembly's opening ceremony on August 26 were allowed to carry their kirpans. The opening ceremony was addressed by Honorable Junichiro Koizumi, Prime Minister of Japan. WSC-AR representatives had worked in advance with the WCRP International and Japanese staff as well as other Sikhs attending the conference so that the Sikh right to bear the kirpan would be respected and accommodated. Other notable speakers at the opening ceremony were Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan, Mohammed Khatami the former President of Iran, and Dr. William Vendley the Secretary General of WCRP.

The three member WSC-AR voting delegation consisted of Dr. Tarunjit Singh (Columbus, Ohio), Ipninder Singh (Chicago, Illinois), and Mrs. Raj Kaur (Long Island, New York). Dr. Tarunjit Singh, Chair of WSC-AR Interfaith Committee and Treasurer of Religions for Peace - USA (US chapter of WCRP), had worked in the past year

with WCRP in arranging for the Sikh delegation worldwide. Ipninder Singh, youth representative of Palatine Gurdwara Sahib of Chicago and WSC-AR youth liaison to Interfaith Youth Core, provided outstanding leadership to the international and North American youth delegation. Mrs. Raj Kaur, Vice-President of Sikh Heritage Foundation, was a key Sikh participant in the Women Assembly. In addition, one business delegate each from India, UK, Australia, and Kenya participated. Three additional Sikh observers attended from the UK.

WSC-AR Sikh participation and leadership was interwoven into the entire World Assembly. Other noteworthy Sikh events and developments of the assembly were:

- At the opening ceremony of the World Assembly on 26 August Dr. Tarunjit Singh, Chair of WSC-AR Interfaith Committee, participated along



Ipninder Singh, WSC-AR youth representative of Palatine Gurdwara Sahib of Chicago & Co-convenor of North American Interreligious Youth Network, attends the VIIIth World Assembly of Religions for Peace

with other faith representatives in reading the *Principles for Multi-Religious Cooperation* to “address common problems like war, poverty, and care of the earth.”

- At the Youth Assembly in Hiroshima, WSC-AR youth representative Ipninder Singh offered Sikh prayers along with other Sikh youth representatives at the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park on the evening of 22 August in a moving ceremony highlighting the devastation caused by the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima.

- Sikhs attending the World Assembly gathered over lunch on 27 August for the Sikh caucus and agreed to further strengthen and promote Sikh

participation at the local and regional levels in WCRP. The Sikh caucus meeting was co-convened by Dr. Tarunjit Singh, Treasurer of RFP-USA, and Dr. Tarlok Singh, Honorary President of WCRP from Kenya on the request of WCRP.

- One of the co-conveners of the Hindu caucus invited the Sikh community to join in the Hindu caucus. In response, the WSC-AR Sikh representative kindly advised the Hindu caucus co-convenor that “Sikhs are an independent world religion. The invitation made is objectionable to the Sikh community since it seeks to undermine our faith and make it subservient to the Hindu community.”

- In the spirit of reconciliation and healing prevalent at the World Assembly, the Chair of WSC-AR Interfaith Committee met with Ms. Ela Gandhi of South Africa, granddaughter of Mohandas Gandhi, and shared with her the written remarks



Mrs. Raj Kaur, Vice-President of Sikh Heritage Foundation & WSC-AR representative on International Women Coordination Committee, meets with other members of committee.

of her grandfather that were offensive to the Sikh faith. Mrs. Gandhi expressed empathy for the Sikh feelings and shared that her grandfather was not a saint and had made many mistakes in his life. It was agreed that more conversation between the Sikh community and Gandhi scholars as well as activists were needed so that Sikh sensitivities could be respected.

- Dr. Tarunjit Singh, as one of the five voting delegates of RFP-USA, attended a six nation gathering of religious representatives from South and North Korea, China, Japan, Russia, and USA on August 28 to express concern at the denial of visas by the Japanese government to six members of the North Korean delegation to the World Assembly.


The gathering, attended by world media, further affirmed that religious leaders have a significant role to play in achieving peace and stability in Northeast Asia, especially the Korean peninsula. The US delegation at the meeting pledged to work across religious and national boundaries to foster trust and peace in the region.

- At the North American regional caucus held on the evening of August 28, Ipninder Singh, WSC-AR youth representative, reported on behalf of the North American youth delegation along with Naomi Greenspan, Programme Associate for the Union for Reform Judaism.

- The first meeting of the newly elected Governing Board of WCRP was held on August 29 and attended by a representative of WSC-AR to ensure a Sikh voice on this international multifaith decision making body.

- The closing ceremony of the World Assembly which was held on 29 August included a rousing "thank you " to the hundreds of Japanese volunteers. Anantdeep Singh, Sikh representative from Amritsar, along with other youth presented messages of gratitude to the Japanese youth volunteers.

The VIIIth World Assembly of Religions for Peace ended with a breathtaking closing video which included selected comments and interviews from the Assembly. The video highlighted prominently the remarks of Dr. Tarunjit Singh, Chair of WSC-AR Interfaith Committee that "As people of many faiths, our paths are complementary to one another and not in competition. This world assembly provides a safe space for people of so many diverse faiths from across the world to come together to build relationships across religious boundaries and to rededicate ourselves to our own faith values as peacemakers of the world."

The World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) also commonly known as *Religions for Peace (RFP)* is the world's largest coalition of religious representatives and their communities working together for peace. RFP-USA is the national chapter of WCRP in United States. WSC-AR is a member of RFP-USA. 

More information on WCRP can be obtained at www.wcrp.org, and for RFP-USA at www.rfpusa.org.



Anantdeep Singh, the Sikh delegate from Amritsar, pins a message of peace for the world.



Dr. Tarunjit Singh, Chair of WSC-AR Interfaith Committee with Professor Hans Kung, Eminent Theologian & President of Global Ethic Foundation.



Dr. Tarunjit Singh, Chair of WSC-AR Interfaith Committee, with Ms. Ela Gandhi of South Africa, granddaughter of Mohandas Gandhi, to discuss a spirit of reconciliation and healing the offensive and mindless remarks of Gandhi against the Sikh community.

The Catholic-Sikh National Retreat

Representatives of the World Sikh Council – America Region and the US Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCB) met on 5-7 October, 2006 in Long Island New York for a three-day Catholic-Sikh bilateral national interreligious retreat. This was held at the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception (Hutington, NY) and the nearby Mata Sahib Kaur Gurdwara (Glen Cove, NY).

The objective of the retreat was for the Catholic and Sikh communities to further deepen the dialogue and trust among the two communities following their first consultation hosted by *Religions for Peace USA* on 20 May 2006.

The Catholic delegation was headed by Rev. James Massa, Executive Director of USCCB's Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs with assistance of Rev. Canon Francis Tiso, Associate Director of USCCB's Secretariat for ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs. The Sikh delegation was led by Dr Manohar Singh, Chairperson of WSC-AR with assistance from Dr Tarunjit Singh, Chair of Interfaith Committee of WSC-AR. A total of 11 invited representatives for USCCB and WSC-AR attended and participated in the discussions. Two observers of Religions for Peace – USA also attended the first day of the retreat.

As Father James Massa stated, 'We value this developing relationship with our Sikh brothers and sisters. The retreat was an opportunity for our two communities to share worship experiences, readings from our sacred texts, and community issues'.

Dr Manohar Singh stated, 'This continuing dialogue with the Catholic community deepens our natural respect and understanding. It has helped us to identify our commonalities and honour out differences. The kind hospitality of the Diocese of Rockville Centre's Seminary of the Immaculate Conception is very much appreciated'.

The retreat began on 5 October with a welcome by Monsignor James M. McDonald, Rector of the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception. Sikh introduction to 'Praying with Sri Guru Granth Sahib' was presented by Dr Manohar Singh, Chairperson of WSC-AR followed by the Catholic introduction to 'Praying with the New Testament' by Monsignor Charles Fink, Spiritual Director of the Seminary. The participating Catholics and Sikhs then joined the seminarians in the Catholic Mass later that evening following which they travelled to Mata Sahib Kaur Gurdwara for Sikh worship service and langar.

On the second day, following the morning Catholic prayer of chanted psalms with seminarians, the Catholic and Sikh communities shared two sacred readings and reflections each. The Sikh readings were led by Kavneet Singh, Member of Executive Committee of WSC-AR, and Yashpal Singh, Sikh community representative from Philadelphia. The Catholic readings were shared by Rev. Canon Francis Tiso, Associate Director of USCCB's Secretariat for ecumenical and Interfaith Affairs. At lunch, Bishop William Murphy of the Diocese of Rockville Centre shared his commitment to interreligious dialogue and encouraged such Catholic-Sikh dialogue to be further deepened on the basis of mutual trust. In the afternoon, the participants shared touching personal perspectives on 'Why Faith is Important to Me?' In the evening, the Catholic and Sikh delegations again visited the Mata Sahib Kaur Gurdwara for a Sikh youth led worship service and langar. Dr Manohar Singh of WSC-AR and Rev. James Massa of USCCB addressed the Sikh congregation on the importance of bilateral dialogue underway between the two national religious organisations.

The retreat ended on 7 October with an exploration of 'Where do we go from here?', a discussion on 'Developments in the Life of the Sikh Community and Catholic Church' and ended with Catholic and Sikh prayers.

At the retreat, the Sikh and Catholic communities expressed shared continuing concerns over the challenges faced by immigrant communities in the USA, the curtailment of religious freedom and human rights in South Asia, and the challenges of secularism to both religious communities.

The US Catholic Conference of Bishops (USCCP) is an assembly of the Catholic Church hierarchy which works together to unify, coordinate, promote and carry on Catholic activities in the United States; to organise and conduct religious, charitable and social welfare work at home and abroad: to aid in education and to care for immigrants. The bishops themselves constitute the membership of the Conference and are served by a staff of over 350 lay people, priests, deacons and religious.

The World Sikh Council – America Region (WSC-AR) is a representative and elected body of Sikh Gurdwaras and institutions in the United States. Its members include 42 Gurdwara and other Sikh institutions across the nation. WSC-AR works to promote Sikh interests at the national and international level focusing on issues of advocacy, education and well being of humankind. ☪

*Manmohan Singh,
Secretary General*

Gurpurab on Capitol Hill

At Washington DC on 6 November 2006 Sikhs jointly celebrated Guru Nanak's birthday for the first time at the prestigious site of the America's Capitol Hill. This site includes the US congressional office buildings; the Library of Congress, the Supreme Court, and the U.S. Botanic Garden. Federation of the Sikh Gurdwaras of Metropolitan Washington jointly sponsored this historic celebration, writes Satwant Kaur Bell of the National Gurdwara.

The three hundred seating capacity was full with representatives of Sikh Organizations, prominent dignitaries and the distinguished speakers. US Congressman Jim Moran was among the guests.

The programme began on the morning of 5 November with readings and singing from Sri Guru Granth Sahib installed on the premises for this occasion, and ended with prayers for well being of the entire world. Sikhs were permitted to carry kirpans to accompany the Guru Granth Sahib in spite of strictly enforced security regulations at the Capital Hill.


The guest speakers were Delegate Brian Moran and Ambassador of Peace Dr. Zulfiqar Quazi, who paid tributes to Guru Nanak and emphasised that Guru Nanak was the torch bearer of interfaith dialogues for harmony and peace. He brought together the major religious communities of Islam and Hinduism and showed them how to live in harmony.

Harbhajan Singh, formerly of The World Bank, convener of the Federation also coordinated the event at the Capitol Hill and outlined the universal message of Guru Nanak. There is one eternal reality that manifests in the creation to give it the format of One Spirit, One World. In God alone can we transcend the divisions inherent in our separatist attitudes of *mine* and *yours, us* and *them, we* and *others*.

Guru Nanak urged humanity to meditate on God's attributes of truth, creativity, fearlessness, without animosity or negativity towards others, and that there was no religion that God would patronise. Each disciple of spirituality had to work out his/her own patterns of religious practices exactly what the founding fathers of American society later had in mind when they formulated the US constitution and modes of governance. Sikhs are proud of being part of American society and active contributors in every phase of its prosperity.

Guru Nanak advocated the institution of spirituality in earthly practices; all seeking the divinity in daily practices (*naam*) and leading a life of altruism (*daan*). He felicitated experience of divinity at every moment and in every act of life in order to inculcate cleansing acts that purify the mind and body (*isnaan*).

Amongst Sikh community leaders who spoke at the function were Baljinder Singh, Chatter Singh Saini, Surjeet Singh, Amarjit Singh Riat, Manbir Singh Kathuria, Dr. Ugajar Singh Bawa and Gurcharan Singh. Kahan Singh Dhillon who was recently elected to the leadership of Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce introduced the guest speakers.

Only a few months earlier Sikh congregations of the metropolitan Washington area had founded such a federation to promote programmes that were of common interest and necessity. Federation members include Guru Gobind Singh Foundation, Guru Nanak Foundation of America, National Gurdwara, Raj Khalsa Gurdwara, Sikh Association of Baltimore, Sikh Foundation of Virginia, Singh Sabha Gurdwara, and Washington Sikh Centre, representing over 25000 Sikhs settled in the metropolitan area. 



Washington Sikhs celebrate Anniversary of the new Gurdwara



On 16 October 2006 - hundreds of Sikhs thronged the white brick building of the one year old Gurdwara Sahib of Guru Gobind Singh Foundation at Washington to celebrate the first anniversary on Sunday, 15th October. The red and white blooming flowers at the entrance of the gurdwara were welcoming everyone and it reflected the mood of the day. Over 125 kids of all ages dressed in Khalsa outfits were lined in a procession and were led by Panj Pyaras (five beloved ones). Zorawar Singh and Gurpreet Singh played the Dholki and chhainai and accompanied the ladies

He offered the following prayer:

“O Architect of the Universe, who conceived the blueprint for the vast galaxies and the minute microbes, thank you for this beautiful day of celebration and rededication. Thank you for helping all those who developed the blueprints for this Gurdwara, and those who gave financial support, ideas, skills, energy, and enthusiasm to its construction. Thank you also for the ancestors of all who gather here today, whose love, hard work, and dreams for their children and their children’s



singing shabads, consecrating the moment. Over 200 people followed the procession with devotion, and the bright autumn morning together created a memorable atmosphere.

Simeon Kriesberg, President of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington and a member of the Jewish faith, brought greetings from all of the major faith communities in the Washington area. He rendered a non-denominational prayer seeking blessings for the Gurdwara and the Sikh community. Representing an organisation of 10 world religions, his words of prayer were powerful and inspirational.

children have made it possible for us to be here today.”

“O Builder of Community, who encourages your diverse creation to congregate in mutual support, thank you for the significance of this Gurdwara: the strength, permanence, and vitality of the Sikh community in this nation and in this region, and the community’s recognition that its success is built on a foundation of faith. May all those who lead this community be blessed with wisdom and vision.”

The Sikhs then entered the main hall and Sikh youth started the programme with singing of five shabads. They had especially prepared these shabads

for the occasion and they were trained by Bhai Gurdarshan Singh. Over 80 kids of all ages took turns to sing each of these shabads during this time. Their singing in traditional raags accompanied with two tablas certainly created the feeling that Sikh tradition is well entrenched in them.

This was followed by Gurbani recitation by Ragis Baljeet Singh, Jaswinder Singh and Bhai Gajjan Singh who had especially come from India for the occasion. Their versatile singing, mixing the raag and modern melody, left an indelible mark in the minds of congregants.

Governor Bob Ehrlich of Maryland personally deputed Chris Foster, Deputy Secretary of Small Business development, to present a citation from the State of Maryland congratulating the Sikh community on the first anniversary. Ehrlich was in neck to neck competition with Mayor Martin O'Malley for his re-election in November. Sartaj Singh introduced Scott Foster to the audience who then presented the brief remarks to Amrit Kaur, Secretary of GGSF. The citation read, "Be it known that on behalf of the citizens of the State in recognition of a special tribute to celebrate the occasion of the first anniversary of the new Sikh Gurdwara with congratulations and best wishes as you commemorate this important day and our citizens honour the Sikh community in Maryland, and as an expression of our respect and sincere gratitude for your positive contributions to Maryland, We are pleased to confer upon you this (citation).

Rev. Dr. Clark Lobenstine, Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington, praised the example of the Sikh community and the ten gurus in his comments at the first anniversary service of the Guru Gobind Singh Gurdwara. "The examples of two of the gurus giving their lives to protect the right of others to freely practice their faith is such an inspiration. The inclusion of texts written by persons who were not Sikh in the Guru Granth Sahib is remarkable. My own faith as a Christian is deepened by these and other examples from the Sikh community. We are blessed indeed to have the active participation on the



S. Ranjit Singh carrying Guru Granth Sahib, Bhai Gurdarshan Singh ready for Ardas

Guru Gobind Singh Foundation in the InterFaith Conference."

In addition, Sandra Kimble, a representative of Congressman Chris Van Hollen, brought best wishes from the lawmaker who is also campaigning for his re-election.

Harminder Singh Jassal, Amrit Kaur and Dr. Rajwant Singh took turns to appeal for the Sikhs to donate money to pay off the loan of the Gurdwara. They launched a special campaign to raise funds until 31 December 2006. Community members responded with great enthusiasm by giving over


\$70,000. Many promised to give their commitments in the coming weeks.

Dr. Rajwant Singh, Executive Director of GGSF, said, "The focus of the gurdwara is to become a centre of learning as well to help create a positive awareness of the Sikhs in the metropolitan area. This has been our faithful journey from last 20 years with the support of the community."

Dr. Harminder Kaur Mangat, Coordinator of the Gurmat School of GGSF, said, "This entire programme was great and has left us with a feeling of assurance for our future generations." 124 kids are enrolled in the Gurmat School and come every Sunday morning for lessons on Sikh history and philosophy at GGSF.

Harminder Singh Jassal, Director of GGSF, said, "We have tried to create a family atmosphere for our youngsters in this gurdwara so that they have a sense of belonging as well as the confidence of being Sikhs in this society."

Baldev Singh arranged the Akhand Path (the continuous reading of the Sikh Scriptures) and Tejwinder Singh's family provided service for the entire congregation for three days.

Ranjit Singh, Chairman of GGSF, thanked the congregation for their continued support for the activities of the Foundation. 

For more details, please contact:

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309 9528 Website: www.ggsfusa.com

Letters to the Editor

I wish you were there to experience the turban tying session at the Rubin Museum. I thought that the Sangeet programme was great and we would not be able to top that - but I was wrong - the turban tying programme was just amazing. There definitely was a 'Higher Hand' that watched over this event.

I had expected about 10 people and that too children - so we were set up in the small room. The woman who runs this series was unwell so I scrambled around to find the things to set up. We were barely ready by 2 pm and low and behold - when I opened the doors - I was stunned. We had about 60 people waiting out side. Immediately we went into 'Plan B' and moved everything into the theatre.

I was thrilled to see Sat Jivan Siingh Khalsa come with his students to the programme. On my request he spoke about the significance of the turban.

The audience was of mature adults in their late 20's to 40's and we had about 6 children. Then came the part where I had organised three Sikh boys from NJ, Westchester and CT. They showed the audience how to tie the turban and the patka and Angad Raj Singh from CT undid his hair (he has the most beautiful long hair - I am so jealous) the audience just could not believe the length and asked wonderful questions of the 3 boys: they loved the way the boys did their hair in a top knot.

Then came the part where I invited the audience to try their hand at turban tying. I had 50 pastel coloured turbans ordered from India and 50 patkas, the stage was packed with people wanting to wear a turban.

I was overwhelmed with the response - by Guru's Grace there were also young college going Sikhs in the audience - who jumped in to help with the turban tying. I wish I knew their names - but that is the Khalsa spirit, they saw the need and just responded so willingly, they were fantastic. I think we all knew that we were experiencing something quite wonderful. With turbans tied they went up to the gallery floor and saw the exhibit and they all were thrilled with the fact that they could keep the turbans. The young girls had their hair braided with parandhi's, and had some bindis for them also. They loved the shiny gold things in their hair. All in all it was a magical afternoon and I truly wish you were there to experience what I experienced. At times we wonder has this exhibition been worth the effort and I say over and over again - YES, YES and YES.

I have had parents thank me with tears rolling - their children remember the saakhis through the

art (at times as parents we wonder whether they will remember what we are saying) but somewhere deep within them - they do - it is heart warming to see the reaction of the children - they are overjoyed to see the art and the explanation on the walls.

I know this is long but I really wanted to share with you what all has been happening.

Inni Kaur
New York

It was wonderful to see my review of Dr IJ Singh's newest book, *The World According to Sikhi*, in the Issue of Nishaan II/2006. Your publication of it is deeply appreciated.

During the edition process, several mistakes were introduced into the article. None of these appear in my original manuscript. While definitely unfortunate, all but one can be overlooked.

On page 45, the error in the first sentence of the second paragraph is quite substantive, and cannot be ignored. The editing change to the first word has completely transformed the meaning of the sentence, and has led to an erroneous conclusion about IJ Singh's previous three books. Please let me assure you that, while I have not written reviews of these prior works, I am, nevertheless, extremely familiar with them.

My original sentence: "Like its three predecessors, *The World According to Sikhi* is not a catechism about who Sikhs are, and what they believe or practice.

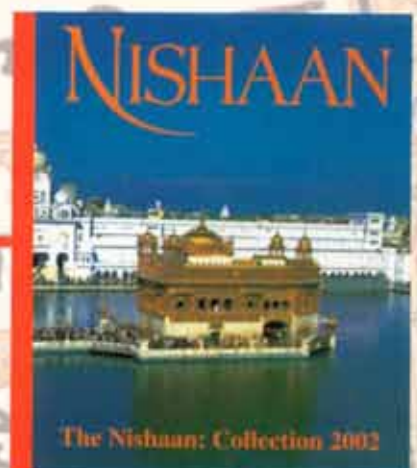
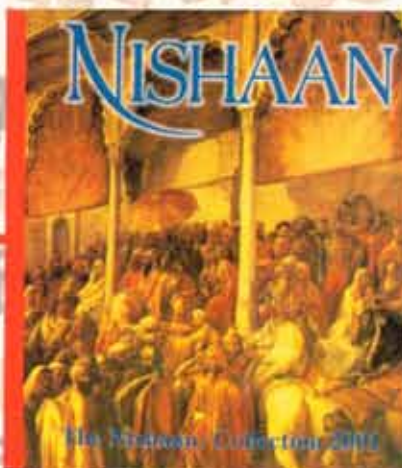
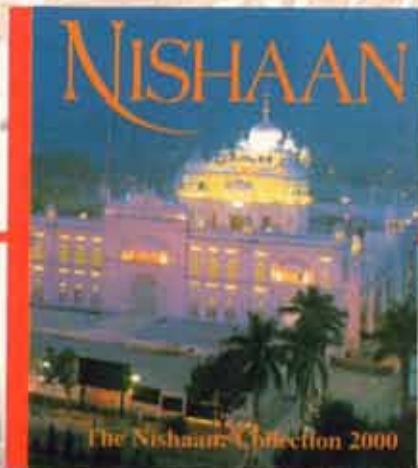
The sentence as it appears in *Nishaan* means that the author's first three books ARE catechisms. This is not only totally false, but also degrades an integral aspect of Sikhi, as well as IJ Singh's 'trademark' way of presenting its tenets. The fact that his books never give preachy, carved-in-stone, black-and-white answers is perfectly in keeping with the very unique nature of Sikhi as a faith that provides an ethical framework for living, not an endless list of do's and don'ts.

It is my firm belief, as one who has embraced Sikhi as her chosen faith, that ALL of his books vividly portray it as a vibrant Path of multifaceted meaning. While *Nishaan* has neither a "Letters to the Editor" nor an "Errata" section, your readership nonetheless deserves to get an accurate image of IJ Singh's entire body to work. To describe any of his writings as 'a catechism' could not be farther from the truth.

Laurie Bolger

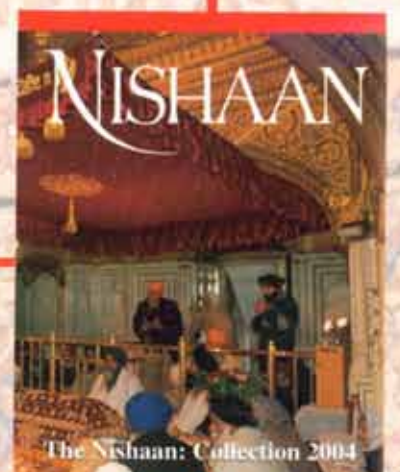
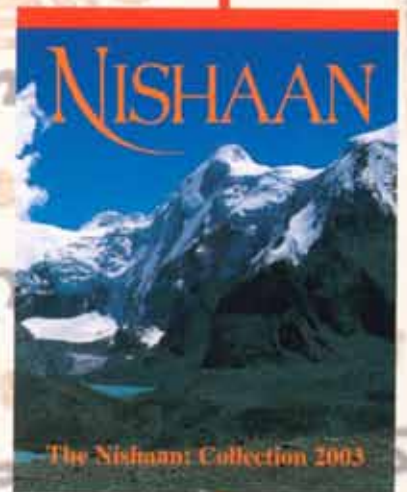
[We stand corrected -Ed]

The Nishaan Collections



The Nishaan Collections for 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004 are now available in bound volumes, also including the Premiere Issue of the Journal released in April 1999 at the Tercentenary of the birth of Khalsa.

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