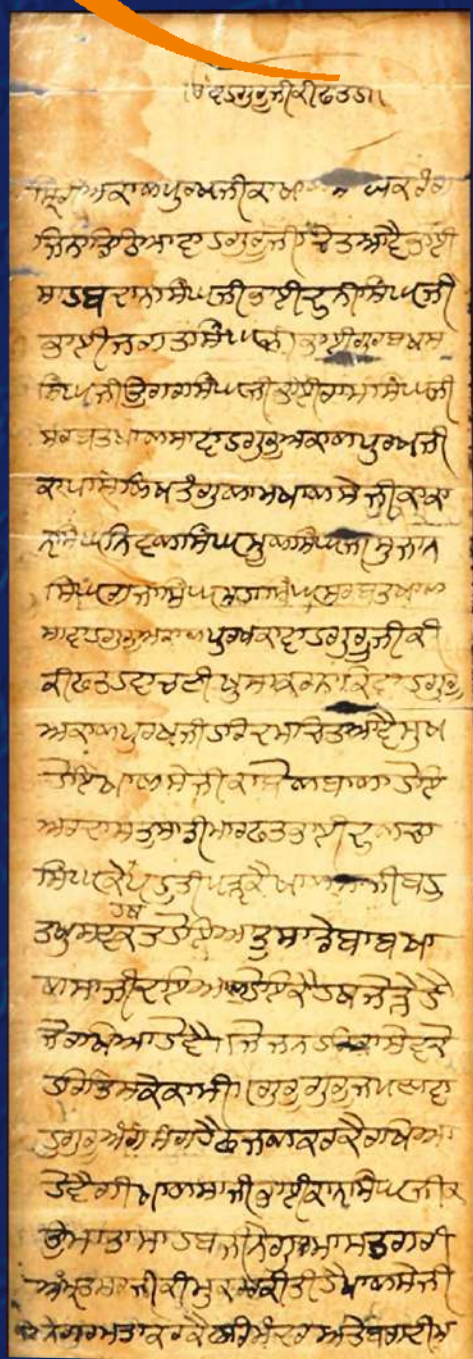


NISHAAN

NAGAARA



Hukam Nama (edict) of Mata Sundari ji, condemning belief in 'Deh Dhari' Gurus.



Original with Bhai Rup Chand's descendents in village Bhai Rupa in District Bhatinda.

Contents

Issue III/2007

2 Editorial

"Strengthen Parchaar,
Expose Perfidy"
BSS

Translation of lines on cover

Waheguruji's Khalsa should be alert and discerning, who shall not recognise anyone other than Akaal Purakh. Only till the 10th Lord shall he accept a Guru in human form (Deh Dhari). To recognise any other is an offence akin to murder. Other transgressions can be condoned by prayer and repentance (Guru Japna), but this offence (of believing in living Gurus) is not pardonable. They who have faith in a living Guru are renegades who have fled from their own faith (Sikhi), and are polluted. So, Khalsaji's recognise none but Akaal Purakh, and seek guidance (Shabad) only in the ten Gurus.

4 Wake up call !

Ronki Ram

6 The Why and How of Heresy

Dr. IJ Singh and Ravinder Singh

8 Deras fester the countryside

Various reports

12 The threat from within

Dipankar Gupta



14 The difference between Faith and Heresy

Sankarshan Thakur



21 This Great man of God : Bhagat Puran Singh

Dr. Inderjit Kaur



26 British Sikhs and multi culturalism

Hasan Suroor



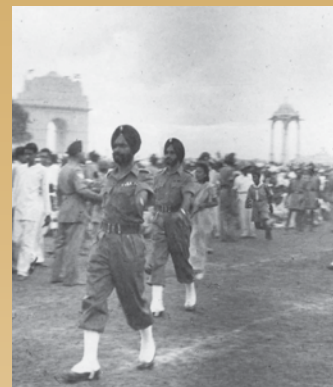
32 An Illustrious Record

Peter Bance



35 Re-visiting history

Col Harinder Singh Attari



44 Sixty years after Partition

Prof. Chhanda Chatterjee



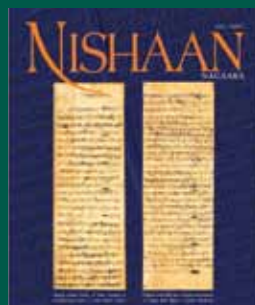
48 An Inquest

Madhav Godbole



55 The Wagah-Attari Border

Extract from 1947: A Soldiers Story



Cover: Hukam Nama (edict) of Mata Sundari ji, condemning belief in 'Deh Dhari' Gurus.(Original at Bhai Rupa)

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Editorial

“Strengthen Parchaar, Expose Perfidy”

In Gurbani, Kabirji after observing conduct of the so-called men of religion during his time (akin to the godmen of today) and much before Guru Nanak's time, wrote:

ੴ ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ॥

They have rosaries around their necks and glittering jugs in their hands

They are not called the saints of God, but the cheats of Kanshi

And again about their personalities, he says :

ੴ ॥

Ever and ever they roam about in self-conceit and drown all their families.

Today, not just on roads of the Punjab and streets of Delhi but also in the United States, Canada and Britain wherever there are Sikh concentrations, such 'godmen' are travelling, beguiling and misleading the ignorant and relieving them of their hard earned savings. All in the name of Sikhi and its heritage, they are busy eroding the first while demolishing the latter. In such false garb, they are actually taking man farther from his God and message of the Gurus. Sikh visage is used to undo the Sikhs. In India, innocence is exploited and turned into vote banks for nefarious designs in gaining power and pelf. These godmen keep *kesh*, pretending to be inheritors of the Sikh tradition.

The phenomenon is not new. Even during the Guru's period, jealous and disgruntled collaterals of the Gurus and ambitious individuals tried to set up their own gadis, putting up false claims and distorting the Baani. Once the Sikhs were made to commit themselves to the Shabad Guru and the edit Guru Manas Granth was established and Sikhi became vibrant, the growth of such false alternatives found it difficult to take root or spread.

After passing away of the Gurus, their Sikhs, in spite of acute hardships and fearful odds faced by them, stood firmly committed to the divinity in Akal Purakh. For almost ninety years after the tenth Guru's

passing, their living was pristine and their character and conduct immaculate as that of the Khalsas was to be, with not an iota of dilution or corruption in the practice of the precepts ordained by the Gurus. Neglect of the *parchaar* by Sikh institutions, lack of education and alienation even from one's mother tongue, made people flounder. Whereas the Sikh way of life is meant to be dynamic motivation for higher achievements and not realising its innate uniqueness, the ignorant and the misled went in search of something else as an opiate and a crutch. Thus started the emergence and then mushrooming of 'Baba's' and the 'Deras'.

A Sikh is supposed to be self reliant in his religious practice.. He does not require a priest to help him practice his faith. He goes to the Gurdwara to be a part of the Sangat – the Society -- listen to the Gurbani and participate in doing sewa with his community. The Sangat is Guru Roop. The Sikh must do his own Nit Nem (recite the prescribed compositions from the baani) and listen to Asa Di Var in a congregation.

After the demise of Akali Phoola Singh, the management of Harmander Sahib slipped into the hands of devious Mahants and Pujaris, who exploited this holy shrine, the centre of Sikhs, for their own designs. Ranjit Singh's so-called secularity and political expediencies had allowed the seed of decadence to be sown within the community. However the subsequent pristine traditions followed by the Giani Taksal of Baba Deep Singh, Baba Karam Singh of Hoti Mardan, Baba Dayalji of the original Nirankari School, Baba Jasbir Singh of Jammu, Bhai Guddar Singh in Malwa to name some, kept the Sikh missionary efforts and spirits alive and vibrant, with originality of the Guru's message well maintained.

During the period following fall of the Sikh Raj, a few dedicated Gursikhs came on the scene, who propagated the Sikh faith with sincerity and dedication. Some of their successors however deviated from the true path and within decades, created personal cults and Deras, solely for the purpose of power and riches even if it meant disowning supremacy of the Shabad Guru. They began propagating *Deh Dhari* Gurus, which is strictly proscribed in the Sikh faith. There were, and are, those who propagate involving the kundalini and yoga as

an accepted mode of practice for Sikhs. Because they wear turbans or sport the *kesh*, they cannot be accepted as the Guru's Sikhs.

The last few decades have actually seen hordes of Babas rampaging upon Sikhi, driving fancy cars and with attendant sycophants to lend legitimacy. They carry out kar sewa but in reality, systematically demolish heritage buildings and relics of Sikh history, which are replaced by morbidly uniform structures of marble, which stone was used by the moghuls for monuments to their dead. Even remains of the original house of Bebe Nanaki has been pulled down by them.

Many of these Deras are reportedly fronts for illegal trade in drugs and worse. Some of them have even been taken to court for exploiting their women followers. The vote bank politics of today's opportunistic leaders protect these frauds from exposure and prosecution. First the colonial rulers and later national ones have promoted these elements to undermine Sikh solidarity and faith. Such patronage still continues.

The great Gurus propounded the Sikh way of life, or Sikhi, wherein it required a Sikh to live his life according to the principles and values enshrined in the Baani endorsed in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The postulate that Shabad is the Guru, endeavours to put the human in direct commune with the Master creator, Akal Purakh. There is no need for intermediaries between the human and his Divine, with the class of professional middlemen firmly rejected in the Sikh way of life.

The Sikh doctrines were formulated keeping in mind the dangers faced during evolution of religious concepts and practice from the birth of mankind. Sri Guru Gobind Singh recalls vividly how the Divine message was misused by the so-called divine messengers to enhance their own egos. In *Bachitar Natak* while revealing the purpose of his life's mission, Sri Guru Gobind Singh recalls how over many millennia, great sages and men known as 'avtaars' (incarnates) forgot their lofty missions. Akal Purakh, advised him (the Satguru) that these messengers had tried to become 'God' themselves.

ਭਗਤਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ

Whosoever great men were created by the Lord, they all started their own cults

And again,

ਭਗਤਾਂ ਨੇ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ ਭਗਤਾਂ ਦੇ ਨਾਮ ਨੂੰ

He got all to recite his name and did not impress upon anybody to mediate upon the True name (of the Lord).

The Gurus have elevated us from such morass and misery and showed us the way whereby with truthful living, honest labour and love for the Lord, one could enjoy communion with Him and life on earth too. For this, Sikhs were given the Guru in Shabad. Sikhi needed no Qazi, nor Pandit or any other institutionalised intermediary between man and his 'God'.

This way of life, the Sikh faith, demands disciplined living, principled conduct and fearless commitment to the values and ideals laid down by the Gurus and followed by Sikhs for the century thereafter. So long as Sikh traditions were upheld and the community remained connected with its heritage, remembering the high moral conduct, devotion, valour and chastity of character, Sikhs had firm focus on centrality of the Guru Shabad and Guru Granth Sahib. But over time, through negligent ways, and distances created from one's ethos, such focus, centrality and commitment started receding with individuals wavering in their faith. In this vacuum, certain individuals exploited the situation, promising 'instant solutions,' which line was swallowed by the gullible.

Neglect of the *parchaar* by Sikh institutions, lack of education and alienation even from their own mother tongue, made people search for 'answer' elsewhere. Whereas the Sikh way of life is meant to be dynamic motivation for higher achievements, but not realising its innate uniqueness, these 'lost souls', went looking for some other faith as an opiate or a crutch. Absence of proactive Sikh leadership has created such space for these Babas and Deras to proliferate even as political patronage for narrow selfish ends have allowed them to expand their tentacles.

It is high time for the Sikh community, their institutions and leadership to confront this menace head on. However, in order to do so, they will have to rise above partisan politics, strengthen the *parchaar* of Sikhi and so expose perfidy of the Babas and their Deras.

However, on a positive note, the personal influence of sincere and dedicated individuals can, and does, play a benign role in certain social and religious affairs. While one such good *sewak* has inspired people to clean the Kali Bein, another great person has established a series of pristine educational institutions in the mountains and other places of northern India.

WAKE UP CALL!

Challenge to the Sikh- Khalsa Identity

The recent violent clashes between followers of the Dera Sacha Sauda (established in 1948 with its headquarters in Sirsa, Haryana) and different groups of Akalis, and another spate of conflicts between Jats and Dalits in the state, mark a crucial turn in the political history of Punjab. The importance of these conflicts surpasses the much talked about "short-term politics of revenge" and shows up the deep socio-religious hierarchies in the so-called casteless Sikh society in Punjab. On the one hand, they lay bare the dormant structures of social discrimination that permeate the fabric of Sikh society and on the other, point towards the neo-conservative Sikhs' anxiety about the Sikh-Khalsa identity.

The Akali-Dera Sacha Sauda row over the Dera's Baba Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh's mimicking of the iconography of Guru Gobind Singh, seems much to do with the prevalence of the doctrinally-rejected system of caste hierarchy among the Sikhs. The majority of the followers of various Sacha Sauda-type Deras come from dispossessed sections of society, who at one point of time had embraced Sikhism in the hope of elevating their social and material status. This near-exodus from Sikhism towards the alternative socio-spiritual space provided by the Deras invites the hostility of clerics of the established mainstream religious order, who see it as a serious challenge to the Sikh-Khalsa identity. Moreover, frequent politicisation of the Deras and the accompanying pontifications further complicate the issue. Persistent attempts by various Sikh organisations to win over disgruntled Dalit Sikh followers of various Deras during the recent Akali-Dera crisis is a clear example of this.

Punjab has the distinction of being home to the largest proportion of the country's Scheduled Caste (SC) population (29 per cent). The SCs in Punjab belong to different religious and castes, and have the lowest share in the ownership of land (2.4 per cent of the cultivated area). The Dalit Sikhs (Mazhabi and Ramdasis or Ramdasias Sikhs) are most deprived of the lot. They embraced Sikhism in the hope of gaining social equality, but even in the new religion un-touchability continued

to be practised against them. Social opprobrium continues to afflict them and other Dalits. Some of them feel that Jat Sikhs treat them as badly in the gurdwaras as they do in their farmlands. This has forced them to establish separate gurdwaras, marriage places and cremation grounds. It is against this backdrop of blatant social exclusion that a large number of Dalits have been veering away from the mainstream Sikh religion and enrolling themselves into various forms of Deras in Punjab.

Another probable cause behind the large-scale Dalit following of the Deras could be the absence of a strong Dalit movement in the state.

However, the phenomenon of Deras/sects is not new to the Punjab. Rather, it is as old as the Sikh faith. During the period of the Gurus, different Deras of Udasis, Meene, Dhirmaliye, Ramraiya and Handali sects cropped up. All these earlier sects and Deras were primarily the outcome of disgruntled and unsuccessful attempts of fake claimants to the title of Guru. Apart from these, there were many more sects and Deras that came up at different intervals on the long and tortuous consolidation of the Sikh religion. Some of the most prominent among them were the Nanakpathis, Sewapanthis, Bhaktpanthi, Suthrashahi, Gulabdas, Nirmalas and the Nihangs who are also



known as Akalis or Shahids. But what distinguished these earlier Deras from the contemporary ones is that they could not become centres of Dalit mobilisation. That could be because of the fact that during its early phase of consolidation the Sikh religion was completely egalitarian in precept as well as practice. Dalits were given equal respect and status. They were not discriminated against at all. It was only later on that the monster of casteism raised its head within Sikh institutions and enraged the dispossessed sections. But one factor that draws comparisons between the earlier and the contemporary Deras is the presence of Gurus in all of them, a practice that goes against the basic spirit and tenets of mainstream Sikhism.

According to a latest study conducted by the *Desh Sevak*, a daily published from Chandigarh, there are around nine thousand Deras in the 12 thousand villages of Punjab. Among them, the most popular are of the Radha Soamis, Sacha Sauda, Nirankaris, Namdharis, Divya Jyoti Sansthan, Bhanjarawala and Ravidasis. Almost all of them have branches in all the districts of the state as well as in other parts of the country. Some of them are very popular among the Punjabi Diaspora and have overseas branches in almost all the continents of the world. Despite their non-sectarian claims, some of these Deras are adhered along caste lines. Though Gurubani from the Guru Granth Sahib is recited in these Deras, other sacred texts are also referred to. For them, idol worship and devotion towards a human Guru is not the anathema as it is in Sikh theology. It is due to the presence of such non-Sikh traditions as Human Guruship in these Deras that the phenomenon of non-Sikh Deras has been described by the scholars Meeta and Rajivlochan as the "alternate Guru movement in Punjab".

This alternate movement in Punjab with its "loose syncretistic practices" throws a formidable challenge to the Sikh-Khalsa identity. Though Bhindranwale tried to assert the Sikh-Khalsa identity by taking up the cudgels for a dissident sect of the Nirankaris and preaching hatred against the Hindus, he could not prevent the movement of Dalits towards non-Sikh Deras. These Deras, in fact, pose an even more serious challenge to mainstream Sikhism. The number of followers of these Deras seems to far exceed that of the Golden Temple-based clerical establishment. It is in this context that the confrontation between the Deras and mainstream Sikhism assumes a critical importance with serious implications for the relationship between Dalits and Jat Sikhs. The confrontation between the Akalis and

the *premis* of the Dera Sacha Sauda is only the most recent case in point. Some of the most prominent conflicts in the past include the Nirankari crisis of 1978, the Bhanjarawala phenomenon of 2001, and the Talhan crisis of 2003. These clashes were, in fact, more about identity politics between Jat Sikhs and Dalits than a row over religion. However, given the religious milieu of the social sphere in Punjab, such conflicts often assumed a communal posture. The Jats of Punjab are primarily an agriculture community. Since the Dalits in the state were deprived of land, in the absence of other job avenues they were forced to depend for their livelihood on the land of the Jat Sikhs. That brought the Dalits in direct confrontation with the Jat Sikhs. Dalits' relationship with the Jats is that of landless agricultural labour versus the landlords. The two communities are engaged in a power struggle.

However, there are many Dalits in Punjab who have improved their economics conditions by dissociating themselves from their caste occupations as well as distancing themselves from agriculture. They have strengthened their economic position through sheer hard work, enterprise and ventures outside the state. Some of them have established their own small-scale servicing units, and work as carpenters, barbers, blacksmiths and so on. In addition, they have also been politicised to a large extent by the famous *Ad-Dharm* movement. Thus, they have not only improved their economic status but have also liberated themselves from the subordination of the Jat landowners.

With an improved economic position and a sharpened social consciousness, Dalits in Punjab started demanding a concomitant rise in their social status. In the process, they also challenged the dominant caste and its claims to represent true Sikhism. The Jat Sikhs, however, interpreted it as a challenge to the Sikh-Khalsa identity, which further deepened the existing contractions between them and the Dalists. That is what has led to a series of violent caste clashes between Dalists and Jats in Punjab in the past few years, as also the repeated confrontations between the Akalis and followers of one or the other non-Sikh Deras. Such conflicts are in no way a manifestation of communalism in the state. They, in fact, are signs of an emerging Dalit assertion against social exclusion that have all the possibility of snowballing into violent conflicts if left unresolved.

Ronki Ram
[Acknowledgement : Tehelka]

The Why and How of Heresy

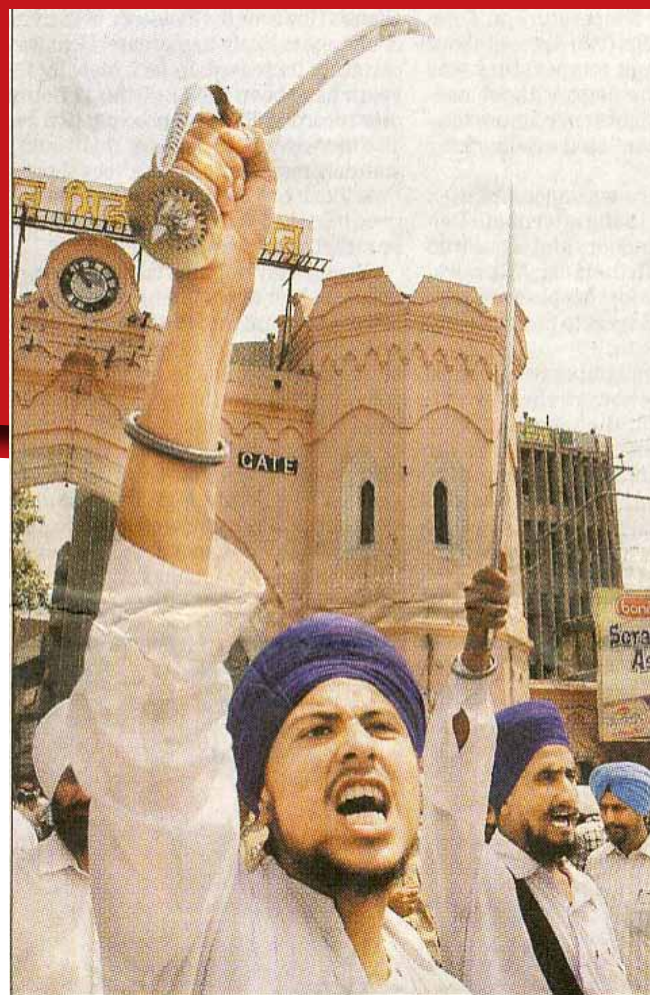
An advertisement in a leading Indian daily placed by the Haryana-based *Dera Sacha Sauda* organisation recently had Sikhs across the world incensed because it depicts their leader – who goes by the rather interesting name of Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh – “doing” a Guru Gobind Singh. He copied the Guru by dressing like him and tries to appear as if he is the Guru, attempting to recreate Guru Gobind Singh’s greatest achievement – creation of the Khalsa in 1699.

Artistic rendition of Guru Gobind Singh during foundation of the Khalsa in 1699 depicts him dressed like royalty of the times: a rounded turban with a plume or *kalgi*, a cummerbund (*kamar kassa*), carrying a silver arrow, stirring the *Amrit* with a double-edged sword. Such artistic images are perhaps the most powerful symbols that inform the Sikh psyche.

Similarity of the advertisement with the rendition of Guru Gobind Singh as Sikhs know it, was unmistakable. And so was the intent. Clearly, Ram Rahim Singh sought to recast himself in the image of Guru Gobind Singh and project himself as a prophet of the times – his public denial notwithstanding.

In this sense, Ram Rahim Singh is neither unique nor the first to misappropriate the message and symbols of an established religion for his own limited, perhaps pernicious use. Sikhi, has had its own share of pretenders and Ram Rahim is just the latest in a line that dates back to Prithi Chand, Meharban, Ram Rai, and in more recent times the Radha Soami Gurus and Nirankaris.

This is heresy. Sikhs rightly view this as extreme provocation and judging from the hackles Ram Rahim has raised, it is obvious that they are not going to put up with it. Not surprisingly, there have been demands for Ram Rahim’s head and talk about



“suicide squads.” Unfortunately, such reaction is unlikely to solve anything except make matters worse. Recourse to the bullet simply means that we have lost the debate.

It used to be that religions could – and did – deal with such acts summarily; thus, a heretic could be burnt at the stake and low caste Hindus had molten lead poured into their ears for daring to hear Scripture. But we now live in a different time. Religions no longer enjoy the same kind of temporal authority over their followers. The best one can hope for these days is eternal damnation for such provocateurs.

Thus the question is, what is one to do? What next?

For starters, we need to find a better and more productive expression for our frustration than what we have seen so far. The reaction – or overreaction – of the hierarchy of our Jathedars provided us an unexcelled example of a knee jerk reaction that is no better than making empty slogans, threatening physical violence and demanding apologies. Demand

for Ram Rahim's head has been made in some Sikh quarters, and news items suggested actions aimed at forcibly closing down the Dera.

Now that Sikhs worldwide have vented their frustration, what real options do they have?

Our actions can be either curative or punitive. Available punitive actions are few but, nevertheless, they need to be exercised. An apology was quite rightly demanded, although not yet received. Legal action has also been filed under Section 529 and moral pressure in the form of a social boycott of *Sacha Sauda* members has been called for. This is the right kind of punitive pressure to apply.

But the Jathedars in their wisdom, also issued an edict, demanding closure of all Dera centres. This is not feasible legally, repugnant morally and certain to diminish support for us. Even if such a result were desired, it would require a long-term strategy of patience, education and social pressure. We need to develop ways to undermine and undercut whatever service the Deras provide that their followers find attractive.

No Sikh leader has condemned the call for Ram Rahim's head. His killing would only transform him into a martyr and would serve no useful purpose. The sight of Sikhs brandishing swords and talking about suicide squads does not serve the Sikhs. It only serves to reinforce the image of Sikhs as a violent bunch, who cannot settle their internal differences peacefully.

Beyond this, there are curative actions that Sikhs need to reflect upon.

An obvious question that is being asked revolves around the appeal and proliferation of Deras in Punjab. At last count, there were over 9000 Deras in the Punjab and commanded a substantial following. Dera Sacha Sauda alone has more than 500,000 followers drawn largely from Dalit Sikhs and other marginalised Hindus and Muslims. The composition of the organisation points to what may be a reason why Sacha Sauda is attracting so many followers.

Some serious introspection is in order for the community at large. Does our leadership have a vision or will it continue to display the kind of knee jerk reaction that has been on display? There will always be "sects" or "movements" at the periphery of major religions and Sikhi is not immune from this. But we need to devise a more balanced circumspect reaction to the presence of such organisations.

In a real sense, this crisis presents an opportunity for our leadership to demonstrate moral authority and to clean house by arresting some of the obviously pernicious tendencies within the Panth, i.e., the drift towards shedding of the 5K's, drugs, foeticide, female infanticide, gender inequality, and castes etc. These demand long-term initiatives, but if undertaken with the right spirit, will, over time, diminish any attraction of Deras like Sacha Sauda.

Every new message is at its core, one of rebellion and is so perceived. And every new message has to be cast in the language of the old. So the cultural context can become difficult. And every new messenger must be an iconoclast.

That's why we remember the lives of Socrates, Buddha, Jesus, Nanak and his successor Gurus. But in time they have become icons, leading to newer iconoclasts. But time has proven beyond doubt that their message is timeless. And the danger to their message is less from newly discovered self-described messengers, but from distortions of their message by their so-called followers. And this is clearly evident in the distortion of the Sikh message by Deras like Sacha Sauda.

It would seem from the above that we do not approve of government-sanctioned censorship, and that is generally true. Freedom of speech is indeed sacrosanct. But it is also true that there are limits on free speech, if the greater good demands it. For example, no one has a right to yell "Fire" in a crowded theatre.

This is not to underestimate the evil of "usual politics" that seems to be at work here. It is worth noting that Dera Sacha Sauda supported the Congress in the recent elections and helped it win an unprecedented 37 out of 65 seats in the Malwa region. The similarity of this Deras activities with the happenings that led to the 1978 Sikh-Nirankari clash is unmistakable, and many rightly fear that history might repeat itself. The course of events in the Punjab suggests that hard-core elements are fishing in troubled waters. If they haven't fomented it, surely politicians stand at the brink like vultures to take advantage of this crisis, of incalculable cost to the community.

As is sometimes said, some diseases are manageable, while others are curable. This disease of Deras is one that is neither easily curable nor simply manageable. It demands of us a level head in *sehaj*, guided by the wisdom and patience of the Gurus.

Dr. IJ Singh and Ravinder Singh

Deras fester the countryside



Swami Agnivesh of the Arya Samaj, along with representatives of various religious organisations, hands over apology of Dera Sacha Sauda to Gaini Joginder Singh Vedanti, Jathedar, Akal Takht, in Amritsar.

There are an estimated 9,000 deras in Punjab, in a total of 12,329 villages and about 80 per cent of Punjab patronises these deras. Prof HS Dilgeer, formerly with the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), points out that “around 90 per cent of the religious offerings are being cornered by deras nowadays”. But what is worrying the Sikh religious establishment more is distortion of the faith, growing apostasy and the huge following that such deras command.

New deras sprang up in the aftermath of militancy, and their spiritual heads amassed enormous wealth when they got funds to rebuild gurdwaras. They made a special effort to woo lower-caste and illiterate Sikhs, and to project an inclusive image.

All political parties woo the deras, which can influence large numbers of voters. In the last concluded Punjab assembly elections, Dera Sacha Sauda came out openly in support of the Congress and constituted district-level political affairs wings. Much of the Congress’ good showing in the Malwa belt of Punjab (where the dera has some 5 lakh followers) was to Sacha Sauda’s credit, which managed to bring 12-odd seats into the Congress kitty. In return, the party reportedly promised to help out dera head Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh with a CBI enquiry he is facing for the murder of a follower and a journalist, who spilled the beans about sexual exploitation of the dera’s woman inmates. Significantly, soon after the polls, the CBI officer enquiring into these allegations was transferred.

A few years ago, some prominent dera heads organised themselves into the Sant Samaj, an outfit comprising some 350 major deras. Since the SGPC is controlled by the Shiromani Akali Dal, the Sant Samaj

became identified with the Congress. This spawned conspiracy theories which held that deras have been deliberately thrust upon Punjabis to dilute Sikhism. But Jathedar Vedanti feels it is unfair to “blame anyone else for what is our own failing”.

Politicians of all hues patronise the deras. “It’s a vicious circle,” feels SGPC member Dr Kiranjot Kaur. “Drawn by their following, politicians go to deras for votes, and their presence grants the dera legitimacy, adding to its following.” So it is with Baba Kashmira Singh or Ashutosh Maharaj: they enjoy considerable clout with political parties and use it for their own commercial ends. Currently, chief minister Parkash Singh Badal, whose Akali Dal got a drubbing in its Malwa stronghold thanks to Sacha Sauda, is wooing select deras in the state. The deras now pose a major threat and challenge to the Sikh religious establishment and have upset the Sikh community. The recent violent clashes across Punjab between followers of the Dera Sacha Sauda and various Sikh groups reflect the community’s growing fears that the ‘dera culture’ poses the most serious threat yet to ‘Sikhi’.

“In a religion where *shabad* or the word of God (immortalised in the Guru Granth Sahib) is the guru, there is no place for a living guru or baba or sant,” states Dr Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia, Sikh scholar and director of the Guru Gobind Singh Foundation. “This is against basic tenets of the faith which is steadily being eroded by a mushroom growth of deras in the last decade or so.”

In the rising din against deras, the Sikh clergy, represented by the five head priests as well as the SGPC, is being squarely blamed for “letting down the faithful”. “Our religious leadership has submitted to

politicians and devotees more time to politicking than propagating the religion. Their grip over the people has loosened and deras and babas have just stepped in to fill the gap,' says Prof Darshan Singh, professor emeritus, Guru Nanak Studies, Punjab University. In 2005, around 100 Sikh organisations gathered at the Akal Takht to find ways to check the rising dera cult in the Punjab. But owing to lack of unanimity over the deras against which action was being contemplated, the campaign fizzled out.

Faced with increasing criticism, the Sikh clergy is on the defensive. Recognising the deras as a "serious threat to Sikhism", Akal Takht jathedar Joginder Singh, Vedanti believes they are drawing people "because following a baba is easy. There is no need to study or understand the scriptures, or the 'vaani' of gurus. All you have to do is hand over all your worries to the baba, and he takes care of everything! This is not Sikhism. There is no place for miracle cures, rituals or godmen in our religion." Says SGPC president Avtar Singh Makkar "We are trying to bring such babas into our fold. But many are missing the gurbani for their own commercial motives and we are now directly in confrontation with them."

The SGPC also claims to have held 'amrit chakho' camps in the last two years in which over a lakh Sikhs have been baptised. Alarmed over the growing number of 'apostates' in the faith, several Sikh missionary organisations too have stepped up their campaigns in rural Punjab, many of them sponsored by wealthy NRI Sikhs. But is it a losing battle? Some 80 per cent of Sikh men in rural Punjab do not sport 'kesh' or hair, the most visible symbol of Sikhism. Have deras then sounded the death-knell of Sikhism as we have known it?

"Sikhism is already a receding religion. The basic ethos is gone from it," noted Joginder Singh, editor of daily newspaper *Spokesman*, and an outspoken critic of the Sikh clergy, for which offence he has been excommunicated from the Sikh panth. Many believe that the sudden rise of deras in Punjab has much to do with the aftermath of militancy in Punjab when many gurdwaras were rebuilt through *kar seva* or voluntary effort. "This became a racket as many *kar seva* babas sprung up to take on contract work from the SGPC. They collected huge sums from the public and bought expensive cars for themselves, spending just a fraction of it on the project," stated a disgusted Dr Ahluwalia. Many of the deras are now being run by these very *kar seva* babas who have assumed cult

status as godmen of sorts. Their "appeal" also lies in their inclusive approach. With the caste system rearing its head in Punjab in recent years, its manifestation visible in separate gurdwaras for Dalits and other lower-caste Sikhs, the deras attract this segment with their egalitarianism. It is not surprising that most major deras draw the low castes, the illiterate and the gullible.

Analysts across the board have sounded a warning about the turn of events in Punjab. A clutch of them such as Shekhar Gupta, the respected journalist and editor who was a young reporter covering the Punjab of the 1980s, has harked back to the days when the terror of Bhindranwale raised its head and in a recent article recalled 13 April 1978 when the Punjab saw a major clash between the Nirankari sect and Bhindranwale's followers. This later culminated in the assassination of Baba Gurbachan Singh, head of the Nirankaris and the beginning of Punjab militancy which then set the state behind by almost a decade. Could the Dera Sacha Sauda induced clashes put the state on fire? Like in the '80s, the same cocktail of religious extremism, politics and poor gullible citizens seem to be in vogue.

Case Study 1

The recent confrontation between Sikhs and followers of the Sacha Sauda sect, headquartered in Sirsa (Haryana) led to bandhs in several towns, resulted in clashes, and injuries to over 100 people were ostensibly triggered by an advertisement. This showed the leader of Dera Sacha Sauda, Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh, dressed like Guru Gobind Singh, re-enacting Guru Gobind Singh's baptism of the first Khalsa Sikhs.

Ensnconced in his 700-acre lair, Gurmeet Singh has claimed that he wore what his followers gave him. The conservative Sikh anger, however, is directed not only at his clothes. The feisty godman also issued a 47-point code of conduct for his followers, contradicting the Akal Takht code for all Sikhs. Though Gurmeet claims he is for the unity of all religions, many Sikhs see it as an attempt to convert lower-class Sikhs to his order. Faced with increasing criticism for not doing enough to preserve Sikhism, the clergy is under pressure to take strong measures. Which way will Sikhism turn?

Case Study 2

At Jalandhar, a Baba Kashmira Singh runs the lucrative Jan Sewa Trust where apart from doling out spiritual advice he also runs a multi-speciality hospital. He preaches unity of all religious and has set up little shrines representative of Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam on his dera's rooftop. In 1999, the baba, himself a Sikh, was summoned to the Akal Takht, the supreme spiritual body of the Sikhs, to explain why he should not be excommunicated from the faith for his "heretical" activities.

Kashmira Singh, known for his proximity to the Congress, said in an interview with a news weekly that "Sikhs are breaking away from gurdwaras and coming to deras like mine for spiritual guidance because of their disillusionment with Sikhism. I believe a religion should be flexible and change with the times." At Kirpal Sagar, a sprawling complex spread over 35 hectares in Rahon village of Nawanshahr district, the piece de resistance is a boat-shaped monument bearing different religious symbols situated in the centre of a rippling tank of water. Here the caretaker of the deceased baba's inheritance is Bibi Surinder Kaur who tells us that amrit in Punjab can only be found at two places. "One at the Golden Temple sarovar in Amritsar, and the other at our dera!" If this rankles the Sikh clergy, the allegedly blasphemous activities of some other deras is a source of frequent violence in the state.

Case Study 3

Followers of the controversial Divya Jyoti Jagran Sansthan at Noormahalrun by Ashutosh Maharaj have had several serious run ins with Sikh groups who object to the 'samagams' held by the dera all over Punjab, where besides projecting himself as a reincarnation of the Sikh gurus, Ashutosh is allegedly also critical of mainstream Sikhism. In 1998, Baba Piara Bhaniarewala provoked Sikhs by writing his own granth, which he called the Bhavsagar Samundar Granth, and encouraged followers to burn copies of Sikh scriptures. He was excommunicated from the faith by the Akal Takht, but the resultant violence at his dera near Ropar forced the government to provide him a hefty security cover. Notwithstanding the opposition, both the deras have grown in strength and in influence.

Sikh Deras : from Grace to Disgrace



The Dera system among Sikhs in Punjab started with the puritan seminaries of Nirmalas and Udasis. Nirmala and Udasi deras were great centres of learning and research of Sikhism and maintenance of Sikh religious institutions. Later, Gulabdasias were prominent deradars as centres of religious teaching. Hindus went to temples, Muslims to mosques and Sikh learners to Deras for contemplation and study. Teaching of basic Sikh scriptures was in Punjabi, in the Gurmukhi script, at all these deras. The famous song '*na main meine padi Gurmukhi na baithi san dere*' depicts this.

Deras were allotted large lands and properties by various Sikh Royalty and Chiefs for maintaining the deras and the religious centres attached to them. Gradually some Deras concentrated on acquisition of land, wealth and power. Rather than caring for teaching religious texts and maintaining the religious centre, they used these for personal aggrandisement. Conflicts arose during transfer of power after the death of one dera head.

Struggles

To retrieve the situation and to relieve the gurdwaras from dera control, the Singh Sabha movement launched morchas like Guru ka Bagh, Chabian da Morcha, Jaito da Morcha, etc. and succeeded in taking over control of these deras. An apex body, the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak

Committee was formed to control the Gurdwaras. Some deras not occupying historical religious places continued while new ones emerged. These deras however, remained wedded to the teaching of Gurus, believing in the Gurus and Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Subtle Inroads

Later, with emergence of the Dera at Beas, things changed subtly but radically. Although it drew its teachings from Gurbani and remained attached to spiritual attainment, it claimed an independent identity. As it did nothing against the value system of Sikhs and paid due regard to Sikh Gurus it was not interfered with, even though it weaned away Sikhs from the faith.

Lately however some deras such as Sacha Sauda, Noormahlias, among others, have risen as independent identities, not accepting Sikh Gurus or Guru Granth Sahib as supreme. In fact they have been trying to prove themselves in the same league as the Gurus while teaching Sikh scriptures, but with no new concept of their own. Various political leaders have used them to inflate their vote banks. This has given the deras political clout.

Dera Sacha Sauda went to the extreme limit of replicating holy appearance of the tenth Guru and performed the ritual of partaking of Amrit on the same lines as that of Guru Gobind Singh. His publicising this blasphemous act widely has been greatly resented by Sikhs.

Criminality & Cultism

As regards Dera Sacha Sauda, its criminal background is well known. A CBI inquiry against its head for the murder of Ranjit Singh a former manager, and another of a local reporter, as well as of sexual exploitation of Sadhvis, was due to be placed against him to the Punjab & Haryana High Court on 25 May 2007. Ram Rahim's act of sacrilege at Salabatpura too needs condemnation. His '47' rules published in papers have nothing religious in them. Most of them are general conduct rules taught in any school book, but these have a deception plan with some points to bind his followers. For example point no. 34 says, "Always wear this locket to make you remember that we (the photo in the locket is that of Gurmeet Ram Raheem Singh and his guru) are the only one, the one who is your Malik (Gurmeet Ram Raheem Singh). Point No. 35 says, "You got to die for your country and the Satguru (Gurmeet Ram Raheem Singh)". Rule No. 6 says, "After getting up in the morning give a call (*dhan dhan satguru tera aasra*); satiguru here means Gurmeet Ram Raheem Singh. Rule No.1 says, "Remove all suffixes like Sharma, Verma, Arora, Sandhu. Write only Insan." Similarly according to rule No. 15, "15th part of your income should be given in charity or to Shah Satinam ji Green Welfare Force".

This way Ram Rahim has built his personality cult, obliterating identification with all other religions, and forcing followers to donate their hard earned income into his dera.

Flash points

Similarly, the role of Noormahlias is of identical nature, and is also widely resented. Even declaration of Satiguru by Namdari Dera leader is not acceptable to Sikhs. These remain flash points and need to be curbed to avoid any communal tension. Although all Sikhs agree that these deras be stopped, but political patronage given to these deras by all party leaders is great cause of concern.

The SGPC was created to check these deras, but it has failed in its role as it has not carried out the required propagation of Sikhism, especially among the poor and the remote, who are being exploited. Now the stage has reached that nearly 80 per cent youth in the remote areas have become apostate. It is now often said that times are not far when the Sikhs will lose their base in the Punjab. Sikhs should blame themselves for this and not find excuses.

Reform Within

It is better that the Sikh clergy, rather than seeking power, links itself to *dharmprachar*. They must shed their political robes and wear spiritual robes so that the Sikhs in general get the required guidance and solace. The *mayawad* of gurdwaras must be curbed. The preachers, the kirtanias and granthis should be dedicated to Sikhism rather than to *maya*. SGPC is not a governmental institution, it is religious. It must refrain from any political affiliation to ensure that Sikhs from all political systems, have equal access to it. It must employ only those who have religious zeal. The religious karmachari system must stop forthwith. This pracharks must perform. Deras have come up because of their failures. It is the Sikhs themselves who have to transform and bring in the change. No one will come from outside to help them.



The threat from within

Sikhs may just be 2 per cent of India's population but in their self-image and deportment, it is as if they constitute 200 per cent of India's one billion. As the saying goes: "Ek Sikh barabar sava lakh". Even during the worst days of the Partition, Sikhs never felt insecure about their religion as Hindu's did, and continue to do.

Why then does a small, insignificant sect like the Dera Sacha Sauda, that does not even claim to be Sikh, get mainstream Akalis and a large number of everyday Sikhs so angry and bothered? This Baba is no medieval tyrant and martyrdom of any kind would be thoroughly wasted on him. He is a minor figure whose demonising by the Akalis raised his stature and downgraded their gurus who gave up their lives in glorious battlefields.

The question then is: how did the Sikhs suddenly turn so insecure? When did it happen and where were we all looking? Or did the lights suddenly go off in the changing room?

The original Panthic Party, which later morphed into the Akali Dal after 1947, never evinced such worries either and those were very difficult times. They regularly participated with the Congress before Independence. The party even supplied the Congress with a stable of leaders from Pratap Singh Kairon to Swaran Singh. On election campaigns in undivided Punjab, the Panthic Party frequently displayed the Congress symbol along with its own. On no occasion did any of this to-and-fro movement from Panthic Party and back threaten Sikhism. Nor did the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee declare Kairon or Swaran Singh, or any of the others who took their political blood lines to the Congress, apostates or 'tankhaiyas'. Sikhism had that much confidence.

In 1899, when Sardar Kahn Singh Nabha wrote "Hum Hindu Nahin (We are not Hindus)," he did not castigate any other religion but just said the plain truth. The Sikhs were not Hindus and let the record state the facts. It was not as if he was prompted to write this tract because of the perceived fear that Hinduism was eating up Sikhism. In this sense he was not the mirror opposite of Swami Dayanand who took every other religion, including Sikhism, as a threat to the Hindu faith.

Nabha's interjection was to remind his readers of the symbolic energies at the heart of his faith without deriding non-Sikhs,

nor, even for a moment, hoping to proselytise other religions to his own. Even the Singh Sabhas and Chief Khalsa Diwan of that period were intent on crafting a separate Sikh identity and not in impressing their own thought prints of their immediate religious neighbours.

Interestingly, in the 60 years after Independence, the Akali Dal has never used Partition to evoke partisanship the way Hindu parties, and sadly, even the Congress have done from time to time. This is indeed quite remarkable. Sikhs had greatly suffered along with Hindus in their migration to east Punjab and beyond. But yet, unlike Hindus, the Partition is history for Sikhs, and not a source of political energies.

When I was working with re-settled rural Sikh refugees in Punjab and Haryana, what struck me most was that they found my questions, which recalled the Partition, quite stupid. So many of these Sikhs told me to move on and not keep looking over my shoulder for monsters and chimeras of the past.

That was such a relief. Hindu refugees, in general, were still agonising over the Partition and related stirring tales of their experiences during those times. Most of this recall was highly adorned as my Hindu respondents in the early 1990s were either babies or playing in the mud in knickers when 1947 happened. Some post-partition Hindu families even held prayer meetings to solemnly remember the day they were ousted from their homes. I found none of this among Sikh refugees. It is no surprise then that even a sectarian

party like the Akali Dal has no use for the Partition as a leavening political agent.

Later, during the tense days of Khalistan, a large number of Sikhs felt that they were humiliated by the Indian State, but on no account did they believe that their religion was under threat. Khalistanis were, of course, baying to the contrary from the margins, but an overwhelming majority of Sikhs did not politically side with these secessionists though they were widely admired for giving the hated agents of the government a tough time. This is not an 'a-ha' moment for, in spite of the post-"Bluestar" trauma, Sikhs were willing to look ahead the moment Prime Minister VP Singh visited the Punjab with a healing balm.

The Khalistani years, if one may call them that, however demonstrated that in times of crisis, it was not as if there were Sikhs and other Sikhs. Regardless of caste and origin, all Sikhs came together. This is where the difference lies when we come to the Sikh over-reaction to Dera Sacha Sauda. There are now Sikhs and other Sikhs and the lines are drawn along the grooves of caste.

Most of the animus against Baba Ram Rahim came from the Malwa region of Punjab where Jat Sikhs are politically dominant. It does not matter really if Jats vote for Congress today and Akali tomorrow, it would always be a fight between 'lions'. Dera Sacha Sauda trampled on this territory by bringing in non-Jats to kick up dust and spoil the Jat versus Jat slugfest.

This is why Baba Ram Rahim was so profoundly despised in Jat-dominated



Akali circles. It was not because he was undermining Sikhism so much as using his "low caste" followers to defeat Jats in their own lair that made Baba Ram Rahim such a hated poster-boy for the Akalis. If the Congress had won without his support, that would still have been acceptable.

It is not true, as the Akalis allege, that in the advertisement put out by Baba Ram Rahim he dressed like the tenth Guru. His turban did not have a 'kalgi (or plume)', he was stirring *Rooch Afza* (or something pink) with a ladle and not with a sword (which is Khalsa tradition) and further, he was wearing pink and not blue, not even white. No icon of Guru Gobind can ever be depicted in that colour: Chhatrapati Shivaji's popular imagery looks closer to Guru Gobind than this pink spectacle of a fellow.

And yet many Sikhs blindly believed the Akalis when they said that Baba Ram Rahim was imitating Guru Gobind and thus mocking Sikhism. The majority of such Sikhs did not bother to verify the facts as they were primed to believe anything against him. It was their Jatness, not their Sikhness, that Baba Ram Rahim deeply hurt. In the 1980s, Hindus too eagerly believed the tale that the Anandpur Sahib Resolution was secessionist. The drive to hate always numbs the better senses.

At the end of the day what is most depressing is that Sikhs are becoming caste-ridden, and more and more like Hindus. If this trend continues than Sikhism will probably find its greatest threat from within and not from figures clad in baby pink.

Dipankar Gupta

[Acknowledgement: Hindustan Times]

The difference between FAITH AND HERESY

Originally a place of belonging – spiritual, temporal or literal – Dera Sacha Sauda is now an aspect that causes loathing and anxiety among many people in the Punjab. A sect that has a large following, Dera Sacha Sauda is now facing the ire of mainstream Sikhism which rejects this sect's 'living God' concept.

The latest round of confrontation began in May 2007 when Dera Sacha Sauda chief, the self-named Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh was accused of blasphemy. Soon clashes broke out between orthodox Sikhs and the Dera's followers, who call themselves 'premis' and 12 people were injured in the violence in Bhatinda.

Since then, apologies have been offered and rejected, petitions filed, an arrest warrant issued and anticipatory bail granted to Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh. However, the worst is far from over; there is every indication that the conflict will escalate. The Khalsa Action Committee (KAC), comprising several smaller, radical Sikh organisations, demanded the immediate arrest of the Dera chief. They refuse to acknowledge the Dera chief as a Sikh; in fact, they refer to him as 'Gurmeet Ram Rahim', dropping the surname 'Singh'. The Dera, too, is referred to as only 'Dera Sauda', since 'Sacha Sauda' is a reference to a *saakhi* about Guru Nanak. One of the placards proclaimed "The Sikh nation will not tolerate interference in religious affairs" while others displayed fake photos of the Dera chief behind bars.

Kunwar Pal Singh, the KAC spokesman, has stated that they intend to "counter the anti-Sikh activity of Dera Sirsa, and other such deras" (Dera Sacha Sauda has its headquarters in Sirsa, Haryana). "There are other deras, but none of them has dared to do what this man did. They are within the fold of mainstream Sikhism as long as they follow the Granth Sahib."

Deras or sects go back well into Punjab's past, and in the 15th Century there were Sufi or Bhakti deras. Maharaja Ranjit Singh actively supported the deras of several Sikh preachers, especially of the Udasi and Nirmal sects. Over time, many different sects emerged, Namdhari, Nirankari, Nurmahaliye, Ramraiya, Bairagi, Radhasoami, Ravidasi, Garibdasi, Nihang, Nath and so on.

Smaller ones continue to come up even now. Some deras trace their lineage to the Qadris and Kalandhars while others have seemingly emerged from nowhere. If one dera does not allow its followers to drink even tea lest it should cause an addiction, at another, liquor is offered on Fridays. Yet another dera insists that its followers wear only white. At another, the sparkling glitter of deep, lush hues forms the backdrop of the gaddi. The Ravidass dera treats the Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhs, with respect, but its preaching and singing is often restricted to the verses of Guru Ravidass.

It was only in the 1870s, after the Singh Sabha movement came into being, that Sikhism moved primarily into gurdwaras and it was not until 1920 that the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) appeared on the scene and started to assume control of the faith.

One of the uniting factors for most of the deras is, indeed, the presence of one major leader, who is referred to as 'satguru' or 'bhagwan'. The Akal Takht, the highest political institution of Sikhs, finds this totally unacceptable. If it was simply a question of theology, it could have excommunicated those who treat babas on a par with the Sikh Gurus. But religious excommunication would not serve the purpose when here are millions of dera followers around.

Why these Deras?

According to Professor Seva Singh, who held the Kabir Chair at the Guru Nanak Dev University, at Amritsar, various deras have one essential difference. "A dera can be orthodox or heterodox. The latter will break with tradition. The orthodox clergy has a problem, because they want to retain their hegemony – religious, political, cultural and economic. They are not worried about the small Sufi deras because Muslims have virtually left (Eastern) Punjab and pose no real threat to upper-caste Jat hegemony. But the newer, larger deras do, since the bulk of their following is lower-caste and poor. If you do not have a political revolution, people must turn elsewhere."

Professor Jagrup Singh Sekhon of the Guru Nanak Dev University agrees. He is currently researching deras in the State and is interested in the political sociology of the tradition. "Deras have begun to influence politics at both State and (village) level. The "babas" are powerful, well connected and rich. Some are techno-savvy. Besides, there is land at stake. Several thousand acres of land brings its own power."

Some dera heads have been legislators themselves; others have politicians in the family; and some, like Bibi Jagir Kaur, have been very powerful amongst the Sikh clergy, even though they have their own deras.

Besides, there are other factors that bring people closer to the deras. Almost all the deras, including Sacha Sauda, Ashutosh's ashram at Nurmahal and Namdhari, claim that they help people recover from alcoholism and drug abuse. Addiction to alcohol and drugs has been a rising problem throughout the State and many families approach the babas for help. Outside Dera Sacha Sauda, in fact, there are many posters warning people about the dangers of tobacco consumption and also scary photos of oral cancer.

Most deras also insist on vegetarianism; most forbid female foeticide. Many of them invest large sums of money in hospitals, schools, charitable trusts, adoption of orphans, and increasingly, organic farming. People go to the deras mainly for the sense of community and belonging they provide; there is very little discrimination too. Sacha Sauda, in particular, has won a lot of followers because of its policy of not accepting any donations from its followers.

Saudagar Singh, a *premi* at Sirsa, said that he went to many deras before he settled on Sacha Sauda. "The Gurbani said, you should have a guru. So I went looking. And here, I found a spiritual college. Don't ask me why. When the wind blows, can you tell which colour it assumes?"

Another follower, Vidya, said that she had been a 'sevak' for about 16 years, and her husband had been cured of his alcoholism and gambling habit. But what was most important is that she feels loved at the dera. "When they sing, I feel like dancing. Just like the mastana guru, who founded this dera."

On an evening, when the Jaam-e-Insaan programme was scheduled, there were tens of thousands of people waiting to drink the 'jaam', a cool drink of rose-flavoured milk, through which a follower is baptised as an 'insaan'. The follower drops the caste surname in the process, and becomes quite simply, a human being. This ceremony is very popular amongst the Dalits in the Punjab since caste has continued to play an oppressive role in their day-to-day lives.

Hardliners and Deras

The KAC states that it is against six deras in particular – Radhasoami, Nirankari, Namdhari, Nurmahali, Bhaniarawale and Sacha Sauda – because they are "misleading Sikhs" or "adopting the outward symbols of Sikh identity". The living guru concept especially strikes at the root of mainstream Sikhism. As for the 'mainstream', it refers to those who have managed to capture the gurdwara management, predominantly those from the upper castes. In this race, the Dalits found themselves on the margins.

The deras with the largest number of followers, a large percentage of whom are Dalit, are the ones that concern the KAC the most. Even though many deras do not hold religious conversions and have a mixed following, the appropriation of the Sikh identity bothers the hardliners.

In the past, those who have run foul of the Sikh hardliners have had to face violence and harassment. The attacks against the Nirankari sect in the 1970s are well documented since they coincided with the demand for Khalistan and the rise of militancy in Punjab, with Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale as the most visible icon of the pro-Khalistan movement.

In 1975, the Namdhari sect landed in trouble with the Sikh clergy, when its followers were found to be reading the Granth Sahib off separate sheets of paper. Hardliners insisted that separating the leaves of the Granth was tantamount to unbinding and, therefore, constituted an insult to the holy book.

In recent times, the leader of the Bhaniarawala dera in Dhamana village, Piara Singh Bhaniarawala, was in focus. He was the "star saint" of a new text, commonly called the Bhavsagar Granth, which was immediately banned by the State. He was sent to jail in 2001, following allegations that he had had copies of the Granth Sahib burnt. There were several attempts on his life, his ashram was bombed and he continues to need Central Reserve Police Force security. One of the points of conflict, even then, was that he wore a plume in his turban, and was photographed riding a horse, like the tenth guru.

The problem, then, is not one of faith, but one of identity. That is the predicament of orthodox Sikhs, who are unwilling to let go of the reins of religion. On the one hand, they fear the dilution of what they recognise as the Sikh identity. On the other, a strict enforcement of the 'maryada' (Sikh code of conduct) would mean that nearly everybody is thrown out of the 'mainstream' fold.

In the words of Sant Harpal Singh, "religion is like a tree." It may have one main stalk when it is young, but inevitably it grows branches or

sects. "The Radhasoamis used to bow before the Granth Sahib earlier. This 'mainstream' created a fuss about that and that tradition stopped. This mainstream is weakening the religion; we will lose all those who want to worship the Guru Granth in their own way."

The SGPC and the Akal Takht would do well to remember what the 15th century mystic poet Kabir, who is believed to have had an influence on Sikhism said: "Religion, without love, is heresy."

Annie Zaidi

(Acknowledgement: Frontline)

wheels and face the law of the land. Layer by layer, over the past couple of months, Ram Rahim has come revealed to us not as God reincarnate – his chosen station – but as a merely earthly megalomaniac who had figured in faith a convenient scheme to indulge his many lusts. The man had created a sin-bin from his high seat using faith on those that remained blind and terror on those who saw the truth. There is evidence, now, coaxed in a dogged investigation by Tehelka reporters, of Ram Rahim's murky fief – torture, molestation, rape, illegal possession of weapons. There is also, following our investigation,

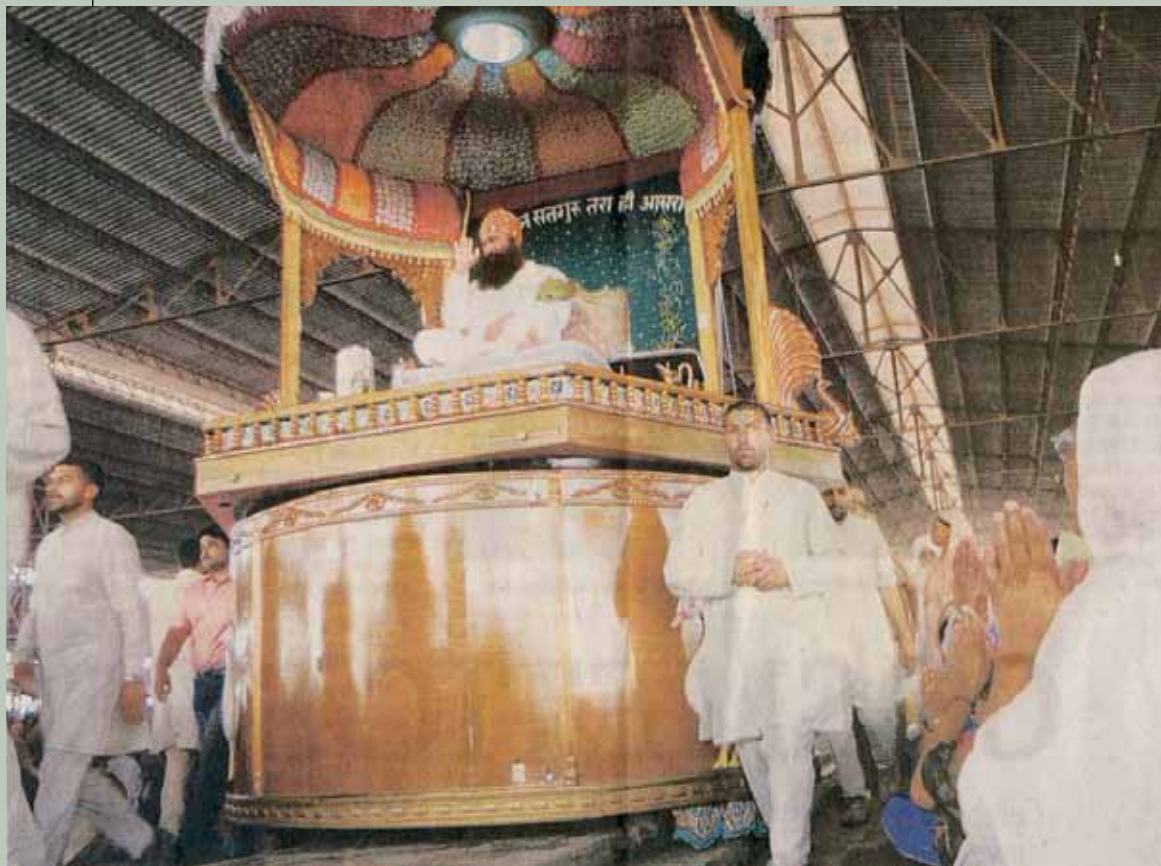
a CBI chargesheet that should that should be able to extract the Dera's leader from his fortress and walk him to the dock – and justice.

Are there any lessons here for us to learn too? Every once in a while, societies must reckon with themselves in the mirror and deal with the warts. Dealing with Ram Rahim will not see to the warts l'affaire Dera have thrown up. What allowed him unchallenged command of his kinky kingdom? The obeisance of thousands. The allowances of the State. The tolerance of society at large. Time to examine all of these. It cannot be that

nobody had a hint of what was happening inside. We are a talkative society, people get to know. What stopped anyone? That Ram Rahim wore a halo? That he had mighty friends and followers? That he could leverage power? Should any or all of those have impeded the rule of law? Mind you, the man still has a following, and a fairly militant one. He will attempt to make that count. Provoke a riot. Unleash bloodshed. Hold the system to ransom. Bigots and cowards of all ilk do that in desperation. Time their bluff was called.

Sankarshan Thakur

(Acknowledgement: Editorial in Tehelka)



Fraud on faith

One of the things about faith is that it is intrinsically blind. Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh of Dera Sacha Sauda isn't the first man to have reduced it from the sublime to the sordid. History is a rich lesson in fraud's diabolical masquerades with faith; without that, we wouldn't have had half our great villains. But that should be no consolation for the bejewelled "maharaj" of Sirsa's Dera. Each crime brings its own consequences; Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh must prepare to step down from his pedestal-on-



This Great Man of God Bhagat Puran Singh

The Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 has been jointly awarded to the UN's climate panel's chief scientist Rajendra Pachauri and former US Vice President Al Gore for "sounding universal alarm over global warming and spreading awareness on how to counter it".

"We, the human species are confronting a planetary emergency, a threat to the survival of our civilisation that is gathering ominous and destructive potential".

Bhagat Puran Singh was arguably the first human being to express his anguish and concern on degradation of the environment and this was a good eight decades before 2007.

“ਜਾ ਕਉ ਹਰਿ ਰੰਗੁ ਲਾਗੋ ਇਸੁ ਜੁਗ ਮਹਿ ਸੋ ਕਹੀਅਤ ਹੈ ਸੂਰਾ ॥

ਆਤਮ ਜਿਣੈ ਸਗਲ ਵਸਿ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪੂਰਾ ॥੧॥

ਨਾਕੁਰੁ ਗਾਈਐ ਆਤਮ ਰੰਗਿ ॥

ਸਰਣੀ ਪਾਵਨ ਨਾਮ ਧਿਆਵਨ ਸਹਜਿ ਸਮਾਵਨ ਸੰਗਿ ॥੧॥

ਰਹਾਉ ॥ਜਨ ਕੇ ਚਰਨ ਵਸਹਿ ਮੇਰੈ ਹੀਅਰੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਪੁਨੀਤਾ ਦੇਹੀ ॥

ਜਨ ਕੀ ਧੂਰਿ ਦੇਹੁ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਨਿਧਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਕੈ ਸੁਖੁ ਏਹੀ ॥ ੨॥

(ਧਨਾਸਰੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ਪੰਨਾ ੬੭੯)

He alone is called a warrior, who is attached to the Lord's Love in this age. Through the Perfect True Guru, he conquers his own soul, and then everything comes under his control.

Sing the Praises of the Lord and Master, with the love of your soul.

Those who seek His Sanctuary, and meditate on the Naam, the Name of the Lord, are blended with the Lord in celestial peace.

The feet of the Lord's humble servant abide in my heart; with them, my body is made pure.

O treasure of mercy, please bless Nanak with the dust of the feet of Your humble servants; this alone brings peace.

In this world who so ever gets engrossed in His name, is a real valiant person. He conquers his own mind and with that the whole world.

Guru Nanak in Japji Sahib dictates that By controlling your mind you can control the whole world.

In Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Guru Ji explains:

ਜਿਨਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਮਾਰੇ ਪੰਚ ਸੂਰਬੀਰ ਐਸੇ ਕਉਨੁ ਬਲੀ ਰੇ ॥

(੪੦੪-੧੦, ਆਸਾ, ਮਃ ੫)

Who has confronted and subdued the five powerful fiends? Is there anyone strong enough? Lust, wrath, greed, attachment and pride are very strong adversaries. One who overcome these foes is the true warrior but this is possible only by the one who is blessed by Him.

Bhagat Puran Singh wrote that "While serving at Gurdwara Dera Sahib for 24 years I learned so much that I thank Him with every breath of mine everyday."

At Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Bhagat Puran Singh served as a humble devotee. His routine included the cleaning of utensils, sweeping the floors, help in cooking the food, arranging beddings for the devotees, looking after the poor and destitute sick people, taking them to hospitals, arranging for tuition fees for poor students, collecting money to pay for the railway fare of poor people. He would sit besides an open manhole so that no one fell in and arranged for getting it covered. Whatever time was available he would spend it in the library in an attempt to learn and find solutions for common social problems.

He had no room to stay in and summer nights were spent under the tin roof of the cycle stand while during winter time he, along with his beloved Piara, would take shelter in a small room near the Samadhi of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the room also used by many travelers. Bhagat ji would sleep near the door because Piara Singh had to be often carried outside. In spite of all difficulties Bhagat ji never asked for a room for himself and it never occurred to the Gurdwara authorities to offer him one. He spent 24 years in this manner. Bhagat ji never even thought about physical comfort or material gains.

Gurbani infuses a divine energy that uplifts are spiritually. Spiritual power gives birth to compassion and the person starts seeing God in all human beings, animals and the environment around. The path leading

to the union with Him passes through these three elements. Guru Arjan explains thus in Sukhmani Sahib:

ਉਰਿ ਧਾਰੈ ਜੋ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ
ਸਰਬ ਮੈ ਪੇਖੈ ਭਗਵਾਨੁ ॥
ਸੋਹੰਦੜੋ ਹਭ ਠਾਇ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਦਿਸੈ ਭੁਜੜੋ ॥
ਖੁਲ੍ਹੜੋ ਕਪਾਟ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਭੇਟੜੋ ॥੧॥

One who enshrines the Naam within the heart, Who sees the Lord God in all.

He is Beautiful in all places; I do not see any other at all. Meeting with the True Guru, O Nanak, the doors are opened wide.

ਬਿਸਰਿ ਗਈ ਸਭ ਤਾਤਿ ਪਰਾਈ ॥
ਜਬ ਤੇ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਤਿ ਮੋਹਿ ਪਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ
ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥੧॥
ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੀਨੋ ਸੋ ਭਲ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਏਹ ਸੁਮਤਿ ਸਾਧੂ ਤੇ ਪਾਈ ॥੨॥
(੧੨੯੯-੧੪, ਕਾਨੜਾ, ਮਃ ੫)

I have totally forgotten my jealousy of others, Since I found the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy, No one is my enemy, and no one a stranger. I get along with everyone. Whatever God does, I accept that as good. This is the sublime wisdom I have obtained from the holy.

ਘਟ ਘਟ ਮੈ ਹਰਿ ਜੂ ਬਸੈ ਸੰਤਨ ਕਹਿਓ ਪੁਕਾਰਿ ॥
ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਹ ਭਜੁ ਮਨਾ ਭਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਉਤਰਹਿ ਪਾਰਿ ॥੧੨॥
(੧੪੨੭-੩, ਸਲੋਕ, ਮਃ ੯)

The Dear Lord abides in each and every heart; the Saints proclaim this as true. Says Nanak, meditate and vibrate upon Him, and you shall cross over the terrifying world-ocean.

ਸਭਨਾਂ ਮਹਿ ਏਕੋ ਏਕੁ ਵਖਾਣੈ ॥
ਜਾਂ ਏਕੋ ਵੇਖੈ ਤਾਂ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਣੈ ॥ (੧੨੬੧-੧੦, ਮਲਾਰ, ਮਃ ੩)

He preaches that the One Lord is within all beings. As he sees the One Lord, he knows the One Lord.

ਏਕਸ ਮਹਿ ਸਭੁ ਜਗਤੋ ਵਰਤੈ ਵਿਰਲਾ ਏਕੁ ਪਛਾਣੈ ॥
ਸਬਦਿ ਮਰੈ ਤਾ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਸੂਝੈ ਅਨਦਿਨੁ ਏਕੋ ਜਾਣੈ ॥੭॥
(੧੨੩੪-੯, ਸਾਰੰਗ, ਮਃ ੩)

The whole world is contained in the One Lord.

One who imbibes the Shabad comes to know everything; night and day, he realises the One Lord.

A spiritual person works for Him by working for his creation day and night.

This is explained in Gauri Sukhmani by Guru Arjan Dev Ji

ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਪਰਉਪਕਾਰ ਉਮਾਹਾ ॥
ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਅਨਾਥ ਕਾ ਨਾਥੁ ॥
ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਕਾ ਸਭ ਉਪਰਿ ਹਾਥੁ ॥
(੨੭੩-੧੯, ਗਉੜੀ ਸੁਖਮਨੀ, ਮਃ ੫)

The God-conscious being delights in doing good to others.

The God-conscious being is the helper of the helpless.

The God-conscious being extends his hand to all.

Guru Nanak called himself a slave bought by Him. A slave has no independent thinking; he does what the master tells him.

Guru Nanak explains this in Raag Maru:

ਮੁਲ ਖਰੀਦੀ ਲਾਲਾ ਗੋਲਾ ਮੇਰਾ ਨਾਉ ਸਭਾਗਾ ॥
ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਬਚਨੀ ਹਾਟਿ ਬਿਕਾਨਾ ਜਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ ਤਿਤੁ ਲਾਗਾ ॥੧॥
ਤੇਰੇ ਲਾਲੇ ਕਿਆ ਚਤੁਰਾਈ ॥
ਸਾਹਿਬ ਕਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਰਣਾ ਜਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
(੯੯੧-੩, ਮਾਰੂ, ਮਃ ੧)

I am Your slave, your bonded servant, and so I am called fortunate.

I sold myself at Your store in exchange for the Guru's Word; whatever You link me to, to that I am linked.

What cleverness can Your servant try with you?

O my Lord and Master, I cannot carry out the Hukam of Your Command.

Guru Arjan also similarly explains in Raag Maru:

ਜੈਸੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਕੀਨੀ ਠਾਕੁਰਿ ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਮੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਮੋਰਿਓ ॥
ਸਹਜੁ ਅਨੰਦੁ ਰਖਿਓ ਗ੍ਰਿਹ ਭੀਤਰਿ ਉਨਿ ਉਆਹੁ ਕਉ ਦਉਰਿਓ ॥੨॥
ਆਗਿਆ ਮਹਿ ਭੂਖ ਸੋਈ ਕਰਿ ਸੁਖਾ ਸੋਗ ਹਰਖ ਨਹੀ ਜਾਨਿਓ ॥
ਜੋ ਜੋ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਭਇਓ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਕਾ ਸੋ ਮਾਥੈ ਲੇ ਮਾਨਿਓ ॥੩॥
॥੩॥ (੧੦੦੦-੩, ਮਾਰੂ, ਮਃ ੫)

I have not turned my face away from my Lord and Master's Command.

He fills my household with celestial peace and bliss; if He asks me to leave, I leave at once.

When I am under the Lord's Command, I find even hunger pleasurable;

I know no difference between sorrow and joy.

I have not turned my face away from my Lord and Master's Command.

After listening to, imbibing and living the Gurbani for 24 years, the path slowly opened before Bhagat Puran Singh. The way was further demarcated by the 4-year old spastic child abandoned in front of Gurdwara Dera Sahib. The child was incapable of looking after himself and Bhagat ji became his father and mother for the next 58 years. He often used to tell me that Piara was his God and on looking at Piara he always remembered God. "When I look at his body, I always thank God for giving me an able body. If Piara had not come into my life I would not have been able to serve humanity to this extent and perhaps Pingalwara also could not have come into existence."

Spiritually made Bhagatji a Godly person.

Guru Teg Bahadur enlightens us:

ਸੁਖੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਜਿਹ ਪਰਸੈ ਨਹੀ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ॥

One who is not touched by pleasure or pain, greed, emotional attachment and egotistical pride, says Nanak, listen, O' mind: he is the very image of God.

The same thought has been further clarified by Guru Amardass:

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਸੋ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਭਗਵਾਨ ॥੧੩॥

(੧੪੨੭-੪, ਸਲੋਕ, ਮ: ੯)

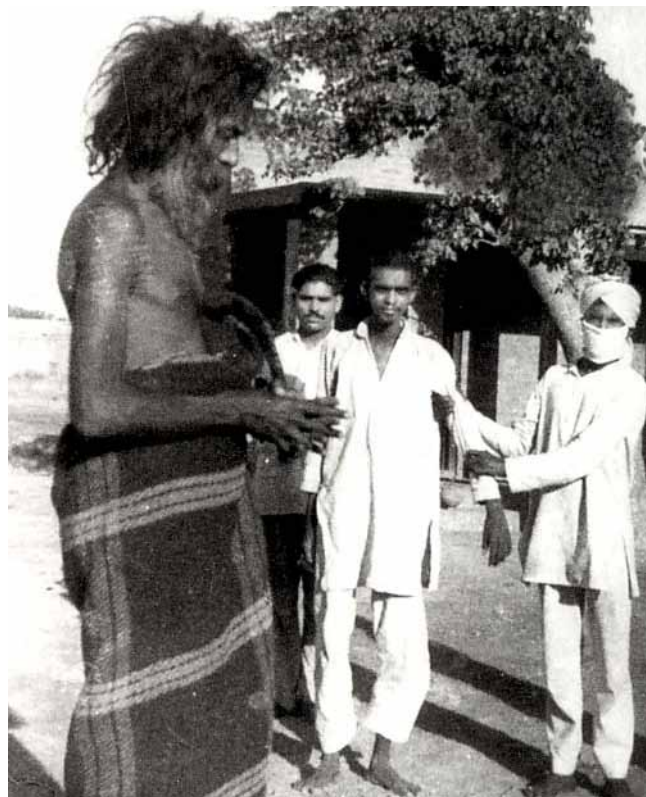
The Lord's Saint is the embodiment of the Lord; within his heart is the Name of the Lord.

A Godly person is always soft spoken, benevolent, compassionate, without ego and rises above considerations of caste, creed, colour or gender. He is always thankful to God. Bhagatji was always in a state of such equipoise.

As per Gurbani: "By remembering Him you come to know everything" Bhagatji had acquired remarkable foresight and vision. For instance, he could feel the difficulties of women in Himachal Pradesh while sitting in Amritsar. He would pick up small pieces of wood from the roadside and explain to me that women in Himachal had to walk many miles to gather wood for cooking their food. In fact Bhagatji was always thinking about the problems facing mankind. From 1927 onward he started paying special attention towards environmental issues. He collected writings of scholars and experts on the subject and distributed countless copies in the vicinity of Sri Darbar Sahib. He would do this at all times of the day and continued his mission through the last years himself or with other sevadars. He was always worried about the coming generations and said "We would be foolish if we pollute the water, air and our earth to an extent that the coming generations would not be able to live a healthy life. We should ensure that nature flourishes and remains a source of happiness and health."

After partition of the country when Bhagatji walked all the way to Amritsar, he had with him Piara and one rupee and five annas only. In the camp there was no one to look after the sick and dying people and there were already 24,000 refugees. Bhagatji considered the responsibility of looking after them to be his own. Bhagatji would wash their dirty clothes himself.

"Shambhu Nath's factory was close to the camp and had a large pump from which water gushed out with great force. This helped me in cleaning the clothes. I don't know what would I have done



without this pump!" The Refugee Camp was closed after some months but the refugees kept coming. Bhagatji had no money, shelter nor any help: Piara required continuous attention but still Bhagatji was constantly engaged in looking after needs of the sick and destitute people. It was a miraculous effort.

Bhagatji first established a home for these unfortunate people near the tonga stand in front of Amritsar railway station. He would collect food and clothes from various houses while he himself was in tattered clothes. He did not look for help till the number of patients was about ten: he would give them a bath, arrange for medicines and, when the rains came, take them to the Railway platform for protection. For the next eight years he was so engrossed in his holy mission that he had no time to comb his own hair: so they matted.

He began to resemble a beggar and had to face insults and rude remarks whenever he went to collect food from the localities. Hardly anyone recognised this great man of God.

Guru Nanak explains thus in Aasa Vaar:

ਜਿਨ੍ਹ ਪਟੁ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਬਾਹਰਿ ਗੁਦਤੁ ਤੇ ਭਲੇ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ॥

ਤਿਨ੍ਹ ਨੇਹੁ ਲਗਾ ਰਬ ਸੇਤੀ ਦੇਖਨੇ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ ॥

(੪੭੩-੧੭, ਆਸਾ, ਮ: ੧)

Those who have silk on the inside and rags on the outside, are the good people in this world. They embrace love for the Lord, and contemplate beholding Him.

We, worldly persons do not tolerate even the slightest of insults. Such great tolerance was made possible only by the spiritual power that Bhagatji had acquired.

Guru Tegh Bahadur says:

ਜੋ ਨਰੁ ਦੁਖ ਮੈ ਦੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥
 ਸੁਖ ਸਨੇਹੁ ਅਰੁ ਭੈ ਨਹੀ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਕੰਚਨ ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
 ਨਹ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਨਹ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨਾ ॥
 ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਆਰਉ ਨਾਹਿ ਮਾਨ ਅਪਮਾਨਾ ॥੧॥
 ਆਸਾ ਮਨਸਾ ਸਗਲ ਤਿਆਗੈ ਜਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਰਾਸਾ ॥
 ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਜਿਹ ਪਰਸੈ ਨਾਹਨਿ ਤਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਨਿਵਾਸਾ ॥੨॥
 ਗੁਰ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਹ ਨਰ ਕਉ ਕੀਨੀ ਤਿਹ ਇਹ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਨੀ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਲੀਨ ਭਇਓ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿਉ ਜਿਉ ਪਾਨੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਪਾਨੀ ॥੩॥੧੧॥
 (੬੩੩-੧੯, ਸੋਰਠਿ, ਮ: ੯)

*That man, who in the midst of pain, does not feel pain,
 Who is not affected by pleasure, affection or fear, and
 who looks alike upon gold and dust;*

*Who is not swayed by either slander or praise, nor
 affected by greed, attachment or pride;*

*Who remains unaffected by joy and sorrow, honour and
 dishonour;*

*Who renounces all hopes and desires and remains
 desireless in the world;*

*Who is not touched by sexual desire or anger – within
 his heart, God dwells.*

*That man, blessed by Guru's Grace, understands this
 way.*

*O Nanak, he merges with the Lord of the Universe, like
 water with water.*

Teachings of his mother, Baani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the study of Sikh history made his faith in the Almighty unshakeable. With this faith he was able to lay the foundations of Pingalwara: a fountain of compassion, love and sacrifice wherein everyone as per his or her own understanding can draw upon countless blessings. There are some who are unaware of this great treasure and there are others who cannot even count their blessings. Some of it can be seen but there are many who while being blessed prefer not to be seen.

Gurbani explains the consciousness of spiritual people such as Bhagat Puran Singh as follows:

ਬਹੁ ਬਿਧਿ ਮਾਇਆ ਮੋਹ ਹਿਰਾਨੋ ॥
 ਕੋਟਿ ਮਧੇ ਕੋਊ ਬਿਰਲਾ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਪੂਰਨ ਭਗਤੁ ਚਿਰਾਨੋ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
 (੧੨੬੯-੧੦, ਮਲਾਰ, ਮ: ੪)



*In so many ways, attachment to Maya leads to ruin.
 Among millions, it is very rare to find a selfless servant
 who remains a perfect devotee for very long.*

ਜਿਤਨੇ ਤੀਰਥ ਦੇਵੀ ਥਾਪੇ ਸਭਿ ਤਿਤਨੇ ਲੋਚਹਿ ਧੂਰਿ ਸਾਧੂ ਕੀ ਤਾਈ ॥
 ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਸੰਤੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਗੁਰ ਸਾਧੂ ਲੈ ਤਿਸ ਕੀ ਧੂਰਿ ਮੁਖਿ ਲਾਈ ॥੩॥
 ਜਿਤਨੀ ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਤੁਮਰੀ ਮੇਰੇ ਸੁਆਮੀ ਸਭ
 ਲੋਚੈ ਧੂਰਿ ਸਾਧੂ ਕੀ ਤਾਈ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਲਿਲਾਟਿ ਹੋਵੈ ਜਿਸੁ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਤਿਸੁ
 ਸਾਧੂ ਧੂਰਿ ਦੇ ਹਰਿ ਪਾਰਿ ਲੰਘਾਈ ॥੪॥੨॥
 (੧੨੬੩-੧੧, ਮਲਾਰ, ਮ: ੪)

*And all the sacred shrines of pilgrimage established by the
 gods, long for the dust of the feet of the Holy.*

*Meeting with the Lord's Saint, the Holy Guru, I apply
 the dust of His feet to my face. And all the creatures of
 Your Universe, O my Lord and Master, long for the dust of
 the feet of the Holy.*



*O Nanak, one who has
 such destiny inscribed on his
 forehead, is blessed with the
 dust of the feet of the Holy;
 the Lord carries him across.*

Dr. Inderjit Kaur
 President
 All India Pingalwara
 Charitable Society
 Amritsar

Tribute Bhagat Puran Singh and His PINGALWARA: The Fountain of Compassion

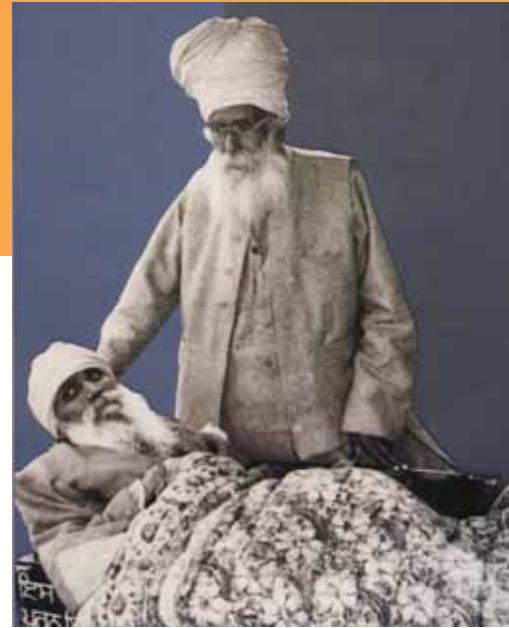
I had known Bhagat Puran Singh for more than 35 years and had many opportunities to observe his life from close quarter. I found him to be unusually inspired for social welfare work. His life was a life of renunciation, dedication, self-abnegation and self-limitation. His only interest, in fact his only aim in life, was wise, pure and creative altruism and in this connection no social work was too small to be beneath his notice. Beginning with small things like the covering of open drains and removing of dirt and the picking of banana peels, nails, horse-shoes and broken pieces of glass etc. from the roads, his activities extend to great humanitarian causes like establishing **Pingalwara**.

His unalloyed and inborn zeal for social welfare work inspired him to a great cause of social welfare, namely the cause of the aged, infirm, disabled and sick persons. This work which he started from his early youth in the shape of care for individual sick and disabled persons had in the course of time grown to such great volume that it no longer remained an individual's affair and deserved the attention of the community at large. This cause which calls for small monetary donations from all human beings was built at the price of great toil and his youthful energies. In fact he ignored altogether his personal requirements while building up the institution of Pingalwara, symbolic of service to humanity.

That Pingalwara existed in his dreams from his early youth. He conducted activities of his Pingalwara in its embryonic stage since 1924 under the shade of trees and on the pavements of Lahore. He picked up a crippled child of four years in 1934 from Gurdwara Dera Sahib and thereafter mothered him with the tender care and fondness of a parent. He himself led an unmarried life as his parental feelings for the poor and crippled received all his endearments in this beautiful relationship.

Pingalwara took tangible shape in 1948. For fourteen years before foundation of his institution, he had to carry the crippled boy in his arms, and on his back, undergoing not only great physical strain but also exposing himself to the ridicule of people. This heroic act of his was comparable with the story of Shrivana Kumar in Indian mythology with the difference that Shrivana Kumar paid his debt of childhood to his aged parents while Bhagat Puran Singh was paying a great debt to an unfortunate cripple.

The act of carrying about the crippled boy on his back was symbolic of his carrying suffering mankind, looking after the aged, the infirm, the disabled, the crippled and the sick – on his shoulders. Who knew that the unfortunate child who had in course



of time grown up to be a man, was not his own son but a destitute and abandoned child. Walking barefooted and semi-naked with his incessant burden on his back became a common feature of his daily life in Lahore but who could count his obscurity in terms of a great humanitarian act. I vividly remember him walking for miles from Gurdwara Dera Sahib to my office in the University Laboratory and my bungalow at Waris Road Lahore frequently on errands of goodwill for the help and relief of many students and people in need and in distress.

Throughout his relationship with me extending over three decades, I found him as the most sensitive and self respecting human being, leading a life of contentment in midst of his ever growing institution, Pingalwara, involving ever increasing expenditure. I am very proud of having been friend of such a noble soul who, with his love of literature, had also won the affection and regard of my revered father.

When I look back, I remain in awe at the great spiritual development attained by this noble soul.

Diwan Anand Kumar,
(Formerly Vice-Chancellor,
Punjab University &
Member University Grants
Commission)

Conversion of Jat peasantry to Sikhism: the perspective

Since I started writing on Sikhism in 2002, my objective has been to project the philosophy of Guru Nanak (*Gurmat*), Sikh history and the Sikh traditions in logical and integrated manner that is consistent with the teachings of *Aad Guru Granth Sahib*. At the same time, I want to popularise the writings of “distinguished scholars” like Sardar Daljeet Singh and Sardar Jagjit Singh. To my knowledge these two are the only scholars who have done an outstanding job in rebutting McLeod and his associates’ fraudulent research on Sikhism under the cloak of academic scholarship. On Internet discussions with readers, I urged them to read Daljeet Singh’s *Sikhism: A Comparative Study of its Theology and Mysticism* and Jagjit Singh’s *The Sikh Revolution: A Perspective View*, in order to understand Sikhism in a logical and integrated manner.

In my article, *The Legacy of Rishis and Munis* I have quoted Jagjit Singh extensively in the section on caste system, but the bulk of the article are my own statements and views and my own interpretation of *gurbani*. I have also quoted other authors Al-Beruni, GC Narang, Kahan Singh Nabha, Sangat Singh, JS Grewal and Gurbakhash Singh Kala Afghana to support my arguments and views. The theme of my article is to draw a clear distinction between “unique and revolutionary *Gurmat* philosophy of universal humanism” and “the life-negating and dehumanising Varna Ashrama Dharama/Caste System.”



There is some impression that Jats were attracted to the Sikh faith due to their socio-economic conditions and the fame of Bhagat Dhanna Jat whose hymns are included in *Aad Guru Granth Sahib*, and success of the Sikh movement was simply due to Jat peasant revolt against the very heavy burden of land taxes and oppression of the Mughals.

The Jats of Punjab were predominantly peasants and the most outstanding problem of the peasants in the seventeenth century, when Sikh faith had taken firm roots in the Punjab, was

that there was very heavy burden of land revenue coupled with oppression by the Mughal ruling classes. This naturally provoked peasant revolts. Thus economic pressures may have forced the Jat peasantry of Punjab, as elsewhere, to resort to armed violence.

It has been forcefully argued by social scientists that it was not religious but economic factors, which forced the Jat peasantry of Punjab to resort to arms. However, insofar as the major factors leading to Jat revolts in Punjab during the period under review are concerned, the issue is inconclusive and debatable. Again to what extent their sacrifice, sincerity, hard work and patriotism has been rewarded, is yet to be properly assessed.

MS Ahluwalia has drawn this conclusion from Irfan Habib's article, "Guru Nanak exalts Jats of Punjab", Presidential address, Punjab History Conference, Patiala, 1971, and his book: *Agarian System of Mughal India*, Bombay, 1963. Instead of questioning or challenging Habib's gross distortion of Gurmat and Sikh history, Sikh historians have been quoting him in their publications and this fact has not gone unnoticed by others. McLeod and his associates also quoted him in their work to support the theory of "Jat influx" into the Sikh movement.

The title of Habib's article "Guru Nanak exalts Jats of Punjab" is erroneous and repugnant because Guru Nanak exalts all and not a single particular group of people of a particular place. His message is universal humanism—love, respect, justice and equality for all. He declared his solidarity with the lowest of the lowest of society:

Nanak will stand by the lowest, not with the elite. Societies that take care of the downtrodden have the blessing of God.

Guru Granth Sahib, p.15

From Habib's article it is quite clear that he is ignorant of *Gurmat* philosophy and history of the Jats of Punjab. He ignores the simple fact that numerical preponderance of Jats in the Sikh movement was natural, as Jats were the majority constituent of the population where Sikh faith took its roots and flourished – the central Punjab. Though Jats dominated the Sikh movement numerically, they [Jat Sikhs] were only a tiny fraction of the overall Jat population of India, which was either Muslim or Hindu. Majority of Jats of Punjab were Muslims and the others were either Hindus or Sultani-Hindus, the latter being those who were moving away from

their temples to the mosques and whose allegiance and devotion was shifting away from gods and goddesses to *pirs* and *fakirs* (Muslim holy men). The latter two categories supplied most recruits to the Sikh movement.

Besides, Habib's theory does not explain why the "heavy burden of land tax" imposed by the Mughals did not impel Hindu or Muslim Jats or other agricultural communities to take up arms against the Mughals? Further, was there no tax burden and oppression on other sections of the population like artisans and the mercantile classes? Moreover, who could be more exploited, persecuted and dehumanised than the Sudras and Antyajatas (untouchables) of India who vastly outnumbered the upper castes? Did they not revolt against the tyranny of caste system? Nowhere in the history of mankind such a large majority has been exploited and subjugated to degrading and dehumanising conditions for such a long period by a small minority as the Sudras and untouchables of India. Can Ahluwalia or Habib explain why the Sudras and untouchables did not revolt to free themselves from the tyranny of caste system? Was it not natural for them to revolt? Why was it natural only for peasants to revolt against heavy burden of taxes?

The Sikh struggle against the tyranny of caste system and the bigotry and oppression of Mughals continued from the time of Guru Nanak (1469-1539) to the 1760s when Khalsa rule was established in the Punjab. It betrays ignorance of *Gurmat* philosophy and Sikh history or it is a disingenuous attempt – motive to distort or subvert Sikhism – on the part of anyone to characterise the Sikh struggle as a peasant-revolt!

Finally, Ahluwalia and Habib would benefit from the keen observation of Mohammed Iqbal, a renowned poet and Islamic scholar, about the victory of Khalsa forces over Mughals:

*Khalsa shamsheero Quran ra burd,
Andrin Kishwar Mussakmani namurd.*

The Khalsa took away the sword and Quran and shattered the dreams of Muslim conquest.

In other words, it was their faith, the very *gurmat* philosophy that inspired the Khalsa to fight unflinchingly with dogged determination and eternal optimism.

Baldev Singh

Origins of Hindu (Arya Samaj) – Sikh tensions in the Punjab

In truth, it is a misnomer to call it Hindu-Sikh tension. It is, in fact, only an Arya Samaj – Sikh conflict. The new name has come to be given to it very recently. A reference to the columns of the *Arya Gazette* and the *Satdharma Pracharak* will show that the Arya Samajists had for a long time carried on a campaign against the word Hindu and refused to associate themselves with it. But this is a separate topic of study.

For sometime past there has been a good deal of misunderstanding about the origin of Hindu-Sikh tensions in the Punjab. It has become fashionable with some of our people to ascribe to British political policies in India even things with which they had not the remotest connection. One such thing is the genesis of Hindu-Sikh rivalries in the Punjab. Hindu-Sikh tensions, as we know was unknown during Sikh rule up to the middle of the 19th century. Relations between the communities were excellent during the great uprising of 1857 and the following two decades. There could have been no better opportunity for the Britishers than the Mutiny days to exploit Sikh sentiment against the Hindu Dogras and Poorbias who were mainly responsible, both directly and indirectly, by secret alliances and open betrayals, for the downfall of the Sikh kingdom. Another opportunity offered itself to the British in the closing years of the eighteen sixties when a schismatic sect of the Sikhs, the Kookas, in their overflowing zeal and fanatical frenzy, pulled down a number of Hindu tombs and went about shouting: *Marhi masani dhai-ke kar dio madana*, meaning "Pull down the mausoleums and crematoriums and level with the earth." But nobody took these activities of the Kookas very seriously and they provided no pretext for anyone to create hostilities between the Hindus and the Sikhs. It is, therefore, not correct to say that "the unfilial sentiments of the Sikhs towards Hinduism were the creation of the British who, true to their policy of 'divide and rule' tried to create separatism." (Suraj Bhan, *The Tribune*, Ambala, 25 September 1957).

Historically speaking, the conflict emanated in the way Guru Nanak and his followers were described by Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj, in his book *Satyarth Prakash* published in 1875. The same year, on 10 April, the first Arya Samaj was established in Bombay.

(I shall not quote extensively from the first edition of the *Satyarth Prakash* or from its later revised and enlarged editions to avoid unpleasantness).

The word used for the Sikh Guru therein is *dhurta*, which, according to Bate's Dictionary of the Hindi language, means "rogue, cheat, fraudulent, crafty, cunning, knavish, sly, dishonest, and mischievous." The hymns of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the Sikh Scripture, is called *mithya* (falsehood), and Sikhism, a *jal* (a snare) to rob and cheat simple folk of their wealth and property (*dhan adik barne ke waaste*).

Two years later, Swami Dayananda came to the Punjab and established the Arya Samaj at Lahore. In his discourses in the Punjab, he always praised the work of the Sikh Gurus. This attracted a number of Sikhs to the Arya Samaj. One of them was Bhai Jawahir Singh who later became Secretary of the Lahore Arya Samaj and also of the DAV College Managing Committee.

While Swami Dayananda was at Kanpur on his return from the Punjab, Sardar Bhagat Singh, Sub-Engineer of the Ajmer Division, wrote to him in protest against his objectionable remarks in the *Satyarth Prakash* against the Sikhs and Sikhism. Swamiji wrote back saying that his opinion had undergone a change during his visit to the Punjab and that the remarks in question would be deleted from the next edition of the book. But nothing came of it, perhaps due to the untimely death of Swamiji on 10 October 1883. With the passage of time, the publication of the second edition of the *Satyarth Prakash* and the admission of some over-zealous young men into the Arya Samaj, the attitude of some of the leading Arya Samajists became increasingly hostile towards Sikhs and Sikhism. The columns of the *Arya Samachar*, Meerut and the *Arya Patrika*, Lahore of those days bear witness to this.

The second edition of the *Satyarth Prakash* turned out to be even more disappointing and hostile. In it attack on the Sikh Gurus, the Sikh scripture and Sikhs was more direct and hurtful. Guru Nanak was given out as illiterate, self-conceited and hypocrite. The scripture was insulted and the tenets and symbols of Sikhism were ridiculed. And the Sikhs in general were dubbed as arrogant and slaves to lust.

This naturally disillusioned those Sikhs who were members of the Arya Samaj or were its active supporters. They felt hurt and dejected. What added to the tension was the fanatical attitude of some members of the Arya Samaj who went out of their way to publicise the wrongful remarks of the *Satyarth Prakash*.

However, there were some well-meaning members of the Arya Samaj who sincerely felt that a wrong had been done to the Sikhs by such objectionable remarks of Swami Dayananda. They wrote apologetic and appeasing letters and notes in the *Vidya Prakashak* and other journals and newspapers. To quote only one, Lala Amolak Ram Munsif of Gujjar Khan writing to the Editor, *Akhbar-i-Aam*, Lahore, on 30 September 1887, said:

"Mere piare aur mukarram Editor Akhbar-i-Aam,

Kisi gumnam sahib ne ap-ke akhbar ke zariye ganare muazziz aur fakhr-i-qaum Sikh bhaiyon ko Arya dharm ke barkhilaf mushtaal karne ke waste Swami Dayanand Surasti ke Satyarth Prakash se ke intikhab shaya kiya hai. Main sacche dil se umid karta hun kih yih us ke koshish-i-basidana bilkul raigan jaegi.

Arya Samaji Dayanand Saraswati ko sirf insane samajhta hai. Har ek insane se ghalti honi mumkin hai. Swami Dayanand Saraswatiji ghalaban zahan panjabi aur halat-i-Panjab se Satyarth Prakash likhte waqt pure wakif no the. Main yaqin karta hun kih bashart mauq milne ke who is rai ko zarur tarmim karte, magar afsos Arya Samaj ko paband nahin karta. Mujhe umid hai kih taqriban hare ke Arya is rai ki ghalti ka qayal hai. Main khud Arya hone ka fakhar karta hun aur main is rai ko ghalat saajhta hun. Mujhe pura yaqin hai kih mere Singh bhai sirf Swami Dayanand Saraswati ki ek ghalti ke bais uk ke baqi nihayat umda kam ke hargiz mukhalif nahin ho jaenge.

Translated into English:

My dear and respected Editor the Akhbar-i-Aam,

Some anonymous person has published in your paper an extract from Swami Dayananda Saraswati's Satyarth Parkash with the object of instigating our respected and glorious Sikh brethren against the Arya dharma. I sincerely hope this jealous effort of his will not succeed.

The Arya Samaj considers Swami Dayananda Saraswati a human being. Every human being is liable to err. At the time of writing the Satyarth Prakash, Swamiji was probably not fully conversant with the Punjab and Punjabi language ... Alas! He did not get a chance; or else, I am sure, he would have amended this opinion. But his expression of this opinion does not bind the Arya Samaj. I hope almost every Arya is convinced of this error. I am proud of being an Arya myself, and I hold this opinion (of Swami Dayananda) to be wrong. I am sure that for this one mistake of Swami Dayananda Saraswati, my Sikh brethren will not at all turn against the rest of his very good work.

Copies of this letter were sent to some other newspapers as well.

The Sikhs were to some extent soothed by the expression of regret and goodwill by those who had reasons to be grateful to the Sikhs for the help and co-operation which they had extended to Swami Dayananda and his movement in the early days. But this did not continue for long. Instead of improving the situation, it was worsened by the fire-breathing speeches of some of the leaders of the Arya Samaj at its eleventh annual session held at Lahore on a weekend, 24-25 November, 1888.

Pandit Guru Datt, the leader of the anti-modernist section of the Arya Samaj, in his speech on the morning of Sunday, the 25 November, not only repeated the anti-Sikh remarks of the *Satyarth Prakash*, but also entered into odious comparisons and launched an attack on Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The discussions of Lala Murlidhar and Swami Swatmananda on the subject added fuel to the smouldering fire which burst into inter-community tensions.

Pandit Guru Datt's speech was followed the same evening by that of Pandit Lekh Ram who spoke with still greater force and hostility against the Sikhs. Not only this. At one stage in the course of his speech, Pandit Lekh Ram physically insulted the holy book of the Sikhs, Guru Granth Sahib, which had been unceremoniously placed there on the table before him. This was more than what the Sikhs present in the meeting could tolerate.

Thus publicly insulted and ridiculed, the Sikhs were left with the only alternative of totally breaking with the Arya Samaj.

There were then a large number of Hindus as well who felt disgusted with this attitude of the leaders of the Arya Samaj. A joint protest meeting was held on the next Sunday the 2 December 1888 in the Baoli Sahib, Lahore, under the presidentship of Lala Nand Gopal. Lala Ladli Prasad was the principal speaker. The other speakers were Bhai Jawahir Singh, Bhai Dit Singh and Dr Narayan Singh. According to the report of the meeting published in the *Civil and Military Gazette*, Lahore of 8 December 1888 there was a great resentment in the city of Lahore at the ugly and unpleasant situation created by leaders of the Arya Samaj in their eleventh annual session held in the last week of November.

This is, in brief, the factual account of how the Hindu (Arya Samaj) – Sikh tensions began in the seventies and eighties of the nineteenth century, soon after birth of the Arya Samaj.

Dr Ganda Singh

British Sikhs and multiculturalism

No debate on British multiculturalism can ignore the experience of early Sikh immigrants who were the first to confront many of the issues such as those of identity and free speech that Hindu and Muslim groups from South Asia were to face later. Indeed, according to a new study, the very roots of present day multiculturalism in Britain can be traced to the role that the Sikh community played in gaining greater public recognition of the cultures and traditions of minority ethnic groups.

Today, Britain's 500,000 Sikhs, though not exactly in the big league, are one of the biggest success stories of Asian immigrants making it good in a foreign country. They are often cited as an example of a well-integrated community, but I am not quite sure if that is entirely true. On the face of it, yes. Having already won their demands through a prolonged struggle, they now tend to keep a low profile and are not as often in the headlines as, say, the Muslims. But the truth is that they remain deeply insular and fiercely protective of their religious and cultural identity. London's Southall area is little more than a glorified Sikh ghetto (as Tower Hamlets is a Muslim ghetto) where the talk is mostly about religion, community and Sikh politics.

It has been a long and rocky journey for immigrant Sikhs, going back to the middle of the nineteenth century when Maharaja Duleep Singh settled down in Britain. There was a time when the Sikh 'question' sparked the same sore controversies that the Muslim 'question' does these days. Even now, the issues to do with Sikh identity and religious sensitivities have not completely disappeared and, as two liberal Sikh academics, Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Singh Tatla argue in *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community* (Zed Books), the battle is far from over. This was illustrated by the furore, last year, over the play *Behzti* when angry Sikhs in Birmingham turned violent and forced the play to be abandoned alleging that its depiction of a rape scene inside a gurdwara was an attack on their religion.

The book claims to be the "first comprehensive study of the Sikh community in Britain". I cannot vouchsafe for that, but it is an important work as it raises questions that have a bearing on the current debate on issues such as diversity and the pressure on immigrant



Former brothers-in-arms: retired Sikh officer and Chelsea pensioner in London.

faith groups to embrace the 'values' of their adopted liberal societies while abandoning practices that their 'host' find uncomfortable or alien.

Professors Singh and Tatla teach religion at the University of Birmingham and having themselves lived through the Sikh 'experience', they are able to bring a personal perspective to the challenges faced by minority groups in Britain.

In the context of the 'burqa' controversy, which has dominated media headlines in recent weeks, the most important part of the book is the one that recalls the Sikh community's own battles with Britain's legal and political establishment over its 'dress code'. Through the 1960s and 1980s, Sikhs fought a series of bitter and long drawn-out battles over their right to have beards, wear turbans and carry *kirpans*.

Professor Singh told me that there were "clear parallels" between what Sikhs had to endure and the controversies surrounding the so-called Muslim 'dress-code'.

"In the 1960s, when Sikhs began to campaign for the right to wear a turban at work, there was great deal of opposition. Some commentators at the time described the early Sikh settlers as 'strangers in a strange land' who were badly equipped to deal with the 'complexities of modern civilisation', "he said pointing out that in some ways the Muslim "struggle" was a continuation of the campaigns fought by Sikhs on this issue.

Are there are lessons that Muslims can learn from the Sikh experience?

According to Professor Singh, Muslims have tried to emulate some of the strategies that Sikhs deployed when they fought to retain their sartorial customs but their approach has been “less sophisticated”. Sikhs were relatively more successful by drawing on their colonial links, especially with the British army.

They also made full use of legal channels to question laws that they believed were discriminatory. Perhaps their biggest – and most enduring – victory was the recognition of the Sikh community as an ethnic group by the House of Lords in 1983. This gave Sikhs special rights that other religious groups such as Muslims and Hindus still do not enjoy.

The Lords’ ruling flowed from a case involving a Sikh student who was refused admission by a school because his insistence on wearing a turban went against its dress policy. In their book, Professors Singh and Tatla note that by designating Sikhs as an ethnic group, the verdict gave a “formal stamp of approval to the dominant discourse of Sikh identity”. “Sikhs were brought, like Jews, within the protection of the Race Relations Act – a protection which continues to elude other religious groups,” they write.

One criticism levelled against Sikhs is that for all their claim to have contributed to “deepening” the idea of multiculturalism beyond the chicken tikka masala-and-Indian curry syndrome they have essentially focussed on single issues, mostly relating to their faith. They have been very good at winning concessions for themselves using their political clout in areas where they are concentrated and can deliver crucial votes at election time. This book acknowledges that Sikhs are seen as a “paradigm case of special-interest group that can always negotiate on opt-out from general rule-making”.

But Sikhs are not alone in this. The fact is that there is no longer such a thing as ‘class solidarity’ among immigrants. Since the collapse of the anti-racist coalition between Asians and Africans in the 1980s most immigrant groups have been fighting their own individual battles. With the larger ‘immigrant-natives’ divide, there are now deep divisions among ethnic communities themselves as superior to Pakistanis, affluent as a cut above other – less prosperous – Indians with Asians treating newly arrived Africans with a touch of almost racist disdain.

Rise of religion

The rise of religion as the defining factor in identity is also something that worries liberal commentators. “Since the early 1990s, religion has come into the mainstream notably with the rise of Islamophobia after the Rushdie affair following the controversy over



Wearing the ‘Poppy’ on their coat lapels, Sikh army veterans at the memorial service near Buckingham Palace, November 2006.

Satanic Verses. As a result, but also related to other developments in India like the rise of the Hindutva and Khalistan movements, Hindus and Sikhs have been increasingly identifying themselves in religious terms. This process has been further reinforced by global events and the struggle for competition between minority groups at the local government level, where religion now is a more powerful currency than ethnicity or race,” says Professor Singh.

I asked him where British multiculturalism was headed in the light of Prime Minister Tony Blair’s assertion that in the wake of 9/11 and the London bombings the “rules of the game” had changed and that ethnic groups would not be allowed to use it as a licence to do their own thing. Professor Singh’s answer reflects the growing fear that multiculturalism is in danger of becoming a casualty of the “war on terror” with immigrants likely to come under increased pressure to conform to what are loosely described as “British values”.

Hasan Suroor

The Remembrance Ceremony

As in previous years, the Remembrance ceremony at the Memorial Gates on Constitution Hill, London proved to be a moving event. The Sikh veterans mingled with their fellow Commonwealth colleagues and, as ever, the Gurkha buglers sounded the last post.

The highlight came as the Reverend Richard Chartres, Bishop of London, stepped forward as traditional to share his thoughts and give blessings. This year however he had something quite different to share. Although he strode forward Bible in hand, the passage he quoted came not from Christian scriptures but from a recitation of the Tenth Sikh Guru, Gobind Singh:

'Dhan jio tih ko jag mai, mukh tay Har, chit mai judh beechaarai.'

'Deh anit na nit rahay, jus naav charay bhav saagar taarai'.

'Deeraj dhaam banai ihai tan, budh su deepak ji ujiaarai'.



Chelsea pensioner and Sikh serving with the Royal Air Force.



The Rev. Richard Chartres, Bishop of London with Lord Karan Bilimoria of Chelsea.

'Gianeh kee badhni manaho haath lai, kaatartaa kutwaar buhaarai'.

'Blessed is the life of that person in the world who recites the Holy Name with his lips and contemplates fight against evil in his mind'.

'He regards the body as a temporary vessel and uses the boat of the Lord's Name to cross the turbulent world-ocean'.

'He makes a chamber of patience in his body and illuminates the mind with the lamp of divine knowledge'.

'Holding spiritual wisdom in his hands, he sweeps away all cowardice and falsehood'.

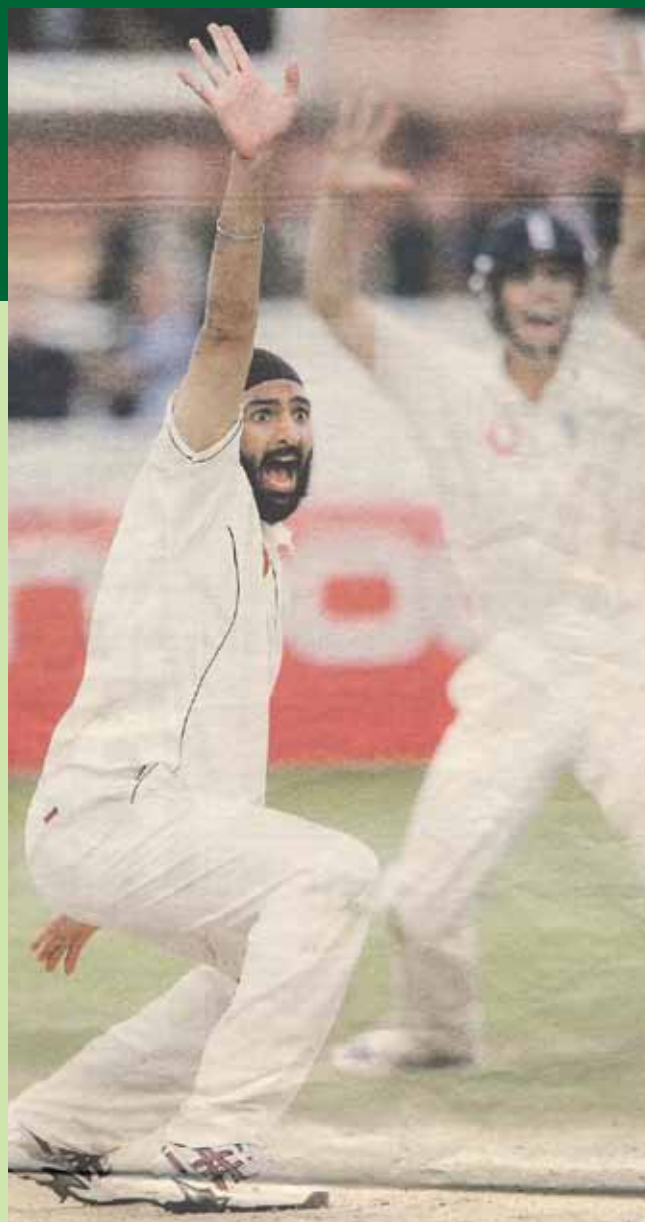
It was Guru Gobind Singh who forged the Khalsa and whose adherents formed core of the Indian Armies, particularly the Sikh Regiment, who fought with such supreme valour in the World Wars of the 20th century. It was greatly appropriate and befitting that the Bishop chose the Khalsa inspiration to exemplify the eternal struggle of good over evil. Nowhere else was that strife more poignant than in the dark days of the World Wars when nations came together to fight the forces of intolerance and disharmony.

England's new 'Spin King', Monty Panesar

Mudhsuden Singh Panesar, universally and affectionately known as 'Monty' Panesar, had his debut playing for England against India at the Mohali Test in early 2006 watched by a fond family and a throng of proud Sikh relatives, thrilled to have one of their own in the England cricket team. For Paramjit Singh and Gursharan Kaur, Monty's parents who flew across from England to watch their son make his Test debut in the land of his forefathers, playing in the Punjab has made it that much more special. They organised a special *akhand path* of the Guru Granth Sahib at a gurdwara in Nangal for their son's success.

Paramjit had left India for England about 30 years ago to work as a humble carpenter and, over time, acquired British citizenship. Though he's worked hard to get Monty where he is now, Paramjit confesses that "it was a bit of dilemma initially". Because, as he puts it, "all along I've been cheering for India in cricket matches, but now I have to change my loyalties. I cheer for Monty now....Monty was born and brought up in England and his cricketing talent has been nurtured by that country. So I guess it's fine if he plays for England". Monty's grandparents and several uncles and aunts live in Ludhiana and Patiala. Perhaps conscious of the emotions surrounding his Mohali appearance, and fearing that it might affect his performance, the England team media manager did not give Monty permission for media interviews. Paramjit, though, has been most forthcoming: "They told us at the beginning itself that he should not speak to the media in Punjab. It will put too much pressure on him and disturb his concentration."

The rest of the extended family was not too perturbed by the fact that Monty was playing against India. "Even if India wins, what matters to us is that Monty plays well. After all, it's just a game," says uncle Prabhjit Singh, who lives in Yamunanagar. Though Monty is a computer management graduate, the family wants him to concentrate on cricket for now.



In Monty's own words "Claiming my first 10-wicket haul in Test cricket is a memory I will always cherish. I've only ever had two 10-wicket matches for Northamptonshire and they both came at the end of the season so this was very special."

"Umpire Aleem Dar gave me the ball to keep as a souvenir at end of the match. Whenever I have taken five wickets in an innings I have kept the ball, so I have five in my collection now, as well as the odd stump or two. At the moment I have them all tucked away in a little box at home – there certainly aren't enough 'souvenirs' to put in a cabinet yet! People have commented on my frequent appealing during the match and I have to admit I probably got a bit too excited when I was bowling on the final day".



In fact, he was laughing at my behaviour. He said to me: 'I know you're getting excited, just take it easy.' I think most umpires know what I am like now, I've been the same since I was very young. But I've never been warned by an umpire for excessive appealing. Sometimes I have been told to calm down a bit but that's all".

"You can't play international cricket without trying to be as competitive as possible, but with me what you see is what you get – I am always smiling and excited because I just enjoy playing so much. As far as I'm concerned it is just a game – there are far more serious things happening in the world and I'm just lucky to be doing what I'm doing. I try to keep things in perspective".

"Outside of cricket I am mostly quite a calm person. It is only in sport that I seem to get worked up. Playing football when I was younger if my team had a goal disallowed I would sometimes moan too much and my aggression would come out. But I was never sent off or anything like that".

"It is very flattering for the West Indies captain, Daren Ganga, to say that I am one of the top three spinners in the world but I don't think you can put me in that category yet, despite my 10 wickets at Old Trafford.

"Perhaps I need to calm down a little but my enthusiasm is such a key part of how I am as a cricketer. When I saw the ball bouncing and turning so much at Old Trafford I just got carried away because it doesn't happen like that very often. But I am definitely not trying to pressurise or intimidate the batsman or the umpire. That just isn't me. Aleem Dar had a word with me at one point, telling me to make sure I appealed before celebrating a wicket but I don't think he was getting annoyed with me.



I have taken quite a few wickets for England in the early stages of my Test career but my view is that I have to keep being successful for a much longer period. There are world-class spinners around who have been producing the goods consistently for five or ten years”.

“In my opinion these four guys are the best in international cricket at the moment (Shane Warne would comfortably make the list but he no longer plays for Australia): Muttiah Muralitharan (Sri Lanka) definitely the No.1. His unique action means he is capable of turning the ball on all surfaces. Anil Kumble (India): He seems to make the ball spit at you so consistently and he has mastered a dangerous *doosra* (off spinner’s equivalent of a leg spinner’s googly). Daniel Vettori (New Zealand): He provides left-arm variation, alters his pace cleverly and keeps taking wickets on green pitches”.

“The skill of a true spinner – the art – is what I’m still learning. I am not an artist yet. It is all about subtle variations and strategies. Vettori and Harbhajan Singh are the masters of that kind of stuff. People talk about top spinners having the ball on a string and that is what I am trying to achieve. Phil Tufnell had the ball on a string – he knew how to bowl to different batsmen at different pace. He was a real genius of left-arm spin”.

“There seems to be a lot of talk about whether I need more variation in my bowling but that’s something I have to acquire as I go along. There were even suggestions that I bowled a *doosra* at Old Trafford, but I think the ball must have just hit a pebble in the rough and gone the other way”!

“So my message to the fans is: Please don’t expect miracles. I’m not going to take 10 wickets every time”!

“An inspiration to England’s young ‘twirlers’”

When Monty Panesar claimed 10 wickets at Old Trafford, it was the first time an England spinner had done so in a Test for 10 years. The good news is that it shouldn’t be another decade before the feat is repeated by someone else. Phil Tufnell was the man who preceded him in taking a double-figure match haul – against Australia at The Oval in 1007 – and he is full of admiration for Panesar.

“The most impressive thing about Monty’s performance was that the guys around him didn’t bowl too well a lot of the time, but he handled the pressure on his shoulders. He was clearly the person everyone was looking to win the game for England and he coped with that situation !!!”

Northamptonshire’s 25-year-old Sikh left-armer is at the vanguard of a quiet cricketing revolution in England. His exploits in making himself a high-class fixture in the national team within a year of his debut should accelerate the gradual overhaul of an ingrained culture around the countries and down to grassroots level.

The game’s stereotypical English image involves green pitches, slate-grey skies and steady, hardy medium-pacers. Conditions have always encouraged the purveyors of swing and seam bowling, with the poor spinner resigned to a peripheral role until pitches become more responsive late in the season.

Captains and selectors alike have traditionally regarded the ‘twirlers’ with suspicion. They were seen as a potential liability, a last resort. But now one of them has proved capable of dismissing just about any batsman on earth, in any conditions, there is a chance that old attitudes will be rapidly revised.

David Parsons was appointed the first national spin bowling coach, charged with trawling the land for young talent that might just fit the bill. Happily, the signs are that budding Montys and Warnes do exist.

The fact that Panesar is making very public waves as one of the brightest young stars in world cricket will assist the search for potential spinners and the quest to change attitudes. As Parsons said: “It makes the job of selling spin bowling so much easier when he is having so much success and is being splashed across the back pages all the time. The question now is: just how far can he go”?

“I don’t think Daren Ganga (West Indies captain) was too far off the mark when he said Monty is one of the top three spinners in the world. Hopefully, seeing him doing so well for England will make coaches and captains realise what an important role spinners can play in this country. There is still a lot of work to be done. We are still generally a nation which picks four seamers and questions the need for spinner in the side”.

Chris Foy

From: Daily Mail

ENGLISHISTAN

Punjabi farmers buy plots in Kent's green belt

It was inevitable when you really think of it! Green belt land in a Kent suburb is being sold to farmers in India, specifically the Punjab. More than 20 plots near New Addington in Bromley have bought by farmers and traders based in the Punjab city of Rajkot. The 300 square foot sites are being sold by *UK Land Investments* for about £ 13,700 each. Even though the green belt status of the land means it is effectively 'untouchable,' there is the feeling that the plots are proving popular because investors believe owning British land could help their families move to the UK.

Gurjant Singh, a businessman from Faridkot near Rajkot, is one of those who has bought a piece of England. He said "I was interested in the land as I hope to emigrate to the UK – maybe not today, but one day. England is a fully developed country and the future of my children will be better served there – their quality of life will be better. If the land is ever available to build on then I can make a profit."

Another investor, farmer Jasbir Singh, said that investing his savings in English land was better than risking it on India's volatile property market. He added "Just six decades after the British left our nation, poor and ordinary Indians like me are getting a chance of owning land in the former ruler's country." In Rajkot, the plots are being sold by *UK Land Investments* agent Jagdish Jain. He said "Me and my son have booked a plot each. We have told the that investors we would be the first to lose [if the investment fails]."



The company's website informs potential investors that the land may one day be re-zoned for development. However, a spokesman for the firm said it no longer had any official referral agents overseas and was investigating companies trading under its name. It also insists that it does not make any promises regarding development possibilities and informs foreign buyers that owning British land does not guarantee residency.

The spokesman said that "A number of companies were appointed to act as referral agents for *UK Land Investments* products. However, these agencies have their own separate shareholders, directors and management teams in the international jurisdictions in question and are responsible for their own sales. Referral arrangements are no longer in place or are currently being reviewed and any use of a similar name to *UK Land Investments* is under investigation."

A Home Office spokeswoman clarified that "Owning land is not a factor in whether or not someone would be given citizenship." A spokesman for Bromley council said: "The land being sold is currently classified as green belt – there are no plans to change it."

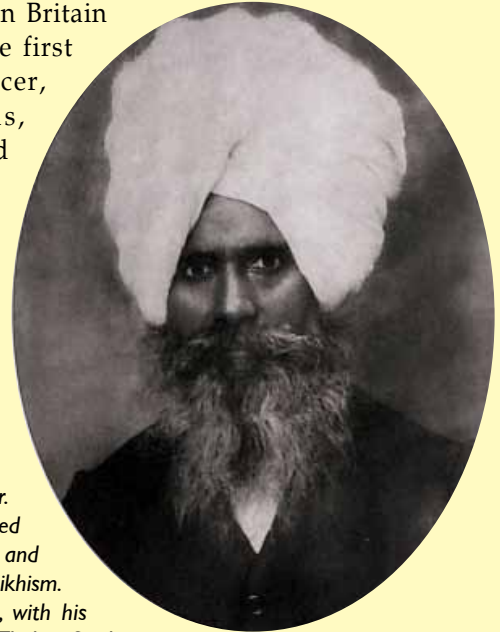
An illustrious record*

The Sikhs in Britain: 150 Years of Photographs is a fascinating illustrated record of Sikhs and their contribution to British society from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Alongside over 200 black and white photographs, the majority of them drawn from private collections and never published before, the author tells the story of Sikhs from their first arrival in Britain to modern times.

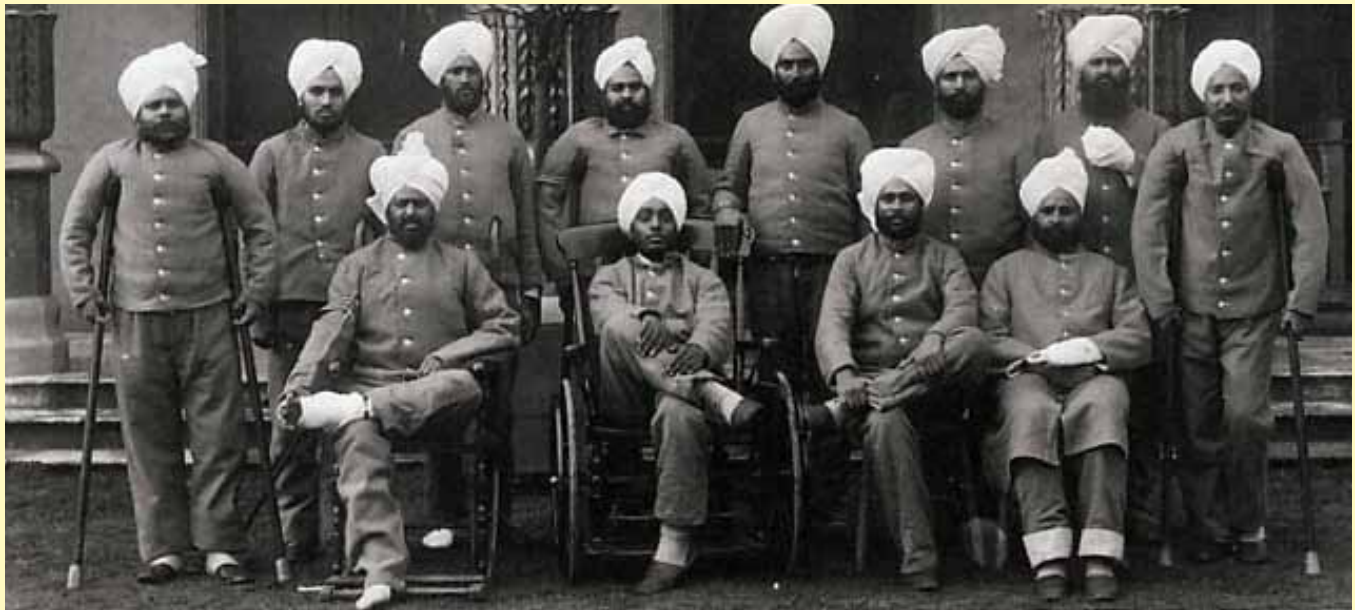
The Sikhs were the first community to migrate in large numbers to Britain from southern Asia. There were four major periods of mass migration – 1930s, post-World War II, 1960s and 1970s – and the author Peter Bance a.k.a. Bhupinder 'Peter' Singh Bance, describes the lives of individuals, capturing their struggles and successes. One sees makeshift places of worship in the early days, the golden days of glory as maharajahs visited British royalty

and nobility, Sikhs based in Britain serving in the military, the first turbaned Sikh police officer, portraits of newly-weds, social life, integration and religious occasions.

While initially Sikh presence in the British Isles was male-dominated, as families were left behind in India



Sardar Pratap Singh Giani was an early Sikh visitor to Britain, a calligrapher and high priest of Amritsar. He is particularly famous as he visited Maharajah Duleep Singh in England and starting the process of his return to Sikhism. In September 1884 Pratap Singh, with his brother Gurdit Singh, accompanied Thakur Singh Sandhawalia to England on invitation of the Maharajah. Pratap Singh would recite the Guru Granth Sahib daily to the Maharajah at his house at 53 Holland Park. He was also one of the five Sikhs present at Duleep Singh's initiation ceremony in Aden when the Maharajah was brought back into the Sikh faith. In 1887 Pratap Singh was arrested at Amritsar for his involvement with Duleep Singh.



Convalescent Sikh soldiers at Brighton, the biggest camp in England where the Indian Pavilion and the Dome was used as a makeshift hospital for wounded Indian soldiers. A marquee was erected on the Pavilion grounds to serve as a Gurdwara. As a wounded soldier recovering at Brighton wrote to his family, 'We are in England. It is a fine country, the inhabitants are very amicable, are very kind to us, so much that our own people could not be as much so ... Everything is such as one would not see even in a dream. One should regard it as fairyland... The King and Queen talked with us for a long time'.



India's first fighter pilot, who flew with the RFC during the Great War, Flight Lieutenant Hardit Singh Malik (fourth from left, seated) was given a reception, with Princess Sophia Duleep Singh attending, at the Maharajah Bhupinder Singh Dharamsala, London in 1934. Also seen in the group are S. Sant Singh Kapur, S. Uttam Singh Dugal and Manmohan Singh.



Young Sikh boys making rotis at Liverpool, December 1955. This wonderful image shows a typical post-war Sikh family kitchen. Thousands of miles from the Punjab, dal and roti were still essential part of the Sikhs' daily meal. Most spices and ingredients came from Indian suppliers in the East End of London.

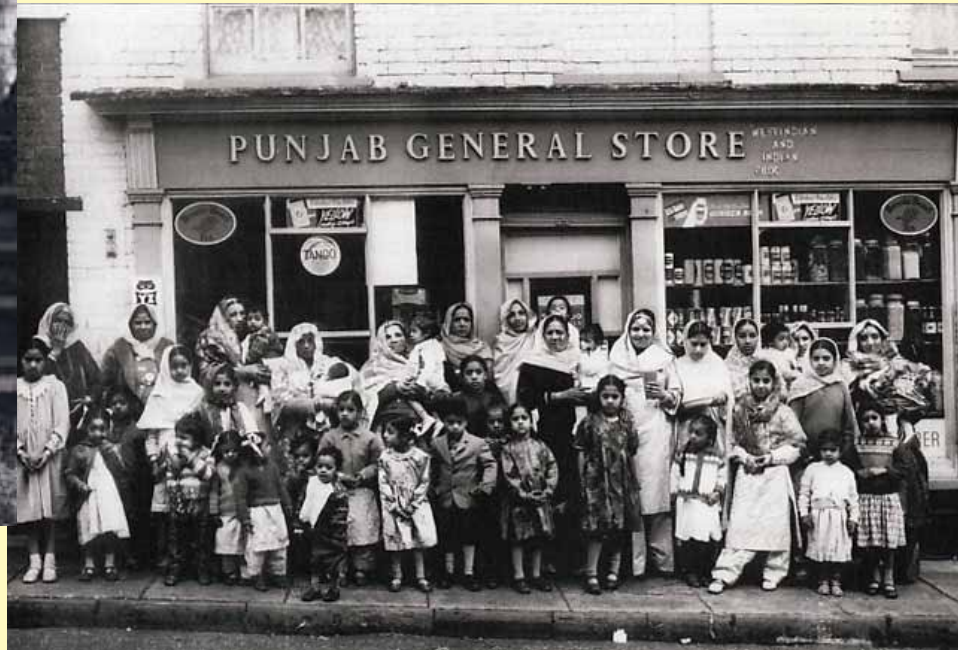
From a tartan-wearing Lord Sikh in a Scottish castle and veteran record-breaking Adidas-sponsored marathon man Fauja Singh to international English cricketer Monty Panesar, Sikhs have been one of the most visible migrant races to settle into, and contribute to British society.

This is not a book just about the Sikh community in Britain but effectively celebrates the multiculturalism of modern Britain.

The author is an independent researcher specialising in Anglo-Sikh history whose first book, *The Duleep Singhs*, was published in 2004. He is a consultant for a film on the life of Maharaja Duleep Singh, being scripted for the famous British-Indian movie director, Gurinder Chadha.

while the men established themselves, later photographs show women and children in abundance. The Sikh community has continued to make an impact and one witnesses an array of distinguished personalities, whether migrant or born or bred in Britain.

Sikh women and children outside the 'Punjab General Store' at Ipswich in Suffolk, during a wedding in September 1963.



Gyani Sunder Singh Sagar, on motorcycle sans helmet, to actively demonstrate against the police order for wearing helmets. The turban-helmet case became nationally famous and the Lord Mayor of Manchester sympathised publicly, the national press covering the event extensively.



Dressed as a Nihang warrior, a British Sikh seen holding the 700-year-old sword of William Wallace's sacrifice for the cause of Scottish national independence, while clothed in the traditional blue and saffron colours of eighteenth-century Khalsa warriors. He marched side-by-side with the gallant and traditionally attired Clan Wallace. It was an occasion of spiritual unity and exhilaration, culminating in a mass parade through Lanark. This was the first time that Sikhs and Scots had stood together in solidarity and spirituality to celebrate the spirit and values of 'Braveheart'. The Clan's head, Seoras Wallace, and its members welcomed Sikhs on this momentous three-day procession and shared the inspiration of two figures from their common histories, William Wallace and Banda Singh Bahadur.



The first Amrit ceremony at Havelock Road Gurdwara in Southall on 13 April 1967. The khanda had been kept at the holy Gurdwara at Keshgarh Sahib (Anandpur Sahib), from where it was taken to Amritsar and then personally brought to London by Gurbachan Singh Gill, president of the Southall Singh Sabha. Over 120 people were initiated into the Khalsa knighthood that day.

Peter Bance,
The Sikhs in Britain:
150 Years of Photographs,
Sutton Publishing,
Gloucestershire, 2007.
Pages: 192; Price: £18.99.



Colonel Harinder Singh Attari speaking at the Royal Armoury in Leeds, September 2007. Direct descendant (5th generation) of the legendary General Sham Singh Attari, the Colonel served with the Indian Army for 26 years (Brigade of the Guards) and is now engaged in major restoration of the Attari monuments, dedicated to his distinguished forefathers.

Re-visiting History

Welcome speech made by The Revd Dr Pete Wilcox, Canon Chancellor of Lichfield Cathedral at Staffordshire, United Kingdom, on the visit by Colonel Harinder Singh Attari

It is my great pleasure and privilege, on behalf of the Dean and Chapter, to welcome you to Lichfield Cathedral this morning. We are delighted that you are here and we place great value on what your visit symbolises in terms of the peace and mutual respect between the Sikh and Christian communities.

I want to say a few brief words about this memorial and especially about the Standards displayed upon it. You may not be surprised to know that we have mixed feelings about them. On the one hand, because we recognise that they are items of great significance to the Sikh community, we count it an honour to

house them in this holy place and for as long as it is appropriate for them to remain here, you can be sure that we will treat them with the utmost care and reverence.

On the other hand, this memorial is a daily reminder to those who see it, that our communities were once at war. Indeed, much blood was split on both sides in the defence and capture of these Standards and while we acknowledge the valour and self sacrifice involved in battle, we are reminded how precious it is to be at peace and how hard we must struggle, with equal valour and self sacrifice, to avoid future bloodshed.



Sikh visitors with their English hosts at Staffordshire.

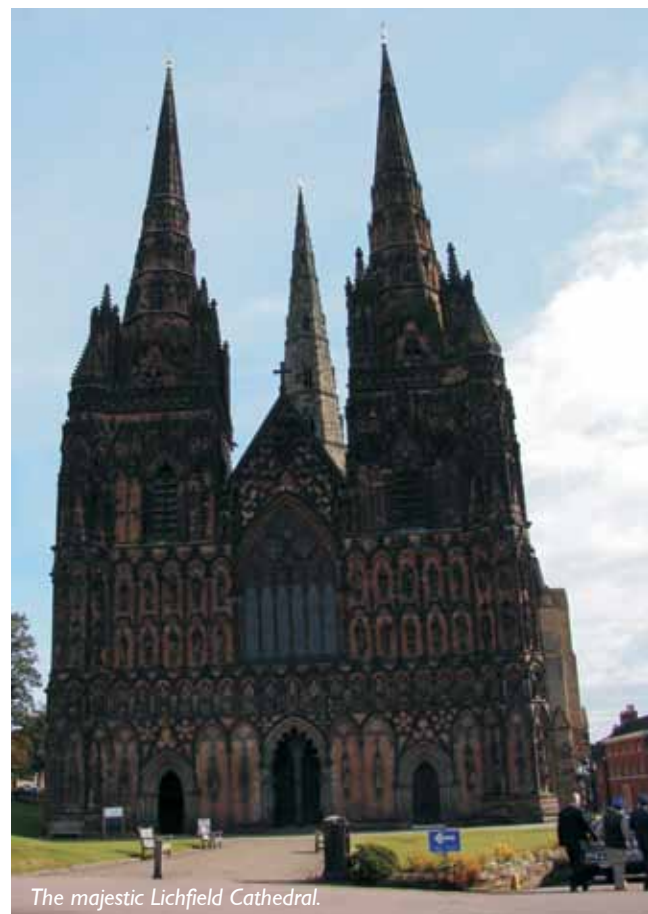


Colonel Harinder Singh Attari explaining a point to Dr Pete Wilcox.

Moreover, I fear it is true that some visitors to our Cathedral see these standards as the spoils of war, and assume that this memorial glories in the victory of the British against the Sikhs. Perhaps the builders of the memorial held that view themselves.

I am grateful for the opportunity that your visit provides today, for us to state unequivocally that we regard such triumphalism and imperialism as deeply unchristian, in fact, alien to the teachings of our faith founder, Jesus Christ. It is a view which we wish do everything we can to refute, and your presence here today is a great help to us for that reason.

Once again, may I welcome you to this house of prayer in the assurance of our desire to be partners with you in promoting the values we share. Thank you for honouring us with your presence today”.



The majestic Lichfield Cathedral.



Inside the Chapel which is memorial to the battles of yore, particularly the Sutlej campaign of 1845-46 also displaying the Sikh standards during the battles of Ferozeshah and Sabraon.



S Harbinder Singh Rana with Andrew Fane, direct descendant of General Sir Henry Fane, C-in-C of the English forces in India during the 1830s and Colonel Harinder Singh Attari after presentation of the Sham Singh Attari memento.



S Harbinder Singh Rana of the Anglo Sikh Heritage Trail, with the Mayor of Lichfield.

60 Years after Partition

Since 1972, when Dr Kirpal Singh's collection of documents concerning 'Partition of the Punjab -1947' was first brought out by the Panjabi University, it has been the basis of studies relating to Partition of the Punjab. Documents concerning the transfer of power and related developments were published earlier in 1970 by Sir Penderel Moon, Mansergh and Lumby. Other such series, like the 'Towards Freedom' series of the ICHR or the Punjab Politics series of Lionel Carter have been published later, but no single set of selections is as useful as Dr Singh's for understanding the chain of events and the cross current of opinions leading to the partition of the province. The popularity of Dr Singh's select documents spawn new editions, the latest being that launched by National Book Shop, Delhi in 2006. Dr Singh judiciously mentions on the jacket that the documents included in the book concern the history of both India as well as Pakistan and they would be relevant for studying the history of both the Indian and Pakistani Punjabs, Haryana and also Himachal (since carving out of these new provinces was from the former, undivided Punjab). The people of all these territories would be able to learn from Dr Singh's monumental work on how and why the Sikhs felt compelled to accept a partition of their Holy space and homeland in the Punjab, what were the options open to them and what ultimately was the shape in which 'final dispensation' came.

Through his choice of documents and from the stray remarks in the introductory chapter it is obvious that Dr Singh was one of those many optimists who entertained hopes that the Indian National Congress would honour the trust bestowed on them by the Sikhs. Thus, in spite of the efforts of many British politicians like Sir Stafford Cripps, to encourage the Sikhs to come to an understanding with the Muslim League, the Sikhs remained steadfast in their

***The Sikhs and transfer of power (1942-1947) : A Critical Appreciation**

By Dr Kirpal Singh
Publication Bureau
Panjabi University
Patiala



15 August 1947: Major Harwant Singh of the 1st battalion, Sikh Regiment leads the honour guard near India Gate lawns in New Delhi.

commitment to the Congress. Although there were brief interludes of divergence, as during the "Quit India Movement" of 1942 when Sikhs constituted the Khalsa Defence of India League to protect their martial tradition in the army, they were main backbone of the Congress and civil disobedience movements, and suffered arrests, imprisonment, deportation and execution in considerable numbers (probably the highest among all Indians). As Dr Singh's last chapters show, it was the Sikhs who bore the main brunt of the partition holocaust. The post-colonial political order in India was thus, in a sense, a product of the martyrdom of Sikhs in the cause of freedom from British Rule. Just as the Punjab had, since time immemorial, shielded the rest of India from enemy onslaught, owing to its frontier-land position, similarly at the time of transfer of power, too, it was this Province and its valiant inhabitants which suffered the most grievous pangs of partition.

Punjab may have represented the far-flung frontier regions of India considering its geographical location, but so far as its geo-political importance was concerned, it occupied the centre-stage of Indian politics during high noon of the colonial regime. To the British, Punjab was the core of their imperial

possessions in the sub-continent, as this was the region which had given the British fresh lease of life, providing them with the military spine which helped them meet challenges in the 'heartland'. In the imperial strategy for India, Punjab always figured at the highest. Thereafter the Raj undertook a very ambitious programme of constructing irrigation canals in parts of the region to water the arid tablelands within its five rivers, so ensuing both good harvest and humour. This added another feather in Punjab's plume, making it the granary for the rest of India.



Outgoing Governor General Lord Louis Mountbatten inspects the 1st Sikhs at Delhi.

The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms of 1919 had deliberately shifted the focus of political importance to rural Punjab, giving it 29 constituencies of which 23 were located west of Lahore, in the areas dominated by estates of the Muslims. The urban areas east of Lahore, Jullunder and Ambala where most of the Hindus and the Sikhs were concentrated, were given only 4. The framing of the constituencies thus betrayed a design on part of the British to bring the rural magnates of Western Punjab to dominate politics of the province. The Muslim landlords of west Punjab found common meeting ground with their Jat counterparts of south eastern Punjab in a political platform organised by a very talented Muslim leader, Mian Fazl-i-Husain. This was the Punjab National Unionist Party, which thereafter directed political destiny of the province from 1923 till eve of disintegration of British rule in the sub-continent.

Although this government of landed notables successfully kept up a pretence of communal solidarity, yet it furtively tried to promote the cause of the Muslims in education, municipal and civil services by introducing quotas for them on pleas of backward state of the Muslims. This was not to the interest of the Hindus and Sikhs, who well surpassed their Muslim brethren in such matters. Thus an under-current of hostility was brewing among the elites of the three communities in spite of their political cooperation in the Punjab National Unionist Party.

From 1901 the British had also aimed at excluding the trading and commercial classes from influence in rural areas by putting a statutory ban on the mortgage and foreclosure of land by people who did not come from an agricultural background. This law had an adverse effect on Hindu and Arora Sikh money-

lenders and even on the services who lived off the interest earned via surplus funds which they lent to the rural producers. This broke backbone of the Congress in the Punjab as most of its support base was in the ranks of the Hindus or a sprinkling of upper middle class Sikh professionals or service persons. However, as the Congress was keen to maintain a secular and pro-peasant image on an all-India level, it could not organise an effective resistance to these measures with any semblance of propriety.

With its all-India concerns, the Congress actually acted as an impediment in taking any effective stand in provincial politics. Thus in 1916 the Congress conceded a weightage to U.P. Muslims quite out of proportion to their numbers, certainly done to secure support of Muslims in the anti-partition agitations organised by the Congress. Thus began the parting of ways between the Sikhs and the Congress, as the former discovered that when it came to the question of special weightage, Congressmen were rarely so enthusiastic ! Thus in 1919 the Sikhs launched their own organisation – the Central Sikh League—to carry on the struggle for rights of the Sikhs.

Struggle of the Sikhs for their own gurdwaras, which had been overwhelmed by immoral influence of mahants, brought Sikhs to forefront of national politics. Henceforth the Sikhs became a potent force in all political negotiations affecting their province, primary concern of the Sikhs in those years being to resist further political encroachment by Muslims in the Punjab. The Sikhs were numerically fewer compared with the other two communities but their contributions to the military efforts of the country and land revenue of the province was very considerable (in the Lahore division the Sikhs paid 46 per cent

of the land revenue). It was from the Sikhs that the British had "conquered" the province and the Sikhs now rightfully claimed fair share in representative mechanism of the province.

The Congress Party's apathy to Sikh fears of Muslim domination in the Punjab were evinced time and time again in the Nehru Report (1928) which had proposed to concede separate constituencies for a majority community (the Muslims were about 51% of the population of the Punjab at this time), the Congress passivity to the Communal Award of 1932 conceding Muslims a statutory majority in the Punjab, Congress enthusiasm for the federal scheme of 1935 and their astounding performance at the ballot box in all the non-Muslim provinces in 1937 being in accordance with the provisions Act of 1935.

Such Congress chauvinism and 'majoritarian' attitude towards minorities since the overwhelming election victories of 1937 brought about certain new developments in politics of the Punjab where neither the Congress nor the Muslim League were a force to be reckoned with. In 1937 the Punjab National Unionist Party under the able leadership of Sir Sikander Hayat Khan had won an impressive majority in the Punjab Legislative Assembly. However, he was prevailed upon by many important Muslim leaders, like Allama Iqbal and Jahanara Shah Nawaz Khan to attend the Muslim League session at Lucknow in October 1937 so as to infuse new life into the Muslim League since its election debacle in the same year. The Muslim members of the Unionist Party numbered a large 91 and many in the Muslim League prevailed upon them to hold double membership and so be known as Muslim League Unionists. Congress highhandedness in the non-Muslim provinces at this time convinced Sir Sikander of the wisdom of such a move and he negotiated the Sikander-Jinnah Pact to bolster the moribund Muslim League and mobilise some support against threats from an enormously strengthened Congress.

Sir Sikander Hayat Khan was, however, aware of the apprehensions which might arise in the mind of his non-Muslim colleagues in the Unionist Party through such closeness with the Muslim League. He knew that it was difficult to run administration in the Punjab without support of the non-Muslims. He therefore indulged in a lot of double-speak, drawing close to the Muslim League and yet denying such closeness in his dealings with his party colleagues. Jinnah also tried to use Sikander's prevarications to his advantage and got the Pakistan Resolution passed at Lahore in 1940 and that too on soil of the Punjab!

It has been argued that the Pakistan Resolution was nothing more than a 'tactical move' or 'a bargain counter' to wring more concessions from the Congress. But in the popular mind the word 'Pakistan, became synonymous with 'Muslim Raj' and, as Sir Penderel Moon had observed, 'once the cry was raised, how would this be silenced'?

The Lahore Resolution thus sounded the death knell of social order even when "three communities (Muslim, Hindu and Sikh) were closely intermingled, "spoke a common language, shared with a common provincial pride and to some extent, a common culture". It raised the spectre of a 'Muslim Raj' in the minds of the Sikhs who observed a 'ghallugara day' to revive memories of the discomfiture of Sikhs at the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali in 1762.

Dr Kirpal Singh has taken up the Lahore Resolution of 1940 as starting point, leading to the chain of events that went into creating partition of the Punjab. Dr Singh's publication displays special concern on role of the Sikhs in these events. In the introductory chapter he engages in an attempt to familiarise readers with political atmosphere of the province, preceding the Lahore Resolution. The tension between Hindu and Sikh urbanites and Muslim peasants was often brought to the fore as during the plague in Multan in 1922 when Hindu graindealers' shops were looted and records were burnt and again during the Hindu-Muslim riots at Kohat in 1923-24.

The plan for finding solutions to the communal tangle through some form of division of the province had long been in the air. Lala Lajpat Rai had envisaged seceding eastern part of the province from the western. This idea was probably prompted by his realisation that the Congress could never make much headway in the rural constituencies of western Punjab which always swayed to dictates of their pirs and sajjada nashins, who also happened to be big landlords.

Muslim leaders including Iqbal also believed that the Ambala Division was queering the pitch for Muslims in the Punjab and he wanted it to be separated from rest of the Punjab, so that the Muslims could dominate without any question. Shah Nawaz Khan thought the same as well.

During the Round Table Conference of 1931 the Sikhs too had asked for delineation of the frontiers of the Punjab anew, virtually abandoning Maharaja Ranjit Singh's acquisitions in western Punjab (except for the Sikh cultivated colonies in Lyallpur and Montgomery). The Lahore Resolution's suggestion

for a "grouping of geographically contiguous units" followed the same approach.

However, the majority of Punjabis were unable to stomach the idea of partition of the province. Cripps' proposal to allow provinces the right to secede from the Indian Union was not welcomed by non-Muslims. Master Tara Singh's suggestion for partition of the Punjab and the Shiromani Akali Dal's *Azad Punjab* scheme were designed to pressurise the Muslim League to soften their stand. Rajagopalachari's idea of allowing the right of self-determination to the Muslim majority areas roused all Congressmen to a fury of indignation. Sikander Hayat Khan, who had written to Governor Glancy to allow non-Muslims to break away from the Punjab, had to retrace his stand in the Punjab Legislative Assembly and declare in 1941 that "we do not ask for freedom where there may be Muslim Raj here and Hindu Raj elsewhere. If that is what Pakistan means, I will have nothing to do with it". Gandhi would not agree to partition of the Punjab and agreed to plebiscites only in the N.W.F.P., Bengal and Assam. Nor did Jinnah envisage partition of this vital province when he actually wanted a "settlement between two major nations" and not any secession from an existing Union.

In spite of major misgivings and doubts, the spectre of partition of the province was forced upon by the terrible riots of March 1947 in Multan and Rawalpindi. Once partition was decided upon, the population should have been gradually and peacefully re-located from their respective lands to alternate areas. However, the government and political leaders had been vacillating till holocausts began on both sides of the border, abandoning all civilised norms of behaviour and transforming human beings to monsters. Penderel Moon had long proposed that an area of Sikh majority be created in Eastern Punjab, transferring Sikhs from Western Punjab and leaving out Rohtak, Hissar, Gurgaon and Karnal Districts. If his plan had been heeded, the trauma of partition would have been much more tolerable for all the three communities affected.

The Boundary Commission now had many formalities to complete and the line of demarcation between two new-born states drawn. Documents of that fateful month August 1947 show that negotiations went on till the eleventh hour for inclusion of Lyallpur district and Nankana Sahib estate – a 2,800 sq miles non-Muslim majority tract west of the Ravi, contiguous



The scene at Palam Airport when 1st Sikhs presented the guard of honour to the new Governor General of India, CR Rajagopalachari.

to the Lahore District, where 71 per cent of the land revenue was paid by the non-Muslims – with India. Dr Kirpal Singh has provided an idea of the economic hardships awaiting the refugees moving to East Punjab comparing the wheat production figures in both parts of the Punjab. Of the total wheat production of the Punjab, 71 per cent came from the west while only 29 per cent was produced in the east. Rice production in the west was 85.6 per cent while being 14.4 per cent in the east. In cotton production too, the west far surpassed the east. Dr Singh's documentation thus clearly establishes the dire economic imbalance awaiting the migrants to eastern Punjab so far as produce and housing was concerned.

Documents are usually featureless as they merely record what has happened. The editor of a sheaf of documents cannot add comments to interpret these but an arrangement of the documents, the collection of an array of information for and against some decisions might unravel the wisdom or otherwise in the course of actions. To that extent Dr Kirpal Singh's book has an important place for it records indignation of the Sikhs at indecisiveness of the British, intransigence of the Congress leaders, the singular determination of the Muslim leaders and despair of the Sikh leaders, who were left shouting in the wilderness. Dismemberment of the Punjab which Maharaja Ranjit Singh had consolidated with such great sagacity and vigour – the once Great Punjab – haunts every Sikh till this day.

Prof. Chhanda Chatterjee

GENERAL SHAM SINGH ATTARI



It is recorded in history of the Punjab that if the test of patriotism is to lay down one's life for one's country knowingly and willingly, then surely Sardar Sham Singh Attari was one of the greatest men of India who, careless of worldly benefits and personal comforts, sacrificed his all to defend the Punjab's independence. He preferred death to thralldom and by his example made it clear to his countrymen that nothing was more precious than independence and freedom from the foreign yoke. He testified to the saying of Kabir that "he is really great who is cut to pieces but does not leave the battlefield."

"Hoary headed Sardar Sham Singh", wrote the bard Mohammad Latif, "dressed himself in a garment as white as his long snowy beard, galloped forward, cheering on his ardent followers and scorning death till the last, fell martyr to his country's freedom." His superb example was a beacon and source of inspiration to the

An old chief whose name should be recorded forever is Sham Singh "among the faithless only faithful found" clothed in white and devoting himself to death, like Decius of lore, called on those around him to strike for God and the Guru and defying death everywhere, rushed manfully upon his own. – R. Bosworth Smith.

numerous freedom fighters who fought against the colonial British from 1846 to 1947.

The family of Attariwalas trace their ancestry to the Bhatti Rajputs of Rajasthan whose forefathers migrated to the Punjab from the neighbourhood of Jaisalmer. According to Griffin, a contemporary British historian "they stand at the head of Sidhu Jats, the best blood of Majha". The Attariwalas, along with the houses of Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Faridkot are direct descendants from the line of Jauthar, the fifth from Raja Solvan Shal.

Sham Singh's father, Sardar Nihal Singh was so loyal to his master Maharaja Ranjit Singh that according to legend when the Maharaja fell seriously ill at a place called Wanicke, Nihal Singh went around his bed seven times praying to God Almighty to pass on his master's illness to him. It is said that from that day, Ranjit Singh re-gained his health but Nihal Singh died soon after.

Nihal Singh's son Sham Singh had caught Ranjit Singh's eye at an early age by his dashing, vigour and soldierly qualities. He soon made his name in his first campaign when in command of a battery of guns at the siege of Multan in 1818 and in spite of being wounded, was the first to storm the breach in the fort and capture it. Thereafter he served with distinction in many other campaigns in the north west and gained as great a name for courage as had his illustrious father.

The clan of Attariwalas gained much strength and influence and in order to have them on his side, Maharaja Ranjit Singh sought the hand of Sham Singh's

daughter for his grandson Prince Naunihal Singh. The marriage took place at Amritsar on the 7 March 1837. History records this as the last marriage of its kind in oriental splendour and pageantry. Sir Henry Fane, the British Commander-in-Chief, was present on the occasion. The wedding is said to have cost the Attari Sardar Rs. 15 lakhs.

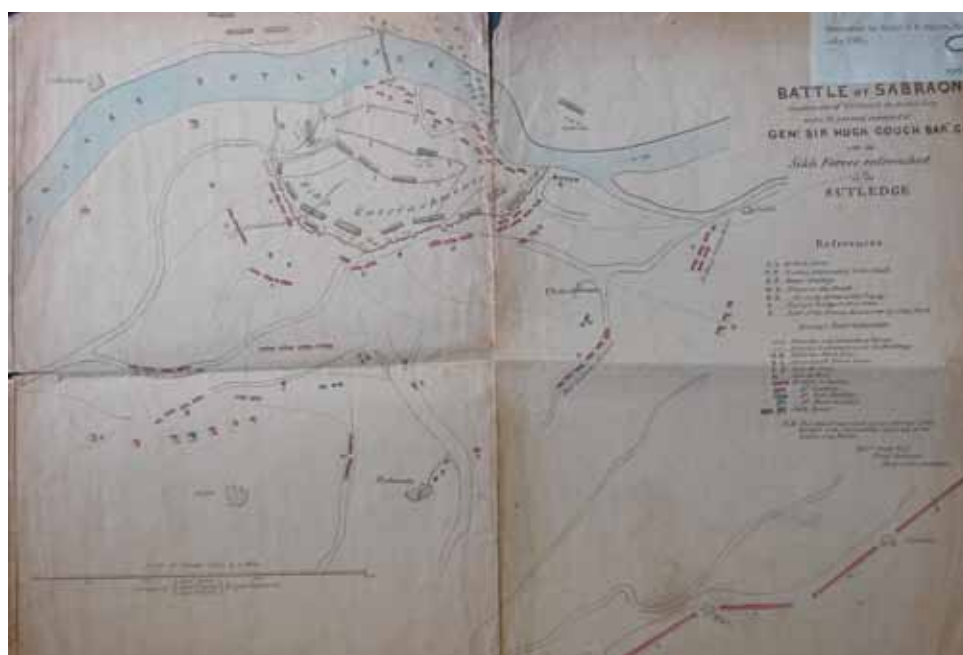
In the absence of strong leadership after the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the rot which set in the Kingdom of Punjab is too well known to be repeated here. The intrigues of selfish and treacherous sirdars at the court so disgusted Sham Singh that he retired from the court and settled down at Attari to spend the last days of his life in prayer and meditation. The intrigues at the Lahore Durbar had culminated in plans to divert the powerful Khalsa Army into action against the English. Sham Singh was called by Maharani Jindan for advice. He strongly protested against this mad venture but to no avail. On the other hand he was dubbed as a traitor and Jindan called him a coward and not true to the salt of her late husband. Sham Singh was anything but a coward. He returned to Attari and in the twilight of his life, he once again donned his armour and, followed by loyal horsemen, left for his rendezvous with destiny.

Historians are of the opinion that the battle of Sabraon during the First Sikh War (1846) where Sham Singh was in command of troops, should never have been lost. The morale of the soldiers was high, some were seasoned veterans of many campaigns and were led by devoted officers. But that was not the intention of the traitors at the Durbar who did everything possible to starve them of ammunition, reinforcements and administrative support.

The night previous to the battle, it had rained heavily and the river Sutlej was in spate. Tej Singh, a court noble, came to Sham Singh's camp at night and tried to persuade him to beat a retreat while the pontoon bridge was still intact. Sham Singh was infuriated. At this Tej Singh taunted him by saying that if he considered

himself so brave and upright he should take a pledge to fight till the last. Sham Singh asked for the Holy Granth Sahib and standing before it in all humility, took a vow that he would return victorious or perish.

As dawn was breaking, the troops moved into attack. Sham Singh, tall and handsome with his flowing grey beard, donned saffron robes, the garment of a *shahid*, and mounted his white charger. Drawing the sword in his right hand and exclaiming Sat-Sri-Akal, he charged at the enemy, with his followers at his heels. For a while the English were flabbergasted for they had never seen anything like this charge before but recovered their wits and the firing became intense. Sham Singh's followers started



The original parchment map depicting the fateful battle of Sabraon 12 February 1846.

dropping and a mere handful were left. The old Sirdar fell at last. When his body was examined, seven bullets had pierced his chest; all from the front. Just as he had wanted. The battle of Sabraon was lost but out of respect for the gallant adversary, the English ordered ceasefire and allowed Sham Singh's followers to take his body away, which was brought back to Attari on elephant back after seven days march. His wife put on her bridal dress and ornaments and performed Satee at his funeral pyre, the last such recorded in history. Till this day Attariwalas do not wear saffron colour at weddings and on other happy occasions.

Lavish tributes were paid to this hero, from the Governor General and English Commander-in-Chief to lower commanders who fought against him. Thus records



Colonel Harinder Singh with Sikh guns on display at Royal Hospital, Chelsea in London.

The Attari border

The Wagah border, as commonly celebrated by both India and Pakistan and perhaps the most known symbol of the Partition, will henceforth be known as the "Attari border" on the Indian side.

The changed name, which has been officially notified by the government of India on recommendations of the Punjab government, will soon appear on milestones and other signage along the western portion of National Highway One (the Grand Trunk Road).



Punjab's suggestion on renaming Wagah as Attari is premised on the belated recognition that the village of Wagah is actually located in Pakistan. The state administration felt it would be more appropriate to use Attari to refer to the joint border checkpost since this is the last big settlement on the Indian side. It was also pointed out that Attari is the birthplace of Sham Singh Attariwala, the celebrated general in Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Sikh army.

Notably, the last Indian terminal before the railway line crosses over into Pakistan is Attari railway station. The first train halt across the "zero line" is Wagah.

Griffin, the British historian. "Sirdar Sham Singh was one of the best representative of the race which, for manliness, honesty, strength, and courage is second to none in the world. His death was a great loss for there was no one to take his place. There were, it is true, many of humble interests of the country, but none among the intriguing Sirdars at the Court. Had there been more chiefs like him, the Sikh nation would have preserved the independence, which it insanely threw away".

Everyone must die one day. Sham Singh's martyrdom had dramatic meaning and significance, one of those sacrifices which keep a nation alive and serve as a beacon guide to coming generations. A nation without traditions of sacrifice and devotion has no right to exist. Sham Singh's extreme act of gallantry has not gone in vain. Shah Mohammed, the famous Punjabi bard immortalised him in his epic poem. Today the country remembers him with pride, but a befitting memorial is yet to be erected at his native village at Attari, although a beautiful portrait of his hangs in the Sikh Regimental Centre museum; a good reminder to our young soldiers of the "right stuff" that Sikhs are made of.

Colonel Harinder Singh Attari

The Holocaust of Indian Partition



An Inquest

Extracts from the book by Madhav Godbole

It is important to note that the Sikhs had a consistent position on their demands over the several years (leading to partition). The Sikh All-Parties Committee, in its representation dated 31 March 1942 to Cripps had, inter alia, underlined that "Punjab proper extended up to the banks of the Jhelum excluding Jhang and Multan districts, and that the Trans-Jhelum area was added by the conquest of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and was retained by the British (after the Anglo-Sikh War) for administrative convenience. It would altogether be unjust to allow the extraneous Trans-Jhelum population, which only accidentally came into the Province, to dominate future of the Punjab proper.... We shall resist however by all possible means separation of the Punjab from the Indian Union."

In his letter dated 1 May 1942 to Cripps, Master Tara Singh had stated "It is being talked everywhere amongst the Sikhs that they are between two fires. They are to have *Japanistan* in case of (British) defeat and *Pakistan* in case of victory. You can well imagine what effect this frame of mind can have upon the Sikh morale."

Cripps had assured them that "this matter (of protection to the Sikhs) had been particularly discussed in the War Cabinet because of our very great appreciation of the contribution that the Sikhs had made in the past and were making now in the defence of India". They continued to press the same demands before the Cabinet mission in 1946. Although, at that time, they were talking of a separate Sikh state, their pleas were the same, namely that the areas to be given to the new state must not be only on the basis of counting heads, but land holding and land revenue paid must also be taken into consideration, there should be transfer of both population and property and so on. The Cabinet Mission itself had clearly stated that it was sufficient to recognise only three main communities in India: "General", "Muslims" and "Sikhs", the General community comprising all persons who are not Muslims or Sikhs. When the Cabinet Mission Plan (CMP), which overlooked the interests of Sikhs, was announced, it was welcomed by Hindus and some Muslims but Sikhs of all shades

of opinion rejected the CMP on the ground that it would leave them "to the mercy of the Muslim majority". A prominent Sikh leader went so far as to say that "the CMP has made every Sikh a rebel against the British government".

It is evident from records that the gravity of the Sikh problem was fully appreciated by the British. In his letter dated 20 May 1946 to Wavell, Jenkins had stated that the Sikh "sense of grievance is real and urgent...in the Punjab the Sikhs could wreck any scheme of which they really disapproved." Pethick-Lawrence, in his letter to (the Viceroy, General Wavell), dated 27 February 1947 had stated, "I can recognise the great risks the Sikhs will resort to extreme measures particularly if the [Muslim] League was not conciliatory towards them, and Jenkins is quite right to warn us that in his view this danger is a serious one". Jenkins wrote

a letter to Wavell on 7 March 1947 which contained a detailed enclosure on the Punjab problem. It dealt with the issues pertaining to the proposed partition of the Punjab at length and significantly stated, "When we get down to the details [of partition] we inevitably find that crude population figures are not necessarily the only criterion". Incidentally, the dividing line which Jenkins had tentatively drawn in his letter was, more or less, the same which was announced by the Boundary Commission later!

It comes as a surprise to read what Nehru then wrote to Wavell on 9 March 1947: "I have received a letter from Sardar Baldev Singh in regard to recent happenings in the Punjab...He has asked me to convey to you and through you to the HMG what the Sikhs feel in this matter. I have suggested to Sardar Baldev Singh to write to you himself." This is shocking in view of the fact that Nehru had written to Wavell on the same day that he had been asked by the Sikhs to



Undivided India, pre- 15 August 1947.

represent their point of view to him. This certainly gives an impression that Nehru did not want to get involved in the Punjab matters.

Jenkins, by his letter dated 24 March 1947, had specifically requested Mountbatten to bear in mind the importance of consulting Sikhs in finding a solution to the Punjab problem and Mountbatten too had accepted the suggestion. Unfortunately, Mountbatten's discussions with the Sikhs were never focussed with a view to understanding their concerns.

It was on 2 April 1947 that several members of the Central Legislature from the Punjab wrote to Nehru to urge partition of the Punjab into two provinces on the ground that "the recent tragic happenings in North-Western Punjab have very rudely shaken the confidence of the Hindu and Sikh minorities in the belief that there will be fair deal for them at the hands of the Muslims in future."

and non-Muslim areas. They agreed that landed property was not on (sic) a basis which could be proceeded upon, but there were Sikh shrines in some of the predominantly Muslim areas. This point should also be borne in mind." Jenkins said that it would be very difficult to take this point into consideration when deciding upon the boundaries. He agreed that there were a number of Sikh shrines in Western Punjab but pointed out that the real Sikh *Holy Land* was in Amritsar, which would in any case fall to the Sikhs. Clearly, Nehru failed to put across the position of the Sikhs to Mountbatten honestly and well in time. This meeting sealed the fate of the Sikhs. Mountbatten put the entire responsibility for leaving the Sikhs in the lurch on the Congress – particularly Nehru. As brought out later, the ploy of asking the boundary commission to take into account 'other factors' while deciding the boundary was just a part of the grand strategy of the British to mislead the Sikhs. During discussions in the Governor's conference on 16 April 1947, Jenkins had wisely advised Mountbatten that "the Punjab could be partitioned satisfactorily only by agreement." This advice was not followed. The Sikhs continued under the impression, till the very end, that 'other factors' would also be taken into account while dividing the Punjab. When this did not happen, all hell broke loose.

Sardar Baldev Singh in his letter dated 27 April 1947 to Mountbatten had once again brought out the Sikh case fully and had expressed the hope that the Sikh interests would in no circumstances be ignored. He had suggested that landed property and the population strength of Muslims and non-Muslims according to the latest available statistics in the Punjab as a whole, should be taken into account. He had warned that "in any political announcement regarding the division of the Punjab which Your Excellency might have under consideration it would be necessary to give a very clear indication of the lines on which the division is to be based I am clear in my mind that unless this is done, the mere announcement of division or the appointment of a Boundary Commission will create increasing complications and more disastrous disorders both in the Western and Eastern Punjab.... The only way of easing the situation is to let the people have a clear and unequivocal picture of the division". This plea too went unheeded.

After his meeting with Giani Kartar Singh, Harnam Singh and Ujjal Singh on 30 April 1947, Ismay sent a note to Mountbatten. The Sikh leaders explained their case once again at length. Ismay's response was



The bone of contention: area between the Rivers Ravi and Sutlej.

unbelievable. "I said [to them] we had no intention of attempting any permanent demarcation of boundaries, and that all that we contemplated was a provisional arrangement to enable us to transfer authority by June 1948." But, whatever perfunctory response Ismay gave to his visitors, obviously, he was quite concerned with the larger implications and urged in his note to Mountbatten, "I think the position of the Sikhs calls for renewed consideration, and I ask Your Excellency's authority to raise this point at the Staff Meeting tomorrow".

Mountbatten had pinpointed the Sikh problem in his personal report No. 5 dated 1 May 1947. "The bone of contention is going to be the area between the two rivers, Ravi and Sutlej and it is going to be very difficult to produce a demarcation which will be accepted by both parties." In his staff meeting on 5 May 1947, Mountbatten had asked a map to be prepared for him of the Punjab showing the line of notional partition, the Sikhs' demands (so far they

were known) and the compromise suggested by the Maharaja of Patiala. However, it must be noted that in his telegram dated 5 May 1947 to Ismay, who had been deputed by Mountbatten to obtain approval of the British government to the proposals for transfer of power, Mountbatten had clearly stated that "It is clear to me that I cannot recommend notional partition on any basis other than communal majorities in the district". In a sense, this foreclosed all options for settlement of demands of the Sikhs, whatever may have been play on the words thereafter *that the question was still open for an award by the Boundary Commission!* This was seen through by Baldev Singh and in his letter to Mountbatten dated 7 May 1947 he frankly stated that he was "considerably upset". He urged, "What I am anxious for is that nothing should be done to prejudice the Boundary Commission or create an impression that the 'notional division' was more or less the final partition of the Punjab." He implored that "it would indeed be unjust if your plans, interim or long term, were to abandon large sections of my community to the risks of bestiality and terrorism, such as you yourself have witnessed and may well recur in future". Like the series of similar letters in the past, this letter too was discarded by Mountbatten, as he had a closed mind on the subject. Baldev Singh's detailed letter bringing out concerns of the Sikhs on the proposed scheme of partition of the Punjab was also circulated to the British Cabinet Committee on India and Burma on 7 May 1947 but it had no effect.

The great betrayal

The same day [7 May 1947], Baldev Singh wrote to Nehru in which he charged "It now seems to me that the situation has arisen because the Congress has not pressed our case emphatically enough.... I have from the very beginning tried to impress upon you the gravity of the problem of the Punjab....I have a feeling that sufficient importance has not been attached to it. In fact, I heard it said by Rajaji that if there was to be a division of India, one district or two in the Punjab this way or that, do not really matter". Surely, Rajaji would not have been as unconcerned if it was the Madras Province which was to be partitioned ! Baldev Singh also stated in the letter "During my talk with the Viceroy, he told me that that the Congress had agreed to the partition on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim majority districts and that it was for this reason he had made his plan for the 'notional division'. If this is so it is quite contrary to the impression I have gained from you, and I do think that no time should be lost to set things right and to let the Viceroy know that his impression was wrong".

The deviousness of the British (and Congress) in dealing with the Sikh demands is clearly brought out in the letter dated 9 May 1947 from Listowel to Mountbatten. There was a marked change in the position of the British in regard to the Sikhs. Listowel stated "Sikhs are a community numbering only 6 million out of nearly 400 million and in the Punjab itself they number only 4 million among 28 million. On any democratic basis, therefore, they must definitely be regarded as a minority (and not even a 'major' minority).... I understand that during the Cabinet Mission these considerations were put to Sikhs in answer to their case but evidently it has all been like water off a duck's back." Listowel was fully aware of the fact that "Unless the Boundary Commission were told to give weightage to these factors [economic position of the Sikhs and location of shrines] it could not do more than make marginal adjustments in the Boundaries. Without mincing any words, he added "if you are satisfied that a Boundary Commission with terms of reference such as will help keep the Sikhs quiet until the transfer of power, can be set up without provoking the hostility of the two major communities, I shall be very ready to support your view to my colleagues". This is precisely the strategy which was followed by Mountbatten which infuriated the Sikhs when the award of the Boundary Commission finally came. But, by that time, the British had already handed over power and it was the two inexperienced Dominion governments of India and Pakistan which had to grapple with the totally unmanageable situation. Other experienced India hands too helped in chalking out strategies to short-change the Sikhs. Cripps in his letter to Attlee dated 10 May 1947 said he was "very worried about the Punjab part of our plan...We must remember that the Sikhs can bust this arrangement as well as Jinnah. We must in the last resort divide out the Sikhs somehow or we shall never get through". The British were at their game once again at which they had all the experience !

In his letter dated 14 May 1947 to SP Mookerjee, Nehru had stated "Any notional division of the [Punjab] Province for the purpose of deciding about the future must necessarily be based on some simple rule which presumably is related to the Census figures of population. Final boundaries can be settled by the Boundary Commission." With this stand the Congress had played into the hands of the British. Nehru tried to make amends for neglect of the Sikh demands in his note dated 16 May 1947 giving comments of the Congress party

on the Draft Announcement. He suggested that "It should be stated quite clearly that the Boundary Commission will have to take into consideration many other factors also apart from the nature of the population... position of the Sikhs in the Punjab is a very difficult one under the scheme and every effort should be made to ease the situation for them....It would be desirable to state something in the course of the document that the Boundary Commission should give due weightage to all the factors and considerations advanced by various groups before coming to a decision; further that the notional division is entirely temporary for a particular purpose and no more."

Nehru sent his supplementary comments on the Draft Announcement to Mountbatten on 17 May 1947: they clearly show that he was writing about the Sikh demands just as a formality and had no personal commitment of any kind. Thus he wrote "I am told that our Sikh friends do not approve of this provision [regarding Girdawar circles]....I think it is desirable that special reference be made to the Sikhs. But whether this paragraph will please them I rather doubt....All of us sympathise very greatly with the Sikhs and would like to help them as much as possible in their predicament. But, I do not feel competent, in a matter affecting them intimately, to say anything on their behalf to commit them." Nehru, significantly, had mentioned at the end of the letter, "I have consulted Sardar Patel and this letter generally represents his views also." This is all the more surprising. The Congress claimed to represent the whole of India but this was not true. The Congress was absolutely not making any demands on behalf of the Sikhs, as if it was not their constituency. In fact, Nehru had no hesitation in writing the letter as a leader of the Hindus only and did not want to speak on behalf of the Sikhs, even at this critical phase of the negotiations. It was not therefore surprising that Giani Kartar Singh had clearly expressed a view that "he had never trusted and did not now trust the Congress". Jenkins wrote to Mountbatten to say, among other things, that the Sikhs "now seem to be almost as suspicious of the Congress as they are of the Muslims". Mountbatten and his advisors must have been reasonably certain that Nehru would not intervene on behalf of the Sikhs or throw his weight to support their demands in any way. As a formality, the same arguments as contained in the letters of Nehru mentioned above were repeated by Kripalani, Congress President, while conveying comments of the

Working Committee on the proposed Announcement on 3 June 1947. The letter referred to the Sikhs being "distressed" and "injury to Sikhs", and not to India's interests being seriously affected! In spite of the known partisan attitude of the British, the letter stated, "We are aware that HMG and you are anxious to protect all legitimate Sikh interests." The letter hoped "that all other factors, apart from population, will be taken fully into consideration" – knowing full well that this was not going to happen!

The British used the Sikh demands merely as a leverage to make Jinnah accept (as if he required any persuasion at all) the Mountbatten plan. Cripps had suggested that "Jinnah might be threatened, if he appeared likely to eject the Plan, by a suggestion that the national partition would be drawn more in favour of the Sikhs". This deviousness is substantiated by the minutes of the meeting of the British Cabinet Committee on India and Burma held on 22 May 1947. "The Committee shared the Viceroy's view that there could now be no question of attempting to carry out the Cabinet Mission's Plan, the only course was to adhere to the plan contained in the proposed announcement, even if one of the parties should refuse to accept it. They thought that Mr Jinnah might be persuaded to adopt a more reasonable attitude if it could be indicated to him that the consequence of refusal would be a settlement less favourable, from his point of view, than that contained in the announcement. For instance, it could be pointed out to him that the proposals in their present form were very unfavourable to the Sikhs and that, if the Muslim League refused to accept the scheme, it would be necessary to arrange for the partition of the Punjab on a basis which would be substantially less favourable to the Muslims. Thus, quite contrary to the sympathetic noises made by the British from time to time, they had never intended to concede any of the Sikh demands, though, in their heart of hearts, they were convinced that the Sikhs had a genuine case. This is brought out by the discussion which Jenkins had with Liaquat Ali Khan on 26 May 1947 when Jenkins told Liaquat Ali, "The Muslims must try to understand the Sikh view—the Sikhs had a real grievance. The League had never apologised for the Rawalpindi massacre and the continued burning in Lahore and Amritsar were making a reconciliation difficult....it was no solution to say that the Sikhs were headstrong and unreasonable—three months ago this criticism was justified, but now the Sikhs had a good deal of reason on this side".

Mountbatten's fantasy

In his press conference on 4 June 1947, Mountbatten put the ball back in the court of the Congress and the Sikhs by stating "It was mainly at the request of the Sikh community that Congress had put forward the resolution on the partition of the Punjab and you will remember that in the words of that resolution they wished the Punjab to be divided between predominantly Muslim and non-Muslim areas. It was therefore on that resolution, which the Sikhs themselves sponsored, that this division has been provided....the people who asked for the partition were the Sikhs....you cannot expect the British to solve all your problems". Concluding the press conference, Mountbatten stated, "I am really sincere in my desire to help the Sikhs, I really believe that the leaders of both the parties are equally sincere and intend to do what they can to help them. In fact it think there will be a revolution in feeling, whereas before there was mistrust and strife. I think we are going to see the leaders come together in a friendly spirit of co-operation." One wonders in which world of fantasy Mountbatten was living!

It is interesting to note that by the beginning of July, Jenkins had started seeing quite some merit in demands of the Sikhs. In his letter dated 10 July 1947 to Mountbatten he was advocating "a settlement out of court. I believe that there is quite a lot in the claim of the Sikhs—and for that matter of other residents of the Eastern Punjab—for a share in the canal colonies, and the Giani's idea that the Montgomery district should be allotted to the East is by no means as ridiculous as it sounds. The district, if so allotted, could be "recolonised" so as to concentrate the non-Muslims there and to transfer Muslims to Lyallpur, which is agriculturally on the whole a better proposition". Jenkins was now talking also of the transfer of population but all this was too late in the day.

The note of the discussion between Jenkins and Swaran Singh on 25 July brings out how the British all along were leading the Sikhs up the garden path. When Swaran Singh said that he was still most anxious to get the whole or a part of the Montgomery district and Nankana Sahib and that the main hope of the Sikhs was an exchange of land and population, Jenkins told him, "I had never thought that there could be much deviation from the *notional boundary* and that they must dismiss from their minds any idea of large territorial gains."

VP Menon stated in the staff meeting of the Viceroy on 28 July 1947 that "he had suggested to Sir Cyril Radcliffe the possibility that Nankana Sahib might be

made a sort of Vatican. This could not be done by the Boundary Commission, but Sir Cyril Radcliffe might put forward this suggestion to the Muslim League."

Giani Kartar Singh met Jenkins on 30 July 1947. Most of his arguments were the same as in the past but he made some significant new points: (i) what the Sikhs had originally agreed to was a report by a Boundary Commission, which would be considered by the GG. The report had suddenly been turned into an award, which would be final. This was contrary to what the Sikhs had accepted. (ii) Baldev Singh had no authority to make any statement and that he had not consulted the [Akali] Party before doing so. The Viceroy had simply send for him "to get his thumb impression". (iii) If no substantial modification in the "notional" boundary was intended, there was no need for a commission at all, and (iv) The future of the Sikhs had been placed in the hands of the chairman of the Commission, who knew nothing whatsoever about them or about the Punjab, and this was a position the Sikhs could not accept. All that Jenkins could say to them was that "the Viceroy was fully informed of the Sikh point of view, and that advice from Sardar Baldev Singh was always available to him." Jenkins concluded that Giani and Kartar Singh had made a great mess of the whole question! What complete hypocrisy!

After having neglected to support the Sikh demands throughout the negotiations with Mountbatten, the AICC submitted to the Punjab Boundary Commission a memorandum which was, in effect, a copy of all the Sikh demands up to the last detail. Clearly this was just to keep on record for posterity how concerned the Congress was for the welfare of the Sikhs!

Hodson, who was highly sympathetic and even partial to Mountbatten, has written, "He [Mountbatten] may be excused for his failure to pacify the Sikhs because they had no effective political leadership; he dealt successfully with Baldev Singh, but Baldev Singh could not deliver the goods. The real leadership of the Sikhs was multiple and (apart from state rulers) spontaneous and irresponsible; for a hundred years the Sikhs had accepted British paternal authority, but it was not the Viceroy's role to become their father-figure. However, it surely was his role, as a Viceroy, to be fair and even-handed in working out the settlement.

[Sixty years later, increasing unrest along Western Punjab's border with the NWFP demonstrates that Mountbatten's casualness in dividing the Punjab remains the root cause of turmoil today: Ed.]

Bravehearts and Lions

The annual 'Portraits of Courage' lecture, organised by the Anglo-Sikh Heritage Trust at the Imperial War Museum in London in September 2006, was given by Rulzion Rattray, descendant of Captain Thomas Rattray who raised the present 3rd Battalion of the Sikh Regiment in 1856. A brief history :

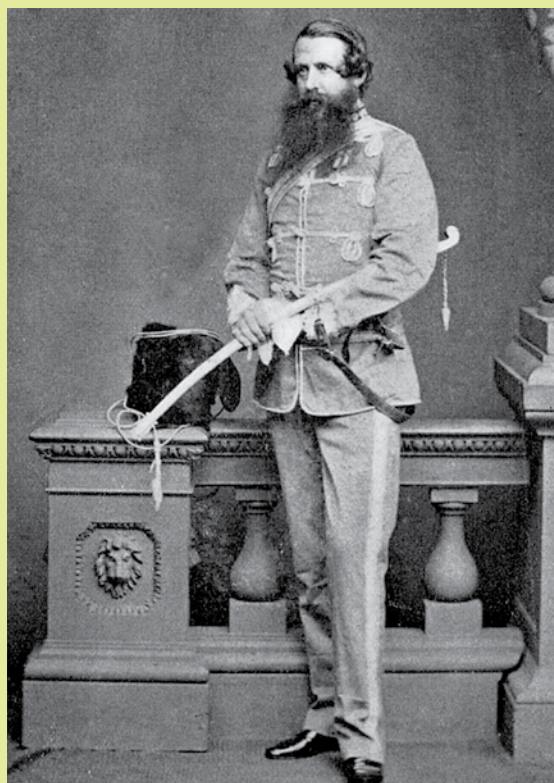
The XLV Sikhs, third battalion of the Sikh Regiment came into being in January 1856 under Captain Thomas Rattray in Lahore. Originally known as the Bengal Military Police battalion, its class composition consisted largely of Sikhs but also a proportion of Punjabi Mussalmans (PMs) and Dogras. The non-Sikh element was gradually eased out by 1885 when, like the XIV (Ferozepore) Sikhs and XV (Loodhianah) Sikhs, they became a wholly Sikh unit. Ever to be known as the "Rattrays", the 45th first marched across country for service in the Santhal Parganas in September 1856.

By late 1856, many of the Bengal Native Infantry sepoys were becoming downright

insubordinate and there was "an increased presence of unpleasant feeling". The Bengal Presidency stretched right across northern India from Peshawar to Calcutta, the capital and headquarters of the British Administration. Majority of the Bengal Army remained stationed in north and north-western India, especially in the Punjab which had only recently been annexed and thus there remained lingering resentment by the Sikhs, if not actual animosity, for the 'Purbias'.

The Rattrays were ideally located and organisationally suited to undertaking counter-Mutiny tasks. By virtue of their mobility, they were constantly presenting themselves at difficult situations. Their contributions were, however, principally two: the defence of a number of British civilians at Arrah against a five-day siege by mutinous Native Infantry (NIs) at Danapore from 27 July through 2 August, and then becoming part of the columns of Gen. Havelock advancing to Lucknow, Kanpur, Gaya and twenty other places.

Arrah town is on the Ganges along the route from Allahabad to Calcutta. The residence of the local railway engineer, 'Boyle's House' and nearby double-storied Arrah House was to become the scene of an epic defence, whose

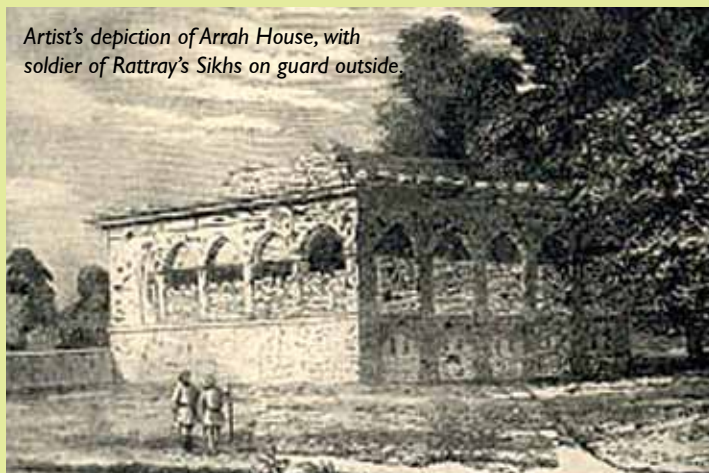


Captain Thomas Rattray, first CO, XLV Sikhs (3rd Battalion).



'Rattray's' Sikhs in the first years of the 20th Century.

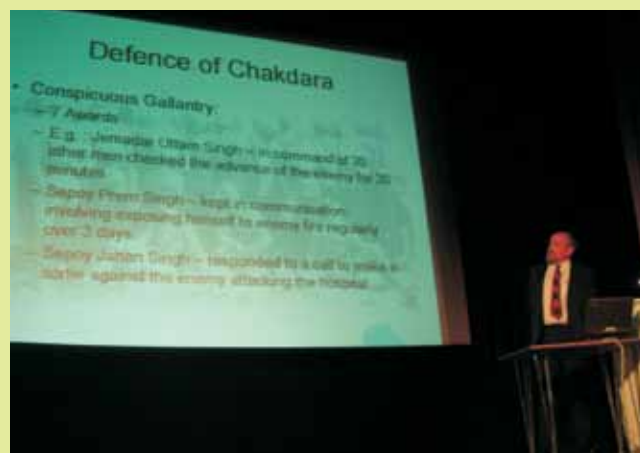
Artist's depiction of Arrah House, with soldier of Rattray's Sikhs on guard outside.



25 European inmates were defended by 52 all ranks of the Rattray's under Jemadar Hukam Singh. There were almost 8000 mutineers and rebels to contend with. The defence of Arrah was a turning point in the 1857 conflagration.

A few years later, the Rattray's as part of the 1st Brigade of 1st Division, South Afghan Field Force took part in operations around Kandahar, Kalat and Ahmed Khel near Gazni. Between the XV Sikh and the Rattray's, the Sikh Regiment earned the battle honours of 'Ali Masjid', 'Ahmed Khel', 'Kandahar' and 'Afghanistan 1879-80'.

45th Sikhs were to take part in the severe fighting during the 'Battle of the Hai River' in Mesopotamia,



During the presentation, and appreciation of Rulzion's lecture.



1917. On 1 February 1917, 37 Infantry Brigade with 36th Sikh on the left and 45th Sikh on the right moved in to attack the strongly held Turkish positions on the banks of the Hai river. Operating under cover of a massive artillery bombardment and amidst loud *jaikaras*, the Rattray's led by Lt Col HB Rattray DSO, advanced to attack.

It was a bloody skirmish with fighting man to man, bayonets and hand grenades to the fore. Turkish machine guns, having inflicted heavy casualties, held up the advance. The Rattrays rallied, in the face of overwhelming odds, to ward off the attack on the left bank and reached their objective. The casualties were heavy and the Sikhs were reduced to a bare 15 per cent of the assaulting strength. Fighting shoulder to shoulder with his men, the CO, Col Rattray too made the supreme sacrifice.

Captain Thomas Rattray's son, Haldane Burney Rattray later commanded the battalion, and his grandson Peter Hugh Rattray was the last British CO in 1947, who had the honour of handing over command of the battalion to the first Indian CO on India's Independence in 1947.



The impressive Imperial War Museum where Rulzion Rattray spoke on 20 September 2006.

August 2007 marked the 60th Year after Partition

The Wagah – Attari border



The legendary Grand Trunk Road, which stretched in undivided India from Calcutta in Bengal to Peshawar in the North West Frontier, a distance of some 1500 miles (2400 km) was the main artery linking the northern and eastern parts of the country, vital not just for commercial transportation, but administrative and strategic reasons. During the on-going 'Great Game' in Afghanistan, the British regarded this road as critical for the defence of Punjab and N.W. India. The G.T. Road went through both the historic cities of Amritsar and Lahore, the most important centres in Punjab and less than 40 miles (64 km) apart and connected by India's best highway, with heavy vehicular traffic, lorries, buses, cars (and trains which ran parallel to it) taking less than an hour to traverse the distance. However, citizens of either city would just as happily travel along by tonga, on horses or simply bicycle down the G.T. Road as often sportsmen of the Khalsa College, Amritsar would do when they played Government College, Lahore at hockey, verily an 'Olympic' event.

The traffic on the Grand Trunk Road changed to more sombre character during mid-1947, with the first tentative thousands of Punjabis moving to the East or to the West in somewhat organised manner but this flow was rapidly to become a torrent as 15 August

Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra, Commander 123 Infantry Brigade after establishing the Joint Check Post at Attari-Wagah on 11 October 1947.



Crossing lines furrowed on the ground, which now indicated the new frontier between India and Pakistan near Attari-Wagah, October 1947.

1947 loomed after which, literally, lakhs of terrified refugees used the Grand Trunk Road to flee eastwards or westwards. This continued through for the next two months even as the Punjab Boundary Force and Military Evacuation Organisation struggled to protect and evacuate the millions.

There was no marker nor pillar to designate the exact boundary line where the Grand Trunk Road left India and became Pakistan. There was, of course, the nominal boundary between Amritsar and Lahore districts of erstwhile undivided Punjab and so it was along here that a Joint Check Post was established on 11 October 1947 by Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra, Commander 123 Infantry Brigade



Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra leads marching columns through roads and lanes of Amritsar, to restore confidence amongst the civil population.



Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru inspecting army parade at Amritsar, January 1948, escorted by Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra.



Sikh leaders addressing refugees from West Punjab, camping around Amritsar in late 1947.



Maharaja Yadavindra Singh of Patiala with Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra and Sikh leaders during the public diwan at Guru ka Bagh, Amritsar.

with a few hastily whitewashed drums and a rubble of stones put along the berms of the GT Road marking the new international border between the separate Dominions of India and Pakistan. Some tents were pitched to house the few troops on duty, with two sentry boxes (painted in the national colours of each country) plus a small swing gate to regulate traffic. Two flag masts completed the picture, with a small brass plaque commemorating the historic event of 11 October 1947 (which is still in place sixty years later, in spite of the severe armoured battles, artillery bombardments and infantry assaults that took place along the Grand Trunk Road during the 3-week war of September 1965).



Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra surveying the 'open border' between India and Pakistan along with villagers near Tarn Taran, October 1947.



With winter approaching, Army officers wives and other ladies knitted woolen scarves, gloves and socks for refugees in and around Amritsar. Mrs Jagjit Chopra is seated centre and her daughter Hardeep, on the ground to the right, at Flagstaff House, 1 Canal Colony, Amritsar.

The first serious clashes between troops of the now opposing Indian and Pakistan armies took place at 0930 hrs on 18 October 1947 when a patrol investigated small arms firing at Namshera Dhala in the Tarn Taran area. Pakistan Army troops were firing on villagers of Dharopal but as the Indian patrol advanced, automatic fire was directed upon them. The patrol took up positions along the canal distributory and returned fire with bren guns and rifles. By 1400 hrs the Pakistan positions were reinforced by troops brought



60 years later, the family of Major General Mohindar Singh Chopra with the historic flag mast at the Joint Check Post (the white line indicates the Indo-Pak border), Wagah-Attari.

in 4 lorries who opened fire with renewed vigour and it seemed they were going to assault the Indian positions. At 1600 hrs however, the firing stopped. As the after incident report put it, "Casualties own side nil. Pakistan forces 4 killed and 6 wounded".

Clearly matters had reached a head and had to be taken in hand: Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra signalled his opposite number in Lahore, Brigadier Nazir Ahmed, commanding 114 Infantry Brigade and suggested a high level meeting at the frontier to sort things out. It was ironic that the two opposing Brigade commanders belonged to the same elite formation, the 6th Royal Battalion, 13th Frontier Force Rifles (Scinde)

and had served together at Kohat with the PIFFER Brigade and elsewhere. Nazir Ahmed was some years junior to Mohindar Singh Chopra in service and the latter issued a stern warning that his forces would give severe punishment against any future transgresses.

The Commanders of 114 and 123 Brigades met at Attari on 21 October 1947, and in a "most friendly and cordial atmosphere", worked out modalities for the future, discussed the safe evacuation of refugees, recovery of abducted women and protection of the border.



With fields cultivated till the very edge of the border, BSF jawan on horseback at the Attari Wagah border.

The *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore so headlined the meeting on its front page 'Keeping the Peace on Indo-Pakistan border,' giving details of the discussions between the Commanders of 114 Brigade (Pakistan) and 123 Brigade (India) while the *Pakistan Times* described (with some apparent relief), the "elaborate arrangements to stop troop clashes". On 23 October, Brigadier Nazir Ahmed sent copies of the articles with a note that "we hope and pray that we both now live up to the expectations we built up that day and also that of the public".

An immediate outcome was the return to normal (friendly) relationships between the eyeball-to-eyeball, troops which units had exchanged fire just some days earlier.

The Commander of Pakistan's 103 Infantry Brigade at Sialkot, Brigadier Mohd. Musa was coincidentally also from the same famous 6th Royal Bn 13th Frontier Force Rifles (Scinde) and with whom Mohindar Singh Chopra also had extremely friendly and constructive meetings.

The Governor of East Punjab, Sir Chandulal Trivedi, accompanied by Lady Trivedi paid a visit to the Amritsar area for four days (17-20 October 1947)



At the ceremony enacted each evening : BSF jawans and Sulej Rangers face each other.

and were conducted around by Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra, the Deputy Commissioner S. Narinder Singh and Senior Superintendent Police, Choudhri Ram Singh. It was freely recorded that "mainly on account of cooperation of these topmost officers of Amritsar that difficult situations, whether on the border or in the town and the district were successfully handled, for which they were popularly christened as the *Three Musketeers of Amritsar*."

Excerpted from 1947: A Soldier's Story

Anglo Sikh Heritage Week

September 15th – 23rd 2007



The annual event as it took place

Events diary

<p><i>Ancient House Museum of Thetford Life</i> White Hart Street Thetford Norfolk IP24 1AA</p>	<p><i>‘Sikh Celebration Day’</i></p> <p>The Ancient House, bequeathed to the town of Thetford by Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, holds a permanent display that reflects its historic local association with Maharajah Duleep Singh. The Museum celebrated Anglo Sikh Heritage Week with music and new exhibits of musical instruments and Sikh armour.</p>	
<p><i>Thetford Library</i> Raymond Street Thetford IP24 2EA</p>	<p><i>‘The Frederick Duleep Singh Collection’</i></p> <p>The Duleep Singh collection in Thetford Library consists of books and other material about East Anglia including family photographs donated by Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, eldest son of Maharajah Duleep Singh.</p>	
<p><i>King’s House Thetford</i> King Street Thetford Norfolk IP24 2AP</p>	<p><i>The Heart ‘Beat’ of Punjab</i></p> <p>In association with Thetford Town Council and Breckland District Council, Gravesend’s <i>Jugnu Bhangra Group</i> pervaded through the town centre culminating in a performance of Punjabi music and folk dance in King’s House Gardens.</p>	
<p><i>National Army Museum</i> Royal Hospital Road Chelsea London SW3 4HT</p>	<p><i>‘Indian Summer’</i></p> <p>The National Army Museum celebrated Britain’s long relationship with the Indian sub-continent, from the earliest Elizabethan traders in India to the massive contribution made by servicemen of the Raj in the World Wars.</p> <p>Amongst the weekend’s events, there was Sikh storytelling, turban tying, and Gatka performances</p> <p>12.00 pm: ‘From Plassey to Partition: India and the British Army’ 2.30 pm: Baba Fateh Singh Gatka Akhara.</p>	
<p><i>Lichfield Cathedral</i> College Hall The Close Lichfield Staffordshire WS13 7LD</p>	<p><i>‘From Victory to Defeat’</i></p> <p>In a look at the extraordinary tale of valour and intrigue surrounding the Battle of Ferozeshah which was to see the Khalsa Army throw away an apparent unassailable victory. Saranjit Singh spoke of the origins of the First Anglo Sikh War remembered through the Cathedral’s monument and Sikh battle standards.</p>	
<p><i>The Sikh Academy Annual Sikh Conference</i> <i>‘Celebrating Heritage & Bridging the Generation Gap’</i> University of Bradford Great Horton Road Bradford West Yorkshire BD7 1DP</p>	<p><i>‘Through His Own Eyes’</i></p> <p>During his time in India from 1904, the Anglican missionary, Reverend CF Andrews, friend of Mahatma Gandhi, witnessed some of the most significant historic moments which defined the Independent struggle. Propelled by his Christian conscience, his observations and actions personified the true strength of his interfaith convictions. A lecture by Harbinder Singh examined the life of a remarkable man who recognised and acclaimed the true nature of the Sikhs.</p>	

British Library Meeting Room 4 Conference Centre 96 Euston Road London NW1 2DB	<i>‘Moving Continents’ : Sikh Migration to Britain</i> What caused Sikhs to migrate and settle in the UK? How did they integrate into this society and how did the indigenous population react to them? On the 60th anniversary of Partition, this talk by Hema Raull examined these themes using testimonies and archive material from the British Library and Gunnersbury Park Museum.
Royal Armouries Museum Armouries Drive Leeds LS10 1LT	<i>‘In Defence of the Realm’</i> A warrior of undisputed achievement, General Sham Singh retired from the Court of Lahore following the passing of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, only to reach for his armour and sword to command the Khalsa Army during the First Anglo Sikh War. He would fall in the battle of Sobraon fighting for sovereignty of the Sikh kingdom. In his talk Colonel Harinder Singh Attari paid homage to the life and courage of his legendary ancestor.
Royal Geographical Society with IBG 1 Kensington Gore London SW7 2AR	<i>‘Showcase Events’</i> An opportunity to explore the Royal Geographical Society’s unique collection of original maps and photographs from the Punjab, including recently researched material. Guided tours in the Reading Room were undertaken.
Brighton Royal Pavilion The Old Courtroom (side entrance) 118 Church Street Brighton BN1 1UD	<i>‘The Greatest Indian Hospital Outside India’</i> In 1914 the Royal Pavilion was transformed into a hospital for Indian soldiers serving in WWI. Visitors could find out what the soldiers made of their peculiar new home. Louise Hume was Lead Interpretation Officer. This talk on Britain’s fighting ‘Sons of the East’ could be combined with a visit to Brighton History Centre and the nearby Chattri Memorial, where Sikh and Hindu soldiers who did not survive their wounds, were cremated.
National Army Museum Royal Hospital Road Chelsea London SW3 4HT	<i>‘Exit Wounds’</i> Most historical accounts of the Empire fail to recognise the pivotal role of Britain in determining current fate of the Sikhs. Retracing the path of Anglo Sikh history, Harbinder Singh will highlight the often untold story of the legacy left by the annexation of the Sikh Empire and the partition of Punjab in 1947. Ending with a look at the Sikh diaspora in the UK today, the lecture examined the painful wounds that the British exit from India inflicted on those who are often paradoxically described as their “greatest foes and allies”.
Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery Education Centre Chamberlain Square Birmingham B3 3DH	<i>‘In Defence of the Realm’ (Repeat)</i> A warrior of undisputed achievement, General Sham Singh retired from the Court of Lahore following passing of Maharajah Ranjit Singh, only to reach for his armour and sword to command the Khalsa Army during the First Anglo Sikh Wars. He would fall in the battle of Sobraon fighting to save the sovereignty of the Sikh kingdom. In this talk, Colonel Harinder Singh Attari paid homage to the life and courage of his legendary ancestor.
Osborne House East Cowes Isle of Wight PO32 6JY	<i>‘The Empress and the Rebel’</i> Described as Queen Victoria’s favourite royal residence, Osborne House was the palace of the Queen’s many meetings with Maharajah Duleep Singh. In <i>The Empress and the Rebel</i> , Christy Campbell, journalist and author of the ground-breaking ‘The Maharajah’s Box’, narrated dynamics of the interaction between the Empress of India and the deposed rebel Prince who dared to challenge her Government’s treatment of him. Home to the famous Durbar Room and Winterhalter portrait of Maharajah Duleep Singh, Osborne House is one of the Isle of Wight’s top attractions.

<p><i>Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery</i> Education Centre Chamberlain Square Birmingham B3 3DH</p>	<p><i>‘A Matter of Balance’</i> Family workshops with storytelling and weapon handling, which explained the spiritual and physical factors that combined to create the Sikh martial tradition.</p>
<p><i>Imperial War Museum</i> Lambeth Road London SE1 6HZ</p>	<p><i>Family Workshops</i> Families would participate in this free drop in art workshop. As well as seeing photos of Sikh soldiers from the Museum’s collections, they more be able to handle a ‘Princess Mary gift box’ given to Sikh soldiers in the First World War, and design their own gift box to take home.</p>
<p><i>Wallace Collection</i> Hertford House Manchester Square London W1U 3BN</p>	<p><i>‘India Then: India Now’</i> A visit to the Wallace Collection is a day of exploration and discovery with practical workshops, art activities and gallery talks aimed at adults and families, all drawing inspiration from the fabulous Indian objects in the Museum’s collections. Tobias Capwell, Curator of Arms and Armour, was at hand to demonstrate mail making. There was also an introduction to Sikh arms & armour.</p>
<p><i>Soho House</i> Soho Avenue Handsworth Birmingham, B18 5LB</p>	<p><i>Rangoli Workshop</i> Rangoli is an art form common throughout the Indian sub-continent and still practiced in the Punjab. A visit to Soho House was an opportunity to create beautiful pictures with coloured sands.</p>
<p><i>Royal Armouries Leeds</i> Armouries Drive Leeds LS10 1LT</p>	<p><i>‘Make and Take’ Family Workshop</i> An opportunity for a day out to see the Royal Armouries collection of Sikh Arms & Armour and to enjoy family activities, including embossing on copper, card armours, the curved sword (<i>talwar</i>) and a stenciled helmet. Younger children had a chance to have their own tiger face painted, hear a story and put on a tiger costume.</p>
<p><i>Historic Royal Palaces</i> Tower of London London EC3N 4AB</p>	<p><i>Koh-i-Noor Storytelling</i> The Koh-i-Noor Diamond, the magnificent jewel that came to Britain after annexation of the Sikh Kingdom now forms part of the Royal Collection at the Tower of London. Storytelling sessions on the Koh-i-Noor and its fascinating history took place through the day.</p>
<p><i>Eastnor Castle</i> Ledbury Herefordshire HR8 1RL</p>	<p><i>‘Historic Houses : Hidden Collection’</i> Standing in the dramatic countryside of the Malvern Hills, surrounded by a beautiful lake and deer park. Eastnor Castle is just an hours drive from the West Midlands, and is a perfect settling for a family day out. This privately owned historic house has a collection of Sikh arms and shares a family history with the Sikhs which dates back to 1848. There was a performance of Punjabi Music and Folk Dance by Gurcharan Mall’s Bhangra Blasters, Saranjit Singh spoke on ‘The Anglo Sikh Wars and Eastnor Connections’.</p>

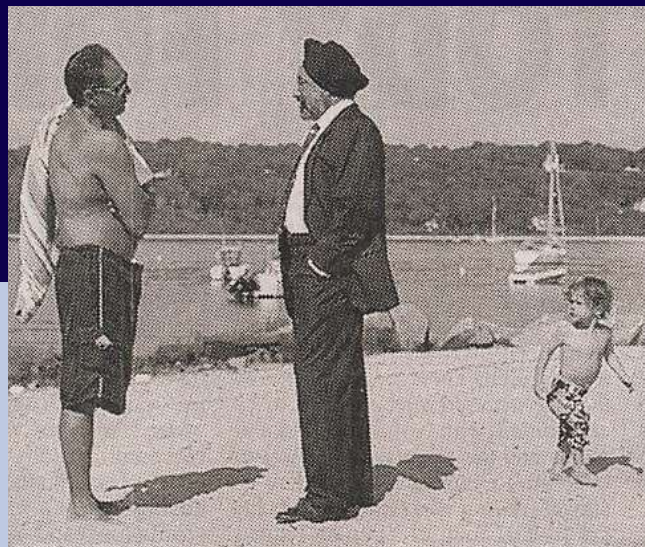
The Sikh Mayor of Laurel Hollow, NY

Harvinder Singh Anand, the new mayor of this Long Island, New York village of multimillion-dollar homes, private beaches and yacht owners, is, like many other residents, a successful business executive, a boater and a connoisseur of world travel. His Sikh turban and beard drew double takes when he moved to the community 10 years ago, but it does not get that many stares anymore. At least not among the locals.

Nonetheless, Anand's way of standing out in the crowd of Bermuda shorts and loafer-wearing people who elected him in June – he ran unopposed – attracted television crews from US and Indian networks to his inauguration in July. The newscasters described the election of Harvinder Singh, 47, who is from New Delhi and is the first member of any minority group to become mayor of this 95-percent-white community of 2,000 fronting on Cold Spring Harbour, "as an unparalleled event".

In fact, he is part of what political analysts see as the new US pattern. While minority candidates are usually propelled into office from densely populated enclaves of their own ethnic groups, a small but growing number of Indian-American officeholders has been getting elected recently in communities across the United States where they are the tiniest of minorities. The group is so small that most of its members know each other and many reached out to congratulate Anand on his election.

The calls came from Upendra Chivukula, a New Jersey state assemblyman elected in 2002, Jay Goyal, a 26-year-old second-generation Indian-American elected to the Ohio Legislature last year, Nikki Randhawa Haley, a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives since 2004, and Kumar Barve, the dean of Indian-American elected



In charge: Mayor Harvinder Anand with a constituent at the village beach in Laurel Hollow, New York.

officials, who won a seat in the Maryland House of Delegates in 1990 and is now the majority leader.

Some are Democrats and some Republicans, but they all share a high level of education and a crossover election appeal. It is a testament, perhaps, to the fact that, compared with other immigrant groups, Indians tend to speak good English when they arrive and are ready to assume their rightful place in the middle class.

Over all, the Census Bureau counts 2.3 million Asian Indians in the United States. In Iowa, Ohio, Kansas, Minnesota, South Carolina and Maryland, each of which has sent an Indian-American to its state legislature, the Indian-American population is below 2 per cent. Chivukula, a Democrat, represents a district where the Indian-American and Pakistani-American population is somewhat higher, at 6 per cent.

United States Representative Bobby Jindal, Republican of Louisiana, a second-generation Indian-American who was elected from a district whose population is 1.5 per cent Asian, has won this year's election for governor. This is a state where Indian-Americans account for about 1 per cent of the population. "There are about 110,000 people in my district," said Goyal. "About 50 to 75 of them are Indian-American families."

Ingrid Reed, Director, the New Jersey Project, a non-partisan voter advocacy group financed by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University said the pattern was probably unique in the history

of American immigrants entering the electoral process. Usually, new immigrants seek office with campaigns focussed on issues of particular concern to their own ethnic groups.

But given an Indian immigrant's education and English proficiency, Reed said, they have been less apt than other immigrants to settle in enclaves. "After three or four decades, they are well established in their professions, and they seem to be reaching out toward political life," she said.

In contrast, Chinese, Japanese and Korean immigrants have largely settled in cities on the East and West Coasts and in Hawaii, which is mostly where they have been elected to public office. Besides Hawaii's two United States senators, there are half a dozen United States Representatives elsewhere in the country who identify themselves as Asian-American. Many Asian immigrants "come from countries where voting is not necessarily promoted as a value," said Christine Chen, executive director of Apiavote, a non-partisan organisation that promotes voting among Americans of Asian and Pacific Island heritage. "Indian-Americans to some extent are different in that, with them, there is the 'world's largest democracy' tradition."

The growing affluence of Asian-Americans of all backgrounds – Chinese, Pacific Island, Korean, Japanese and Indian – has led both the Democratic and Republican Parties in recent years to court them aggressively for campaign funds, votes and their political talent as candidates, said Jay Chaudhuri, president of the Indian American Leadership Council, a Democratic-leaning group.

Indians began to emigrate to the United States in large numbers in the late 1960s, after a 1965 immigration law lifted quotas that had severely restricted Asians and other non-North Europeans from becoming legal residents. The law also established rules favouring immigrants with professional skills in science and technology.

The 1965 law made it possible for Harvinder Singh Anand, the newly elected major at Laurel Hollow, to emigrate in 1982 upon graduating from the Punjab University with a degree in chemical engineering. After postgraduate work at Hofstra University, which is also on Long Island, he got a

job with a small chemical company, then moved up to a larger company and in 1995 formed his own company with a partner. It manufactures chemicals in the United States. China, India and Thailand.

Soon after moving to a gated community in Laurel Hollow, where the 2000 census says the median household income is \$ 200,000, Harvinder Singh became active in civil affairs. He organised the two dozen homeowners in his development to form a cooperative to buy heating oil and unify the system of garbage collection.

"At the end of the day, I am a businessman," he said, who ran without party affiliation in the village election but calls himself a Reagan Republican. "I believe in efficiency and cost-effectiveness."

His wife, Dr Chandni Anand, is an internist. They have two children, Nikita 14 and Angad Singh, 13.

A member of the village board of trustees, John Fitteron, a retired Getty Petroleum executive said, "Harry is just a highly capable individual who, like all of us, wants to give something back to the community". In Laurel Hollow, that is expressed in the issuance of boat permits and the maintenance of roads and in upholding the zoning code in negotiations with very rich people over their wishes to build very big houses.

Harvinder Singh Anand arrived recently at his office in Village Hall, which sits on a lawn overlooking the village's private beach, wearing his usual business suit. He checked in with the clerk and treasurer, Karen Navin and her deputy, Nancy Popper, attended to business about permits for residents who wanted to cut down some trees, then stepped outside, where most of the people wore dripping-wet bathing suits.

"Harry Anand," he said to one after another on his stroll across the lawn, gripping wet hands and making eye contact with people, a few of whom seemed unable to keep their eyes from the turban. If Anand noticed, he did not show it.

"I'm the mayor of Laurel Hollow," he said with a polished smile. "Just elected. So nice to meet you."

Paul Vitello

(From the *International Herald Tribune*)