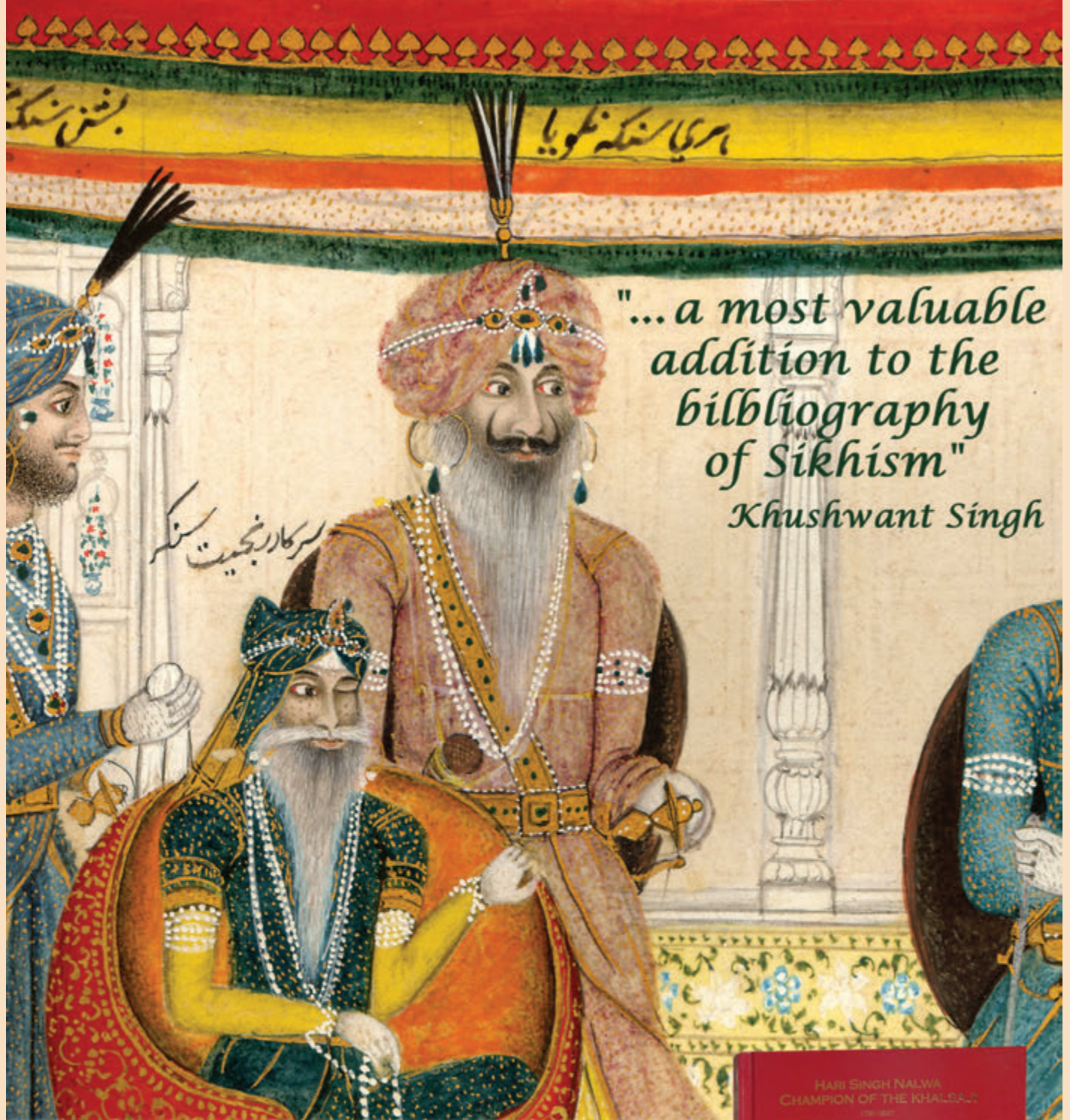


III/2014

NISHAAN

NAGAARA

Kashmir of the Sikhs
Sanctity of the Land
Unfurling the Nishaan
Historic Gurdwaras



"...a most valuable
addition to the
bibliography
of Sikhism"

Khushwant Singh

HARI SINGH NALWA CHAMPION OF THE KHALSAJI (1791 - 1837)

Author: Dr Vanit Nalwa, Ph.D.

In English & Gurmukhi

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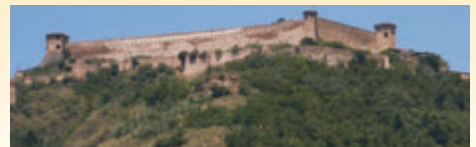
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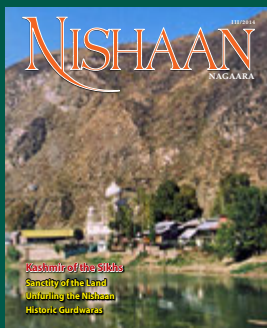


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Editorial Director
Dr Jaswant Singh Neki

Executive Editor
Pushpinder Singh

Joint Editor
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Editor for the Americas
Dr I.J. Singh at New York

Editorial Board
Inni Kaur
Monica Arora

Distributors
Himalayan Books, New Delhi

Editorial Office
D-43, Sujan Singh Park
New Delhi 110 003, India
Tel: (91-11) 24617234
Fax: (91-11) 24628615
e-mail : nishaan.nagaara@gmail.com

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Kashmir of the Sikhs

In two special back to back issues, *Nishaan* focuses on the larger than life presence of Sikhs and Sikhism in the Kashmir Valley. This then is the first of these two issues.

Most readers know that, as in all wars that India has fought, whether as part of British India or as an independent nation since 1947, Sikh warriors have had a dominating and defining presence. They have been rightly lauded the world over for their martial spirit and dedication to a cause. I ask you to wait a while for more of this. These and related matters in reference to the Kashmir valley will be explored at length not in the present issue but in the subsequent one. The subsequent issue will, in fact, start with the contributions of Sikh regiments that saved Kashmir from Pakistani-led tribals in 1947 - and at other times in the past half century.

But Sikh presence in the region of Jammu & Kashmir antedates this Indo-Pakistani imbroglio by several centuries. In fact, the intimate connection of Sikhs with Kashmir is as old as Sikhi itself and dates from the time of Guru Nanak, some 500 years ago. This first special issue of *Nishaan* on this subject briefly introduces these matters to establish the facts. Briefly we will revisit the time when the Gurus visited Kashmir and introduced the teachings of Sikhi; teaching of Sikhism in Kashmir; unfurling the Sikh flag in Kashmir when the valley was incorporated into the Sikh Empire, and finally, the wages of betrayal or perfidy of the Dogras in Kashmir during the post 1846 period.

Jasbir Singh Sarna, a Kashmiri Sikh, has written a useful little book on development of the Sikh community in the Kashmir valley, while Commodore Dalbir Singh Sodhi of the Indian Navy and a Kashmiri Sikh, has documented the '*Historical Sikh Shrines of Jammu & Kashmir*' in his lavishly

illustrated book which was released in 2013. His respected father, Anoop Singh Sodhi, had earlier documented the historical, social and cultural background of the Sikhs in Kashmir.

History and tradition enshrine that during one of his four odysseys through the length and breadth of India, Guru Nanak traveled from Tibet, entering Ladakh before visiting the Kashmir Valley. Several memorial gurdwaras exist as historical markers of his travels. Traditional lore speaks of Brahm Dass, a very learned Brahmin, who is celebrated as the first disciple of Guru Nanak in Kashmir. This was more than 500 years ago.

The next Guru to visit Kashmir was the sixth, Guru Hargobind, shortly after his release from the Gwalior fort. There are numerous gurdwaras across the valley which mark that hallowed visit. The seventh Guru, Har Rai, also visited Kashmir.

It is important to note that thereafter, 'masands' or preachers routinely visited Jammu and Kashmir, amongst whom Bhai Pheru, Bhai Madho Sodhi, Bhai Garhia and Bhai Makhan Shah Lubana are better known. History records that Biru Datt, Moola and Bhai Jhanda were some of the early Kashmiri Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh also visited Jammu and it must be recalled that Banda Singh Bahadur who led the Sikhs in the immediate post-Guru period with great success, was from Jammu.

And then there is that historically critical visit, nay, a pilgrimage of Kashmiri Pandits to Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur. This seminal and defining event, to my mind, cements the relationship of Sikhs with the people of Kashmir forever.

These were difficult times for non-Muslims in India. The emperor on the throne of India then

was Aurangzeb. Islam in India had by then grown singularly intolerant and intemperate. Non-Muslims faced regressive taxes and were coerced to convert willingly or at the point of a sword.

A delegation of Brahmin-Pandits of Kashmir led by Pandit Kirpa Ram came to Anandpur in May 1675 to appeal to Guru Tegh Bahadur for his assistance and intercession with the emperor. The emperor rejected all reason. The Guru embraced the challenge. History unequivocally records that Guru Tegh Bahadur was offered a choice of conversion or death.

Clearly, Guru Tegh Bahadur was not a Hindu. He was a Sikh and Sikhi clearly differed and continues to differ today in many ways from Hindu practices. Why then did he accept martyrdom? Precisely for the principle of freedom of religion – that every person has the right to freely practice his faith. In such matters no one should be coerced.

Succinctly put, his martyrdom breathed life into the principle that now comes to us from Voltaire when he said “I do not agree with what you have to say, but I’ll defend to the death your right to say it.”

In many ways the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the evolution of the Khalsa made possible the continuing survival of the Hindus in north India.

I see a linear connection between the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in the cause of Kashmiri Brahmins and the dramatic events of 1699. Guru Gobind Singh raised a standing army that fought many battles, though never even once to conquer any people, territory or treasures. Many Kashmiris enrolled in these Sikh militias and earned the highest honours in the battles of Chamkaur and other engagements. Parenthetically I add that in the dramatic events of 1699 Pandit Kirpa Ram became a Khalsa, Kirpa Singh, and later embraced martyrdom. And significantly Guru Gobind Singh deputed Banda Singh Bahadur (nee Madho Dass Bairagi) of Jammu to lead the Sikhs in the immediate post-Guru period.

Banda Singh Bahadur swept clean most of eastern Punjab of all tyrannical rulers of the time, issued a coin in the name of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, and initiated India’s first ever land reforms in the areas in his command.

Within less than a century after Guru Gobind Singh, Sikhs had developed the organisational structure of 12 semi-autonomous *misls*, and liberated Punjab and adjoining areas from tyrannous rule. Shortly thereafter, Ranjit Singh consolidated the *misls* and established a stable kingdom that ranged from the Khyber Pass to Kashmir and the Tibetan border – and south eastwards onto the Sutlej River.

Ranjit Singh’s reign is remembered as the golden period of the Punjab. Yes, he was a Sikh but his governance followed the time-tested principles of accountability, transparency, justice, secularism and tolerance.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh conquered Jammu in 1800 CE and Kashmir in 1819. Over the next 27 years, until 1846, he appointed nine Governors of Jammu and Kashmir. Perhaps the most pre-eminent were Hari Singh Nalwa and Mihan Singh, who brought prosperity and security to the Kashmiris that had been earlier oppressed by the Afghans. In the Sikh Raj, agriculture and crafts thrived while gurdwaras, temples and mosques were financially supported by the government with estates for their up-keep.

Vanit Nalwa’s brilliant book on Hari Singh Nalwa, ‘Champion of the Khalsaji’ has recorded for posterity the taking and administration of Kashmir by Sikh forces in the early 19th Century and as penned by S. Khushwant Singh, is “...a most valuable addition to the bibliography of Sikhism.”

In summary, this issue of *Nishaan* dwells upon the Sikhi-Kashmiri nexus from Guru Nanak to 1947; that’s almost 500 years. The following issue of *Nishaan* on ‘Kashmir of the Sikhs’ will highlight the community and Sikhism in Kashmir from the fall of 1947 to our realities today, spanning the spectrum from the continuing Indo-Pakistan imbroglios to the very recent devastating floods in Kashmir.

When we try to interpret history, often intermixed with cultural memory and orally preserved tradition, we are, in what TS Eliot labels as “the cunning passages and contrived corridors of history that deceive us with vanities.” But do not diminish cultural memory or oral history. The history of mankind depends on such sources, sometimes amply documented, sometimes not.

Dr IJ Singh

Sanctity of The Land

Guru Nanak Sahib (1469-1539 CE) was the most widely travelled person of the age, covering thousands of miles for over two decades, mainly on foot and in all four directions so as to enlighten humanity with his divine knowledge, which was conveyed via sacred hymns.

Guru Nanak completed four *udassies* (tours) from 1497-1521, over 24 years, his travels recorded in various *Janam Sakhis*. In the *Bhai Bala Janam Sakhi*, which was written in 1658 CE and in the *Sodhi Meharwan Janam Sakhi* written between 1581-1640 CE, a detailed account of Guru Nanak's visit to Kashmir is given as also to other places including Sumer Parbat ; Hindus generally identify Mount Kailash with Mount Meru or Sumerul. In *Walayat Wali Janam Sakhi*, which was taken away to England by HT Colebrook in 1815, the date of composition has been worked out as 1634 or during Guru Hargobind's pontificate. In this *Janam Sakhi*, Guru Nanak's visit to Tibet and then on to Kashmir and his meetings with Brahm Dass Pundit of Bej Bahara are particularly mentioned.

Nature had bestowed Guru Nanak with a strong and healthy physique which stood him in good stead for bearing the rigours of long and arduous journeys in the plains and deserts, along snowy mountains and over high passes. Guru Nanak changed his attire according to the environment, customs and climates of the places he visited.

An account of Guru Nanak's third Udassi, which included his visit to Jammu and Kashmir has been described in some detail by Professor Surinder Singh Kohli in the work *Travels of Guru Nanak*. As per this treatise, Guru Nanak came to Kashmir (Ladakh) in 1517 from the Sinkiang province of China, through the frontier post (at that time) of Shahidullah. In this



Painting of Guru Nanak by Mehak Kaur Sodhi

Udassi, Guru Sahib was accompanied by Bhai Mardana, Hansu Lohar (blacksmith) and Sihain Chemba (a calico printer). Guru Nanak visited a large number of Hindu religious places in Kashmir, met pandits, *sidhs* (who were celibates) and *yogis* and patiently explained that mindless and hollow rituals carried out by them have no value in their search for God.

Circumambulating the 30 kilometers around Lake Mansarovar in Tibet, Guru Nanak then turned north-west and passed Lake Rakshastal which lay just west of Manasarovar and south of Mount Kailash from where the Sutlej River originates, then reached Rudok via Gartok. Many mountaineers have seen idols of Guru Nanak among the stupas in the area. From Rudok, skirting the picturesque Pangong Tso, Tibetan for “long, narrow, enchanted lake”, situated at a height of about 4,350 m, Guru Nanak entered Ladakh through the Chushul pass, overlooked by towering snow peaks and glaciers. From Chushul, crossing

hill above by an evil demon who was terrorising the local people. But as it reached the Guru’s person, the rock softened like warm wax and stopped. The Guru kept meditating, unhurt and undisturbed, the rock taking a hollow imprint of his shoulders, head and back. The demon, taken aback and realising that he was powerless, fell at the feet of Guru Nanak and begged forgiveness. The locals have ever since worshiped the rock around which, in time, was built a Gurdwara revered by both the local Lamas and Sikh sangat. This is located along on the main highway from Kargil to Leh with hundreds of trucks and army



Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh, bordering Tibet

the river Indus, Guru Nanak reached Upshi and then traversing a distance of 30 kms reached Kiari on the Indus, where people still worship ‘Guru Nanak Lama’. Guru Nanak went on to Gompa Hemas, the largest monastery of Ladakh which is 40 kilometres from Leh.

Vividly commemorating the visit of Guru Nanak to this region is the *Pathar Sahib* Gurdwara, about twenty five kms from Leh, on the highway towards Kargil and at a height of 12,000 ft. As per legend, during Guru Nanak’s meditation at the place, a massive boulder was rolled down towards him from the



Gurdwara Pathar Sahib at Nemu on the road from Leh to Kargil



Side impression of Guru Nank Dev ji on the rock at Pathar Sahib Gurdwara in Ladakh

vehicles driving past the Gurdwara every day, the occupants paying obeisance and partaking of

langar managed by Sikh soldiers of the Army. Guru Nanak is called 'Nanak Lama' or 'Guru Gompka Maharaj' by the local populace.

From Khalatse, on the main road from Leh, Guru Nanak went towards Skardu in Gilgit-Baltistan where a Gurdwara commemorates his visit and is known as 'Nanak Peer'. Skardu and Kargil were linked by an old route which Guru Nanak adopted and going past snow bound peaks more than 17,000 feet high, via Dras and Baltal, continued via the Zojila Pass to reach the holy Hindu shrines at Amarnath. From Amarnath, he reached Pahalgam where the Gurdwara commemorates the Guru's visit (centuries later, a foundation stone was laid here by Akali Kaur Singh Nihang).

Guru Nanak thereafter went to Mattan and after a few weeks there, reached Anantnag, which too has historic Gurdwaras commemorating his visit. Guru Nanak came to Srinagar and had religious discussions with Shivites on Shankracharya Hill and thereafter visited Harmukh Ganga. Guru Nanak met a Sanskrit scholar Braham Das at Mattan near the Martand temple. The pandit who was renowned for his learning, soon bowed before the divine knowledge of Guru Nanak and became his great devotee.

Bhai Vir Singh in his work *Guru Nanak Chamatkar Part II* has written about the visit of Guru Nanak to Mattan. A Muslim Fakir Kamal and the Pandit Braham Das, though from different faiths, were friends and often met to discuss aspects of their beliefs. However, despite the penances



Gurdwara Guru Nanak Charan Kamal at Kargil



Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Charan Asthan at Beerwa

and fasts carried out by them, they did not get any redemption. Pandit Braham Das (who was an idol worshiper) spent most time in meditation and reading of scriptures. At this time, Kamal enquired as to why Jumma, the local milkman, had not served them for many days and Braham Das explained that a saint was visiting a nearby forest and related the story of Jummu's earlier insulting behavior and subsequent change of his life after meeting the Saint.



Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji at Mattan

People soon thronged the forest to have darshan of the Saint as eventually did Kamal and Braham Das. Kamal found solace, but Pandit Braham Das, who was very arrogant about of his knowledge finally met Guru Nanak, had long discourses on how to find the true Lord. Guru Nanak's sermon to Kamal and Braham Das was

*The Handsome Lord is One.
His door is One.
The way to reach him is One.
Recite the Lord's Name with love
Let us also go on that only one way.
Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru*



View of Bej Behara

Guru Sahib visited Bej Behara and Awantipura, where a Gurdwara has been built. Guru Nanak continued towards Srinagar and visited the historic Shankaracharya temple, located on a hill top, constructed in 2664 OE (old era). At this temple, Guru Nanak met shaivites and a great saint of Kashmir Shaivism and held religious discussions. Later on, during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, some devoted Sikhs raised a platform near the Shankaracharya temple and engraved on stone the Guru's visit in Punjabi and Persian, but during the reign of Dogra Raja Partap Singh (1905-1908) the raised platform and engraved slates were removed.

Guru Nanak meditated under a Chinar tree as later did his son Baba Sri Chand, who preached Sikhism under this same Chinar tree, this becoming to be known as 'Chinar Baba Sri Chand'.



Chinar trees on the outskirts of Srinagar

Guru Nanak thereafter crossed the Jhelum river and rested near Hariparbat Hill, where Sharika Devi shrine was located. After spending some weeks in Srinagar, the Guru continued to the Wular lake the largest fresh water body in the world, through which the river Jhelum flows. On banks of this lake is Bandipura which the Guru visited and

then continued along the river Jhelum, touching Kamraz, resting near Koti Tirath Baramulla and then on to Uri Kohala.

Continuing his Udassi, Guru Nanak left the Kashmir Valley for Jammu over the Pir Panjal range, crossing the Banihal thereafter visiting Kishtawar, Bhadarwah and Thatthari as also Vaishnodevi (Garbh Yoni). From Jammu he travelled to Purmandal (Chhota Kashi) before proceeding to Tila Bal Gudai and crossing the Jhelum and Chenab rivers, reached Sialkot where Gurdwara Ber Sahib was built. Guru Nanak then visited Pasrur and Saidpur before finally returning to Talwandi in the Punjab.

Macauliffe in his work *The Sikh Religion* has given an account of Guru Nanak's visit to Kashmir. His interaction with Pandit Braham Das at Mattan Sahib while seated on a raised platform in the middle of a pond, has been elaborated upon at length. The Pandit posed numerous questions to Guru Nanak and, overwhelmed by the Gurbani being recited, fell at his feet and embraced Sikhism.



Wular has one of the world's largest fresh water lakes

Pandit Braham Das asked Guru Nanak about what existed before creation and the Guru recited :

For endless ages, there was only utter darkness.

There was no Earth or sky; there was only His Command. There was no day or night, no Moon nor Sun; God sat in primal and profound meditative position. There were no sources of speech or food, no air or water. There was no creation or destruction, no birth nor death.

There were no continents, regions, seven oceans, rivers nor flowing water. There were no heavenly realms, Earth nor nether regions of the underworld. There was no destruction nor time. There was no hell nor heaven, no birth nor death, no cycle of reincarnation.

There was no Brahma, Vishnu nor Shiva. No one was seen, except the One Lord. There was no female nor male, no social class nor caste to be born into; no one experienced pain or pleasure. There were no people of celibacy or charity; no one lived in the forests.

There were no saints nor seekers of living in peace. There were no yogis, no wandering pilgrims, no religious robes; no one called himself the master. There was no chanting nor meditation, no self-discipline, fasting or worship. No one spoke or talked in duality. He Himself created and rejoiced; He Himself valued everything.

There was no purification, no self-restraint, no rosary beads. There were no Gopis, no Krishna, no cows nor cowherds. There were no tantras, no mantras and no hypocrisy; no one played the flute. There was no karma, no dharma, no buzzing fly of Maya. Social class and birth were not seen with any eyes.

There was no emotional attachment, no death inscribed upon the forehead; no one meditated on anything. There was no slander, no seed, no soul and no life. There was no Gorakh and no Maachhindra.

There was no spiritual wisdom nor meditation, no ancestry nor creation, no reckoning of accounts. There were no castes or social classes, no religious robes, no Brahmin or Kh'shaatriya. There were no demi-gods nor temples, no cows nor Gaayatri prayer. There were no burnt offerings, no ceremonial feasts, no cleansing rituals at sacred shrines of pilgrimage; no one worshipped in adoration.

There were no Muslims, there was no Qazi. There was no Shaykh, nor pilgrims to Mecca.



Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji at Chand Nagar, Jammu

There was no king and no worldly egotism; no one spoke of himself. There was no love or devotion, no Shiva, no energy nor matter. There were no friends nor companions, no semen nor blood. He Himself has been the banker, and He Himself has been the merchant.

There were no Vedas, Korans nor Bibles, no Simritees or Shaastras. There was no recitation of the Puraanas, no sunrise nor sunset. The Unfathomable Lord Himself was the speaker and the preacher; the unseen Lord Himself saw everything. When He so willed, He created the world. Without any supporting power, He sustained the Universe. He created Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva; He fostered enticement and attachment to Maya.

Rare is the person who listens to the word of the Guru's Shabad. He created the creation, and watches over it; His command is over all. He formed the planets, solar systems, nether regions and brought what was hidden to manifestation. No one knows His limits.

This understanding comes from the perfect Guru. O' Nanak, those who are attuned to the Truth are wonderstruck; singing His glorious praises, they are filled with wonder.

Chhevin Patshahi in the Vale of Kashmir



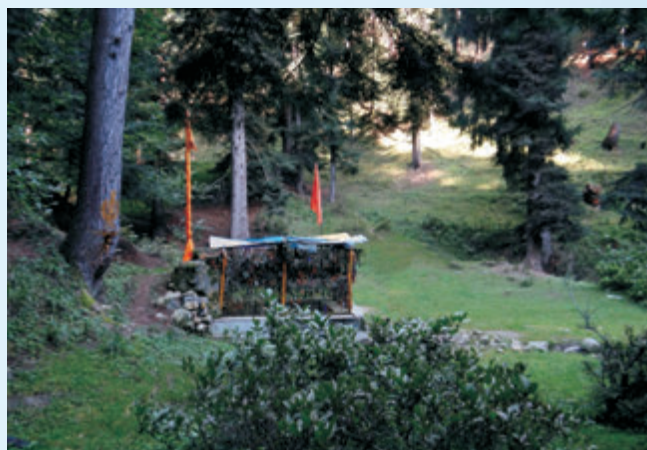
Our Sixth Guru, Chhevin Patshahi, Guru Har Gobind Sahib came to Kashmir about a century after Guru Nanak and there are scores of Gurdwaras in the valley, sacred to his visit. In fact, the very institution of Gurdwara, the Sikh centre of piety and prayer is an abiding legacy of Guru Har Gobind.

Just eleven years old when his father, the saintly Guru Arjan Dev was cruelly martyred by the Mughals, young Har Gobind made it be known that hereafter, the Sikhs would directly take on the challenge of oppression and stoutly fight against injustice. Symbolically, he wore two swords around his waist, one representing spiritual power (*peeri*) and the other temporal (*meeri*), which ever since have been fundamental to the Sikh faith. He trained men in the profession of arms, spending time in martial pursuits

and hunting, built Lohgarh ('fort of steel') near Amritsar and on other side of the Harimandir Sahib, the Akal Takht ('Timeless Throne'). Chhevin Patshahi not only restored the dharamsalas but provided the Sikhs with their banner (*Nishaan Sahib*) and kettledrum (*Nagaara*).

Alarmed at this 'challenge', Mughal Emperor Jahangir ordered Har Gobind's arrest and subsequent confinement at the Gwalior Fort. The story of his release, along with 52 Hindu Chieftains also incarcerated by the Mughals has become legendary and is celebrated coincidental with Diwali as *Bandi Thod Diwas*. Jahangir was certainly also sobered by the increasing obeisance of many Sikh disciples along the walls of the Gwalior fort and soon not only released the Guru but is said to have requested his company on the planned visit to Kashmir. This is said to have taken place in 1620, the journey commencing from Sialkot with the party then reaching Mirpur via Wazirabad.

At Mirpur, large numbers had darshan of Guru Har Gobind Sahib and many embraced Sikhism, including Bhai Jhanda, Bhimba Brahman, Changarh of village Kane, Bhai Moola of Sumani and many others.



'Gursar' (Yarwan Forest) where Guru Hargobind Sahib discovered water for Emperor Jahangir



Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi at Rajouri

Guru Har Gobind travelled on to Chaparnalla near Silakot and enquired from a Brahmin whom he casually met, as to where he could find some water to drink and bathe in. The Brahmin replied that the area was rocky and water was scant. Guru Har Gobind then drove his spear into the ground and water gushed out. The Sarovar here is now known as 'Gursar'.

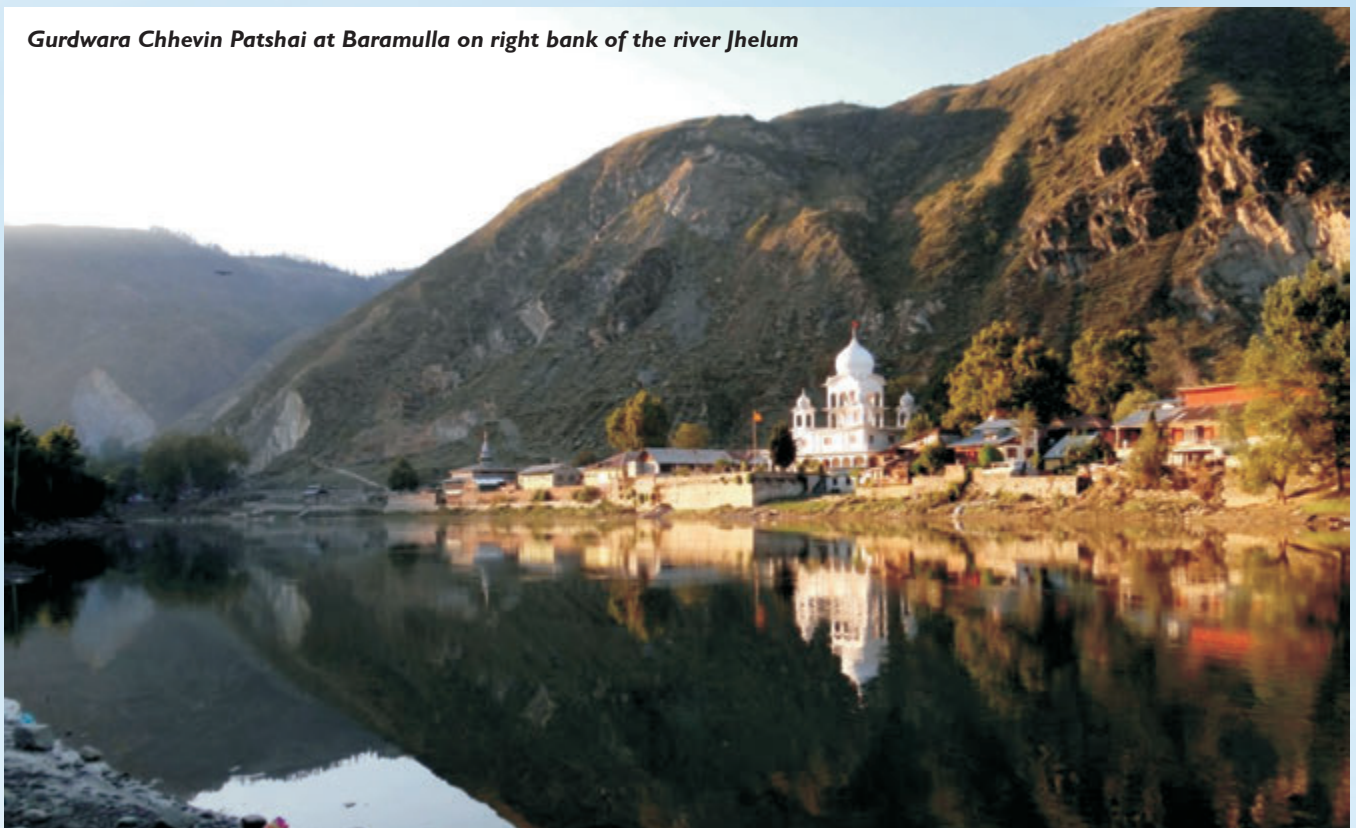
According to Zulafkar Ardistani (Mohsan Fani), from Mirpur the Guru went to Rajouri via Poonch and then Shaupian, from where he continued to the valley, reached Srinagar, camping for some time at Shalimar Bagh, while Emperor Jahangir was in Nishant Bagh. His Empress Noor Jahan came for blessings to Guru



Gurdwara Nangali Sahib at Poonch

Har Gobind at Shalimar. During the Guru's stay in Kashmir, many people embraced Sikhism. Guru Sahib stayed for some days near Hariparbat Hill where Mata Bhag Bhari had lived. Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi at Kathi Darwaza commemorates the Guru's visit.

From Srinagar, the Guru went to Baramulla, on banks of the river Jhelum near Kot-Tirath, where Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi is now situated. Guru Sahib visited Kalimpura (Singhpura) and other villages in the area which have since then become the abode of Kashmiri Sikhs.



Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi at Baramulla on right bank of the river Jhelum

Guru Har Gobind continued to Uri, then reached Muzaffarabad, where a number of Gurdwaras were built in commemoration. A mile or so before Uri is the historic Gurdwara Peeran Peelan situated on the right bank of river Jhelum. After this the Guru went to Kathie, Khanda and Niluchi. At these locations Gurdwaras were built but after October 1947, these remain in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and their state is unknown. The Guru stayed in Kashmir for three months and then went on to Panja Sahib (Hasan Abdal) enroute to Hazara.



Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai at Peeran Peelan on the road to Uri

Another account of Guru Har Gobind's travel to Kashmir is by Bhai Santokh Singh 'Kavi Churamani': Emperor Jahangir having understood the realities of life, gave much respect to Guru Har Gobind : not only did he release the Guru from imprisonment at Gwalior Fort but, as per the Guru's wishes, also that of 52 Hindu Rajas in captivity.

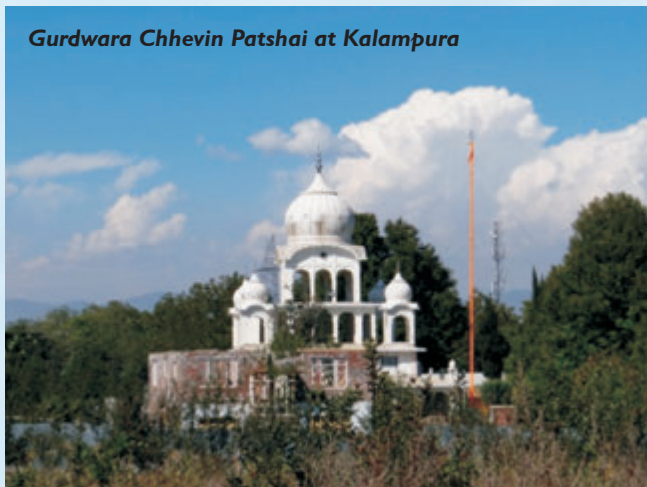
There were many pious Sikhs in Kashmir, including Madho Das, Mata Bhag Bhari and her son Sewa Das who had been carrying out *prachar*. After Guru Nanak, no Guru had visited Kashmir but Mata Bhag Bhari kept her faith and the hope that she would be blessed by Guru Har Gobind ji some day. The aged Mata Bhag Bhari had woven a dress (*chola*) for Guruji, but knew that it was not possible for her to go to Amritsar for Darshan of Guru ji.

Guru Har Gobind Sahib having learnt about the devotion of Sewa Das as also Mata Bhag Bhari's ardent wishes, planned to visit Kashmir. It has been recorded in the book *Dasna Karo Kamna Puran, Heray Prem Ko Pohanchi Turan*, that Guru ji commenced his journey from Chapraharpur (village near Sialkot) and Rehmsa village (where Gurdwara Tali Sahib and Gurdwara Gursar were built). From Chapraharpur, Guru ji travelled to Galoti, Wazirabad and reached Mirpur (Gurdwara Kotha Sahib). From here, he continued over the mountains to reach Katu Shah's place where he held religious discourses and thereafter continued to Srinagar (Kathi Darwaza) where Mata Bhag Bhari was staying. She had become very frail and her eye sight had also deteriorated. The Guru sprinkled some *jal* on her eyes and asked her for the *chola* she had woven for him. Mata Bhag Bhari was overjoyed and also regained her eye sight. Whilst Guru Har Gobind was in Srinagar, Mata Bhag Bhari passed away and Guru ji carried out her last rites. Guru ji blessed Sewa Das and encouraged him to continue preaching Sikhism.

Whilst Guru Har Gobind was at Kathi Darwaza, some Sikhs brought fruits and pure honey for Guruji at Shadimarg but he had already left for Srinagar. The Sikhs decided to stay overnight at the residence of Katu Shah, who treated them with hospitality. As the Sikhs were departing the next morning, he enquired as to what they were carrying: "some honey and fruits for the Guru" and Katu Shah requested for some, but the Sikhs declined as "this was first to be offered to Guru ji." When the Sikhs met Guru Har Gobind at Kathi Darwaza and offered the honey, they were dismayed to find worms in it.

Guru ji told them that this was the consequence of not having given this to his devoted Sikh Katu Shah, and advised them to go back. When they did, they were amazed that the honey was now pure. Guru ji's message was clear : there was no difference between Him and a Gurmukh Sikh.

Thereafter, Guru Har Gobind travelled to Baramulla, where he had religious discourse with the Sikhs there and people of other faiths. He stayed at Baramulla for some time and visited nearby places (Kalampura /Singhpura) for hunting. At Kalampura, the Guru had religious discussions with the Muslim Fakir Balol who apprised him about the scarcity of water in the area, which was then redressed. After spending some time in Baramulla, Guru Ji left for Muzaffarabad via Uri (Peeran Peelan, Dulanja).

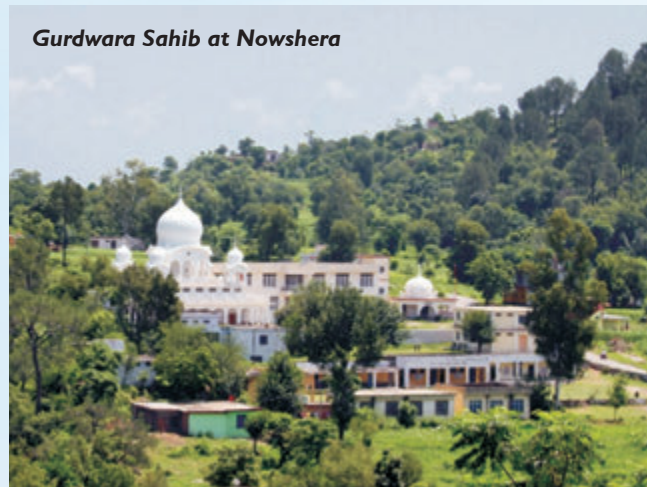


Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai at Kalampura

Another account of Guru Har Gobind's travel to Kashmir is by Giani Gyan Singh : along the journey, the Guru stayed in Chapraharpur, Ghanoti, Wazirabad and gave religious discourses to various people. On reaching Mirpur, he was greeted by Beeram Dutt Brahmin and others, inspiring them to become Sikhs. Thereafter, Guru ji went to village Kayan where one Jhangar also become a Sikh (the village Jhangar renamed after him). At the village of Beyram, Bhai Jhanda who had waited for many days to have darshan, was blessed by the Guru who asked him to preach Sikhism in that region.



Gurdwara Baba Beeram Shah at Jhangar



Gurdwara Sahib at Nowshera

From here Guru Har Gobind went to meet Katu Shah and then on to Srinagar (Kathi Darwaza) to the house of Mata Bhag Bhari whose complete faith and good will had brought him there. Guru ji was received by Sewa Das (son of Mata Bhag Bhari), whose *Dastar Bandi* was personally performed by Har Gobind Sahib.

Guru Har Rai Sahib

Guru Har Gobind Sahib was succeeded by Guru Har Rai Sahib, his grandson, as the Seventh Guru. Born at Kiratpur on 16 January 1630, he was a saintly person, immersed in the scriptures and although he did not compose any hymns himself, travelled extensively to spread the word of Guru Nanak and bring people to the Sikh fold.

The visit of Guru Har Rai Sahib to Jammu and Kashmir has been documented in the book *History of Sikh Gurus Retold* giving reference of Bhat Vahi Talaunda Jind. It has been documented that Guru Har Rai Sahib travelled to Ghalotian, Sialkot, Srinagar, Mattan (Martand), Tanda, Akhnur, Jammu, Ramgarh Khurd, Samba, Pathankot and finally back to Kiratpur (Anandpur Sahib).

The account of Guru Har Rai Sahib's visit to Jammu and Kashmir has also been covered in some detail by S Himat Singh in his book *Kashmir Layee Kurbani*. It is believed that during Guru Har Rai Sahib's visit to Srinagar, a small well was dug which is located at Pakhribal Srinagar (foothill of Hari Parbat). The reference of Guru Har Rai Sahib sending his emissaries to Kashmir is found in a number of books and accounts.

(Text and images from 'Historical Sikh Shrines of Jammu & Kashmir' by Commodore Dalbir Singh Sodhi, NM).

Composite Culture of Kashmir

Extracted from 'Kashmir and the Sikhs' by S. Anoop Singh Sodhi; 'An Outline of the History of Kashmir' by Prof. LN Dhar and other articles from the Web.



Once a major empire of epic proportions, Kashmir has continually reasserted its cultural identity throughout the centuries and has evolved as a distinct political, social and cultural entity. Holistically, the history of Kashmir is intertwined with the history of a far larger region, comprising many areas of Central Asia,

Afghanistan, India, Tajikistan, Tibet and China. Kashmir has developed a composite identity having been ruled by myriad dynasties and influenced by diverse cultures including those of Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, through the Chak Dynasty, Mughal era, Afghan rule, then as part of the Sikh Empire and after the Anglo-Sikh wars, the Dogras.



The ethereal beauty of Kashmir is exemplified by these Chinar trees on outskirts of Srinagar

Kashmir is amongst the world's oldest continuous major civilisations, with historical and urban settlements dating back to pre-Mahabharat era. According to the Mahabharata, the Kambojas ruled Kashmir during the epic period with a Republican system of government and they were succeeded by the Panchalas. Panjal is simply a distorted form of the Sanskrit tribal term *Panchala*. The Muslims prefixed the word 'Pir' to it in memory of Siddha Faqir and the name thereafter changed to Pir Panjal.

According to legend, Jammu was founded by Hindu King Raja Jambu Lochan in 400 BC. During one of his hunting campaigns he reached the Tawi River where he saw a goat and a lion drinking water at the same place. The king was impressed and decided to set up a town after his name, 'Jamboo'. With the passage of time, the name was corrupted and became 'Jammu'.

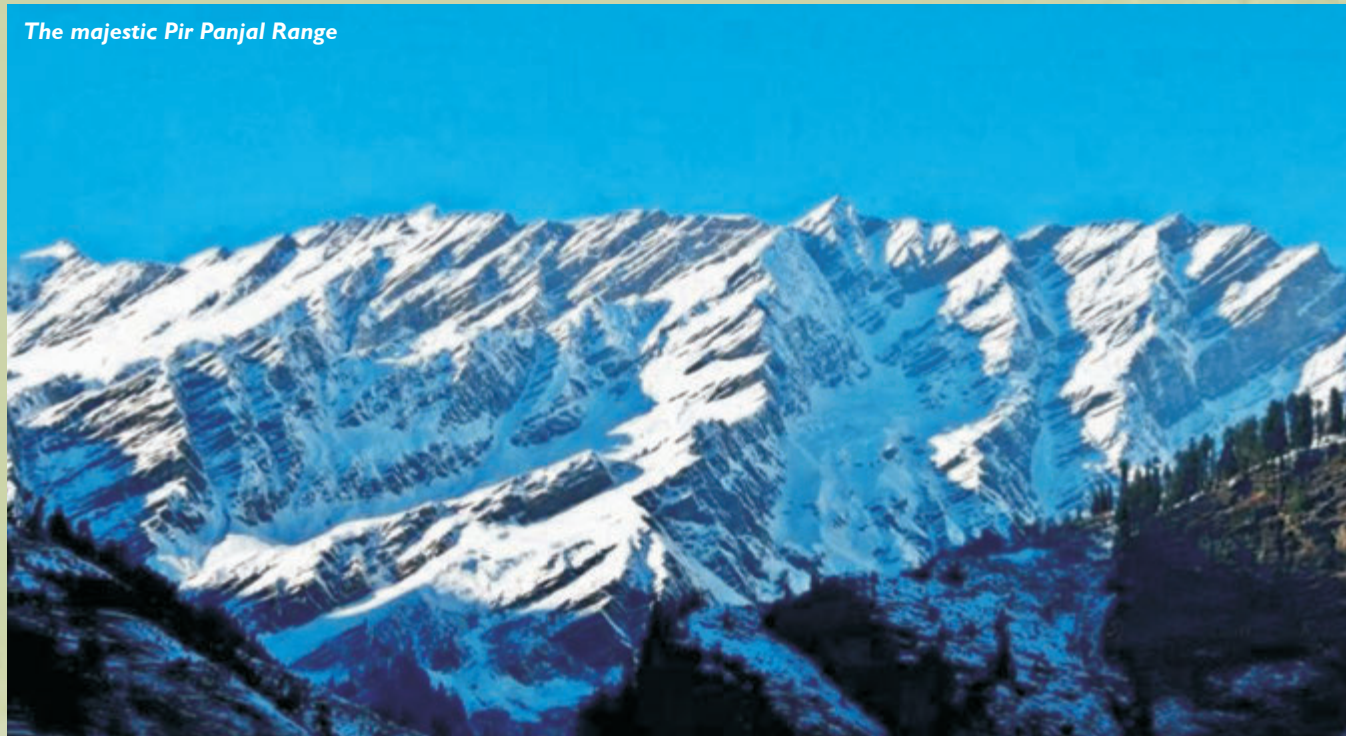
During the reign of Emperor Ashoka, Kashmir became a part of the Mauryan Empire and Buddhism was introduced in the area. During this period, many stupas, some shrines dedicated to Shiva, and the city of Srinagari (Srinagar) were built. The Chinese explorer Hien-Tsang mentions the arrival of 500 monks to Kashmir and Ashoka making a gift of the valley to Sangha. Many Buddhist scholars, missionaries and intellectuals permanently settled in

the valley. Naturally, in course of time, many people embraced Buddhism in the region.

At beginning of the 14th century a ferocious Mongol, Dulucha invaded the valley through the Zojila Pass, with an army of 60,000 men. Like Taimur in the Punjab and Delhi, Dulucha used sword and fire, destroyed towns and villages and slaughtered people in the thousands. His savage attack practically ended the Hindu rule in Kashmir. A weak and worthless man, Raja Sahadev was then the ruler. It was during his reign that three adventurers, Shah Mir from Swat (tribal territory) on the borders of Afganistan, Rinchin from Ladakh, and Lankar Chak from Dard territory near Gilgit came to Kashmir, and played a notable role in subsequent political history of the valley.

The last Hindu ruler of Kashmir was Udyan Dev. It was his chief Queen Kota Rani who practically governed the state, a very brave lady, shrewd and an able ruler. Though she tried her best to save her kingdom, odds were too heavy for her. The valley was again invaded by the Mongal and Turk invader Achalla, but the Queen defeated him and drove away all the foreign troops. In the confusion, Rinchin, the Ladakhi prince, whom the Hindu religious leaders of the time had refused to admit into their fold, organised an internal rising and seized the throne. Before his death, he embraced Islam. Finally another

The majestic Pir Panjal Range



up rising was led by Shah Mir, who defeated the queen at Jayapur (today Sumbal). The defeat upset her and seeing the indifference of the Hindu grandees and general public, she stabbed herself to death, because Shah Mir wanted to marry her. Her death in 1339 paved the way for the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir, which was established with Shahmir ascending the throne in 1342 AD under the title of Shams-ud-Din.

As the historian M. Hassan states, "of all the Sultans who sat on the throne of Kashmir, Zain-ul-Abidin was undoubtedly the greatest, who ushered in a period of nearly half a century of peace, prosperity, and benevolent rule for his people. He introduced many arts and crafts for which Kashmir has become famous ever since. He promoted learning, music and painting and made Kashmir the centre of great culture. He won the loyalty and affection of his subjects who called him Badshah or the great king."

Zain-ul-Abidin organised a huge army and then occupied the Punjab, Western Tibet, Ladakh and Balti regions, Kulu and Ohind (Hazara). The Sultan also maintained cordial and friendly relations with rulers of other countries. There was an exchange of embassies and gifts between the great Sultan and the rulers of Gwalior, Sindh, Bengal, Tibet, Gujarat, Malwa and Delhi. He appointed talented persons to high administrative posts, irrespective of caste or creed and took keen interest in agriculture and thanks to irrigation works, draining of marshes and reclamation of large areas for cultivation, Kashmir became self-sufficient in food, and rice was plentiful.

Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin's passing sounded the death knell of the Shah-Miri dynasty. It met the same fate that the Lohara dynasty had met after the death of Jaisimha in 1156. Ghazi Chak ascended the throne and tried his best to improve conditions in his empire, including the disturbed regions of Rajouri, Gilgit, Skardu and Kishtwar. His brother Hussain Chak took over rule in 1563 and encouraged Shia-Sunni relations, besides letting Hindus follow their religion without any hindrance. However, 1568 was marked with violent fights between the Shia and Sunni communities and the latter even went to Delhi to meet Emperor Akbar. Later, Ali Shah Chak ascended the throne, followed by Yusuf Shah Chak. Married to the famous Urdu poetess Zooni who later came to be known as Habba Khatoon, Yusuf Shah proved to be a poor ruler and was eventually imprisoned by

Akbar's forces. Yakub Shah Chak ascended the throne thereafter but soon had to accept supremacy of the Mughals in the kingdom.

The Chak rule began in Kashmir in 1561 and lasted till 1587, when Akbar, the great Mughal Emperor conquered Kashmir. The Mughals remained in power here from 1587 to 1752 and the people of this pristine valley enjoyed comparative peace and an orderly government. It was in 1579 that Mughal emperor Akbar visited Kashmir and some eighty thousand Kashmiris were entertained by Akbar at Id-Gah. The great emperor visited the valley three times accompanied by his royal entourage of noblemen and army generals.

Subsequently, the valley's fame and tales of its immense natural beauty spread throughout the country and large numbers of people started to visit, but it was actually during Jahangir's reign that the beauty of the state attracted thousands of visitors to Kashmir. The emperor visited the state thirteen times and wherever he found a hill rolling down gently to a spring or a grove of majestic Chinar trees or a beautiful lake, he utilised the place for planting a pleasure garden. Shalimar and Nishat gardens on the banks of Dal Lake, besides the gardens at Achale and Verinag are living testimonies of his affinity towards nature. His queen Noorjahan was equally enamoured by the beauty of Kashmir. Their last visit to the valley was in 1627 but he passed away shortly thereafter and Shah Jahan assumed the throne.

Thanks to the long and peaceful rule of the three Mughal Kings, people now began to visit Kashmir to regain their health or attain spiritual salvation. Shah Jahan laid the garden of Chashmashai, the sulphur pond renowned for its healing qualities. Aurangzeb took over the throne in 1658 following the devastating floods and famine that plagued the valley during that time. His reign was marked by revolts and rebellions in several parts of the country. Many states became independent under their subedars and a reign of disorder spread. Mughal Governors such as Iftkar Khan began to loot and plunder the people and at the same time they ruthlessly started a policy of religious bigotry and fanaticism. Harassed and distressed, a delegation of Kashmiri Pandits under Kirpa Ram's leadership visited Anandpur Sahib and apprised Guru Tegh Bahadur about the atrocities being committed on them. Guru Tegh Bahadur protested against



Kashmiri Pandits seeking help from Guru Tegh Bahadur

the treatment meted out to Kashmiri Pandits and eventually sacrificed his life for the cause.

Bahadur Shah took over the rule of Kashmir after Aurangzeb's demise in 1707. Meanwhile, in other parts of the country, Rajputs, Marathas and Banda Singh Bahadur had revolted against Mughal tyranny. Banda Bahadur captured Sirhind after defeating and killing Wazir Khan but since he was unable to devote any attention towards Kashmir, appointed Jaffar Khan as the Governor. The reign of terror and mayhem continued through the governorships of Ibrahim Khan, Arif Khan and Inayat Ula Khan. In 1712, Inayat Ula Khan assumed the throne after Bahadur Shah, who in turn was overthrown by Farrukhsiyar. Banda Bahadur engaged Farrukhsiyar in battles in the Punjab and no one had much time to devote for welfare of the local populace. Pandits were forced to convert to Islam, were prohibited from wearing turbans and even riding a horse for a long distance during Muhammed Shah's reign, during which time eleven governors were changed.

There was absolute chaos in northern India after the invasion of Nadir Shah of Persia, with treasuries looted and worsening economic conditions. The people of Kashmir could no longer tolerate the misrule of Mughal satraps and accordingly, when Ahmad Shah Abdali of Kabul was at Lahore in 1752, two Kashmiri noblemen Mir Muquim Kant and Khwaja

Zahir Didmari, waited upon him at Lahore and apprised him of the pathetic conditions in Kashmir. In 1753, Ahmed Shah Abdali directed Abdula Khan Ishik Aqasi to invade Kashmir, thereby marking the end of Mughal rule in the state.

Afghan Rule: 1752-1819

When Ahmad Shah, an independent warrior of Nadir Shah despatched a strong and a powerful Afghan army under the command of Abdullah Khan Ishik Aqasi to occupy the valley, the Mughal satrap offered strong resistance, but was defeated and the Afghan flag was flown on the ramparts of Akbar's town at Nogar. The rule of Mughals in Kashmir had come to

an end although it continued to exist in northern India, nominally upto 1857. Kashmir remained a dependency of Kabul rulers till 1819, over a period of 67 years.

The Pathan rule is recorded as the darkest period in history of the state: the rulers of Kabul were great despots and they ruled all the parts of their kingdom ruthlessly. The Kashmir nobleman had expected that Abdali would give them a good and a stable government, but the very first Afghan governor Abdullah Khan Aqasi commenced a reign of terror and tyranny. People were looted and indiscriminately killed and even petty Afghan soldiers began to amass wealth by the foulest means. The entire state went into gloom and despair, the magnificent valley virtually stripped of its prosperity and beauty and people could not even move on the streets for fear of anarchy.

Sukhjeevan Mal was appointed as Kashmir's Governor in 1754 and Khwaja Kizak was his deputy. However, when Ahmed Shah made huge financial demands from Sukhjeevan Mal to fund his various battles against the Marathas and the Sikhs, the local populace revolted under Abdul Hassan Bandey and refused to pay for further warfare. And when the local Kashmiris were united in forcing Khwaja Kizak to leave Kashmir, this was taken as an insult by Abdali, who eventually ordered Abdullah Khan Ishik Aqasi to attack Kashmir. A fierce battle ensued at Baramulla in which the Afghans lost and Sukhjeevan Mal



Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Emperor of the Punjab

again proclaimed himself as ruler of Kashmir. Despite introducing fresh reforms for the welfare of the Kashmiris, a massive famine struck but even then, Mal continued to the aid of the hapless populace leaving Abdali with no choice except offering truce through his trusted aide, Mir Muquim Kanth.

However, Mir Kanth soon created differences between Mal and his aide and friend Abdul Hassan Bandey and by the time the former saw through the conspiracy, Abdul Hassan had been badly affected. Meanwhile, Mal attacked Rajouri, Bimber and Sialkot in 1758 but lost the battles Sukhjeevan Mal thereupon inducted a learned Hindu Mahanand as his advisor and encouraged several Hindus, Punjabi Brahmins and Sikhs from the Frontier, Hazara and Pakhli areas to settle in Kashmir. He augmented his forces and created permanent vigilance posts along the vulnerable borders.

About this time, Abdali re-entered the Punjab and also sent thousands of soldiers to attack Kashmir under Noor-ud-din Bamzai. Unfortunately, though Kashmiri soldiers were prepared, the Muslims

amongst them chose to side with Afghan forces and Sukhjeevan Mal was killed in battle (*nothing has changed: the same perfidy was to take place 200 years later*). Noor-ud-din Bamzai handed over the state to Buland Shah after ruling for a year but by then, situation in the valley had deteriorated even further owing to Shia-Sunni fighting. This followed a phase of shuffling of governors when, in 1793, Ahmed Shah passed away and his son Taimur succeeded him. Again his ascension to the throne was at a strife-stricken period with Shia-Sunni clashes at their peak, war against the Sikhs in Punjab and political unrest throughout his kingdom.

All this while, as the Sikhs under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh were getting powerful in the Punjab, atrocities on Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley were on the rise. Only weak and worthless Amirs governed Kabul after the death of Abdali and they would either be quickly deposed or assassinated. Naturally accession of every new Amir would mean appointment of a new Subedar in Kashmir and this uncertainty made these rapacious governors ruthless, and they were merciless towards the Kashmiri populace. As many as twenty eight Durrani Subedars governed Kashmir during these sixty seven years. Finally Birbal Dhar, amongst the last subedars of Kashmir went to Lahore to seek Maharaja Ranjit Singh's help, who then mounted an invasion of the region in 1819 and brought it under his Kingdom.

A deputation of Kashmiris led by Pandit Birbal Dhar, and his son Pandit Rajakak Dhar, had gone to Lahore and fervently requested Maharaja Ranjit Singh to "save" Kashmir. Three prominent Muslims helped Pandit Birbal Dhar in his escape from the valley: Abdul Qadoos Gojwari, Mallick Zulfiqar and Malik Kamgar. In 1819, 30,000 soliders of Maharaja Ranjit Singh went into Kashmir, defeated the Pathans and the state became a part of Ranjit Singh's empire. Maharaja Ranjit Singh bestowed honours on the Dhar family and the capital Lahore was illuminated for three days.

Sikh rule lasted for three decades and during this period 10 Governors administered the country of whom the last two were Muslims. "It must have been an intense relief to all communities in Kashmir to see the downfall of the evil rule of Pathans and to none was the relief greater than to the peasants who had been cruelly fleeced by the rapacious rulers of Kabul," wrote historians.

Sikh religious prachaar in Jammu and Kashmir

After the visit of Guru Nanak to Jammu and Kashmir, and of Guru Har Gobind and Gur Hari Rai Sahib to the region a century later, Sikhism spread in the area as preachers spread the word. These learned Sikhs included Bhai Madhudas, Mata Bhag Bhari, Bhai Gadhyia, Bhai Bano and Bhai Pheroo who attracted many Hindus of the region to Guru Nanak's philosophy and religion. These preachers also looked after various places connected with the visits of Guru Nanak and Guru Har Gobind Sahib who had carried out discourses with learned people of various faiths.

Guru Gobind Singh ji had baptised Baba Pheroo in 1699, bestowed him with the name of Pheroo Singh and inspired him to propagate the philosophy of Sikhism in the North Western parts of the country including Poonch and Kashmir. Bhai Pheroo Singh set up his Dera (headquarters) in Rajoieay (Hazara), and travelled extensively to Peshawar, Kandahar, Bulkh, Chach, Hazara, Pakhli, Attock, Poonch, Muzzaffarabad, and thence throughout the Kashmir valley.

In 1711, Bhai Pheroo Singh handed over this responsibility, and *gaddi*, to Bhai Punjab Singh who moved his headquarters from Hazara to Chatter Kalaas near Muzzafarabad. He preached to the peoples living in the mountains and



Artist's rendering of Bhai Pheroo ji as displayed in Gurdwara Nangali Sahib

attracted many Hindus to the Sikh fold even as they discarded, casteism and superstitions. Bhai Punjab Singh visited Mattan near Srinagar when atrocities were being inflicted upon Kashmiri Pandits, many of

whom then became Sikhs. Towards the later part of his life, he handed over this task and responsibility to Bhai Rocha Singh in 1736. Guru Gobind Singh had also baptised Bhai Rocha Singh at Sabo Talwandi (now Damdama Sahib). Bhai Rocha Singh was of military disposition, maintained arms and exercised with these. He shifted his headquarters from Chhatter Kalaas to Rawalakote to facilitate touring in the surrounding areas. During this time, in 1753 the Afghans invaded Kashmir and brought the region under their control.

Khatri Sukhjivan Mal soon revolted against the Afghan rule and energised Sikhs and Brahmins from

the preaching of Bhai Rocha Singh, many of them become Sikhs. During his mission to preach Sikhism, Bhai Rocha Singh and his followers arrived at Kashmir via Pir Kanthi and Dard Kot, and on his way to Kamraz, battled Afghan forces near Jamazpura and defeated them.

Bhai Rocha Singh remained in deep meditation in the jungles of village Shalkot for a long time where a beautiful Gurdwara exists today. Because of his saintly and spiritual life, he was called Thakur Sant Bhai Rocha Singh who at the age of 115 years in 1803 handed over the mantle to Bhai Mela Singh. Bhai Mela Singh shifted his headquarters from Rawalakote



S. Anoop Singh with Baba Harbans Singh Ji in Kashmir

various places including Pakhli, Hazara and Pothar to come to Kashmir and fight the Afghans. Their castes included those of Rism, Dutta, Sudan, Sasan, Lao, Kala, Reen Mehta, Bali and others: following

to Nangali Sahib in Poonch, then widely travelled to preach Sikhism and covered areas such as Shalkot, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Mendhar and others. Bhai Mela Singh continued to preach in and around Poonch

and also visited Shalkot where he built a small *kutia* where Bhai Rocha Singh had once meditated.

The Gaddi continues to function from Nangali Sahib and the preachers of this mission directed by Guru Gobind Singh ji, are :

<i>Sant Bhai Pheroo Singh</i>	(1640-1711)
<i>Sant Bhai Punjab Singh</i>	(1672-1736)
<i>Sant Bhai Rocha Singh</i>	(1688-1803)
<i>Sant Bhai Mela Singh</i>	(1783-1854)
<i>Sant Bhai Manna Singh</i>	(1791-1870)
<i>Sant Bhai Ratan Singh</i>	(1816-1901)
<i>Sant Bhai Ratan Singh</i>	(1828-1889)
<i>Sant Bhai Mangal Singh</i>	(1844-1877)
<i>Sant Bhai Avtar Singh</i>	(1865-1892)
<i>Sant Bhai Mohar Singh</i>	(1878-1919)
<i>Sant Bhai Mangal Singh</i>	(1880-1947)
<i>Mahant Bachatar Singh</i>	(1918-1991)
<i>Mahant Manjit Singh</i>	(1954 -)

In 1799, the Nishaan Sahib was hoisted by Ranjit Singh at his capital in Lahore. With establishment of the Sikh kingdom, the movement of preaching Sikhism in Kashmir by Bhai Mela Singh also gathered momentum. Many Hindus who had come to Kashmir for trade also embraced Sikhism as did many Kashmir Pandits (Bhai Almat, Madho Dhar, Tarloknath Raina being some of those prominent). Members of the Tantrian community and warrior caste Hindus became 'tantrey' Muslims, whilst others adopted Sikhism.

Sevadars Bhai Punjab Singh, Bhai Phantoo Singh and Bhai Tara Singh began their *prachaar sewa* from Santpura Daney in the mountains and were followed by Bhai Khushal Singh, Bhai Gurdit Singh, and Sant Gurbaksh Singh. Thereafter Sevadars of Nangali Sahib, Sant Bhai Joga Singh, Bhai Diya Singh, Bhai Narain Singh and Bhai Gurdit Singh were appointed as head of *Gufa Waley Santa De Deray* at Muzaffarabad for prachar of Sikhism in various areas. Amongst other Sants were Sant Bhai Hakekat Singh, Bhai Prem Singh, Bhai Kishan Singh and Bhai Bahadur Singh and it is largely attributed to them that Sikhism spread in Jammu and Kashmir. Mahant Manjit Singh in addition to prachar, also established various schools and colleges for the benefit of all Kashmiris. Sant Gurbaksh Singh of village Dana, near Muzaffarabad began prachar in the Jammu region, which is presently being carried out by Tejwant Singh.

Panth Ratan Jathedar Baba Harbans Singh was born in 1920 in the village Noorpur Thal, near

Sargodha in western Punjab. His father Assa Singh and mother Dharam Kaur had named him Hari Singh but as narrated by Baba ji himself, the fingers of his hands at birth were slightly twisted. During Kar Sewa at Harmandar Sahib in 1923, his elders gave the young Hari Singh the *Kar Sewa Dhoor* from Harmandar Sahib. Miraculously, his fingers soon began to straighten out and finally became normal. He believes that this was the blessing of Guru Ram Das.

After his schooling he joined the army during the Second World War and left after it was over. Whilst Kar Sewa by Sant Baba Gurmukh Singh was in progress at the sarovar of Nankana Sahib, Hari Singh happened to be in the area and requested that he be allowed to carry out Kar Sewa. Giving his name as Hari Singh, Baba Gurmukh Singh then stated that "*Aap tou Hari key Bans ho*". Thereafter, Baba Ji was to be known as Harbans Singh.

At Nankana Sahib, he also met with many other Kar Sewaks and carried out various duties given by these saintly people. After the partition of India in 1947, he shifted to Khadoor Sahib to carry out Sewa under Baba Jeevan Singh. In 1952, he also carried out Sewa under Baba Jeevan Singh and Baba Daleep Singh at Gangsar Jeyto. In 1956, Baba ji also participated in Kar Sewa at Kurukshetra.

In 1963, Baba Jeevan Singh and Baba Daleep Singh visited Hazoor Sahib and began work on building roads and bridges, to make the places accessible for the Sangat. Baba Harbans Singh was assigned the duty of overseeing Kar Sewa for construction of Gurdwaras and took with him Baba Fauja Singh and Baba Jagir Singh. After Kar Sewa at Hazoor Sahib, Baba Harbans Singh carried out Sewa at Tarn Taran Sahib, Babek Sar, Ramsar, Kolsar as well as at Darbar Sahib Amritsar.

After Baba Jeevan Singh passed away in October 1974, Baba Harbans Singh, along with his three associates (Baba Karnail Singh, Baba Fauja Singh and Baba Jagir Singh) continued Kar Sewa at various historical places. Baba Harbans Singh moved to Bangla Sahib at New Delhi in 1976 and commenced Kar Sewa of the Sarovar and of many other historical Gurdwaras in and around Delhi.

In 1982, Sardar Anoop Singh of Baramulla became President of the District Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee there. In the same year, an electric short circuit caused the fire which damaged the Gurdwara



Gurdwara Sant Baba Natha Singh at Didarpura, 20 kms north of Baramulla

building. S. Buta Singh, then Union Minister, visited Baramulla in 1983 and suggested to the local Sikhs that they could approach Baba Harbans Singh (Kar Sewa Wale) at Delhi and seek his advice for reconstruction of the Gurdwara. S Anoop Singh, along with some members of the Committee visited Delhi and requested Bakshi Joginder Singh for an audience concerning the reconstruction of Gurdwara Chatti Patshahi at Baramulla. However, Baba Harbans Singhji then said *"Haley Samaan Naheen Aaya."*

Returning to Baramulla, S. Anoop Singh kept constant touch with Bakshi Joginder Singh, while others visited Delhi from time to time. It was at the time when the beautiful Hazatbal shrine in Srinagar was in the news that S. Anoop Singh once again visited Delhi and met with Bakshi Joginder Singh who was keen to learn more about Gurdwaras in Kashmir. S. Anoop Singh convinced him that the historical Sikh Gurdwaras in Kashmir too were at the most beautiful of locations.

They met Baba Harbans Singhji once more and requested him to visit Baramulla who, after giving thought, said *"Chalo bana deangey."* Thus began Kar Sewa for reconstruction of historical Sikh Gurdwaras in Kashmir.

Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai Baramulla was the first. Much impressed by the great enthusiasm of the Sikhs of Kashmir, Baba Harbans Singhji on the request of the Kashmiri Sangat started reconstruction of other historical gurdwaras, despite turbulent conditions in the valley. Muslims of the Kashmir valley gave wholehearted support to Baba Harbans Singhji at the Kar Sewa. There was considerable interaction between the community and Baba Harbans Singhji who helped many young Sikh students in getting admissions at various colleges in India outside Kashmir.

In recent years, Baba Jasbir Singh has supervised Kar Sewa construction of Gurdwaras in very noble manner. S Gurcharan Singh Saraf (then president of District Parbandhak Committee, Srinagar), Baba Sant Singh, S. Tarlochan Singh Wazir (ex. MLC), S. Attar Singh, S. Gurcharan Singh and others from Jammu have played an important part in the construction of historical Gurdwaras in and around Srinagar as also Jammu.

The Kar Sewa of Baba Harbans Singh for rebuilding of historical Sikh shrines and associated infrastructure has been immense. For his contribution to the Sikh Panth, Babaji was honoured with the title of *Panth Ratan*.

Unfurling the Nishaan

Kashmir as part of the Sikh Empire (1819-1849)



Extracts from 'Hari Singh Nalwa: Champion of the Khalsaji' by Dr. Vanit Nalwa

In 1752, Ahmed Shah Durrani had established his control over Kashmir and made it part of the Afghan Empire. Following their partially successful joint-venture in the company of the Afghans in 1813, the Sikhs made a premature attempt in the following year to take Kashmir. On that occasion, Diwan Ram Dayal, grandson of the celebrated Mohkam Chand, known for his "vigilance and smartness in the art of soldiery", led the Sikh Army. Jamadar Khushal Singh commanded the van, while Hari Singh Nalwa and Nihal Singh Attariwala brought up the rear. The early onset of the monsoon, a scarcity of grain and the treacherous conduct of their allies – the Rajas of Rajouri and Poonch – all contributed to an abortive expedition.

Kanwar Kharak Singh's *munshi* (office secretary) Jiwan Mal, was to some extent held responsible for the catastrophe. He was unsuccessful in his attempt to cross the Pir Panjal because of his failure to

co-ordinate with the others. When he was killed, Azim Khan, the Afghan Governor of Kashmir, on the advice of Agar Khan of Rajauri and Rohilla Khan of Poonch, spread a rumour that Ranjit Singh's advance troops had been defeated. The report roused the peasantry who harassed the Sikh Army so much that they were obliged to return to Lahore. On their return, the Sikhs were attacked and plundered by the Rajas through whose territories they passed. This treacherous conduct of his allies understandably enraged the Maharaja.

In April 1815, Shah Shuja left Lahore and sought refuge at Rajauri. Predictably, Ranjit Singh did not look kindly on the acts of his ungrateful guest and that of the Raja of Rajauri. Following the Dussehra celebrations that year, Hari Singh Nalwa together with Ram Dayal and Dal Singh carried "fire and sword" into the Rajauri Hills. They were sent to collect the long overdue tribute of one lakh rupees. The *namak*



The Mughal Emperor Jahangir immortalised the poet Amir Khusro's words when he exclaimed : *Agar firdaus bar roo-e zameer ast, hameen ast-o hameen ast-o hameen ast* ("If there is any paradise on the face of the earth, it is this, it is this, and it is this")

haram (ungrateful one) reportedly ran away at night, compelling Hari Singh to burn his house and raze his fort to the ground.

Appalling condition of the Hindus

Kashmir had been a great centre for Hindu and Buddhist learning before it first passed into Muslim hands in the sixteenth century. In 1586, the Valley was conquered by Akbar and remained a Mughal possession for the next 166 years, before Ahmed Shah Abdali annexed it to his vast Empire. During Muslim rule, the use of brute force to promote the cause of Islam resulted in anarchy and misery for the Hindu Kashmiris. Till the Sikhs arrived, centuries of subjugation had left them totally disempowered. The widespread and persistent atrocities in Kashmir by the Muslim rulers against their Hindu subjects were highlighted in ballads of the time.

The Mughals oppressed the Hindus with blind fury and forcibly converted 500 of them to Islam every

day. They forcibly took away Hindu women, would not allow Brahmins to offer their prayers and instead forced them to read the *Kalma* (Muslim prayer). No one came to the rescue of this humiliated and oppressed population and if they dared complain they were slaughtered.

The Sikhs took possession of the Vale of Kashmir in 1819 some 150 years after the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur and once again in response to a request for help from a Kashmiri Pandit. Azim Khan's revenue minister, Birbal Dhar, had travelled to Lahore to beseech Ranjit Singh's assistance for the release of Kashmir from the oppression of the Afghans.

When the Maharaja heard this plea, his heart was deeply touched and he loudly proclaimed, "Be patient, I'll conquer Kashmir and put the evil ones to sword". The *Sarkar* immediately rallied his forces and repeatedly called out aloud to Hari Singh Nalwa, "this task cannot be accomplished without you; go conquer Kashmir and then govern it".



*Typical Sikh soldiers of the early 19th century with two foot soldiers (Nihangs) and Ghorchurra Khas sowar (cavalryman).
[Image courtesy The Sikh Army 1799-1848 (Osprey)]*

In April 1819, the Sikh Army marched towards Kashmir. Hari Singh Nalwa was nominated, together with Misr Dewan Chand, to lead a select and strong division for offensive operations. A second Division, under the command of Kanwar Kharak Singh, brought up the rear for the support of the leading troops. The third Division, under the personal command of Ranjit Singh, expedited supplies and conveyed these to the advance troops. The news that the Sikhs were coming induced the panic-struck Afghan Governor to implore the British Government to take Kashmir under their protection.

By early June 1819, the Sikhs had taken Rajouri, Poonch and all the territory south of the Pir Panjal Mountains. They entered the Valley through the pass of Tosa Maidan with their 12,000 strong force and took position at Sarai Ali, on the road to Shupiyani. Sardar Jabbar Khan, the interim governor in Axim Khan's absence, arrived with 5,000 Afghans on the plains and the battle commenced soon thereafter.

On the morning of 5 July 1819, the Sikh columns advanced to the sound of bugles and severe engagements took place between the two armies. Instead of waiting for the Sikhs to attack, Jabbar Khan had crossed the rivulet that separated the two armies and ascended the heights beyond to meet them. Consequently, his cavalry could not charge and the Afghans were driven back by the Sikhs. The Afghans defended their positions bravely and after a short struggle, however, they gave way to the superior numbers and fled precipitately – some to Shergarh and others across the mountains towards the Indus, thus leaving the Kashmir Valley open to the Sikhs.

Great rejoicing followed in the Sikh camp and the cities of Lahore and Amritsar were illuminated for three successive nights. Kashmir was one of the most important conquests for the Sikhs. Its loss inflicted the most significant blow to the Afghan Kingdom and with it gone, Kabul lost its financial backbone. The British spy Alexander Burnes was to note, "It has been said with some truth that Kabul could never have existed as a kingdom without the possession of Kashmir." After losing Kashmir to the Sikhs, the Afghan Amir was driven to mortgage his wife's jewellery to raise money for an invasion against the Sikhs.

Pandits, Shias, Khakhas & Bambas

The Sikh conquest of Kashmir had put an end not just to 67 years of Afghan rule, but also five centuries

of Muslim domination in this part of the Indian subcontinent. The two communities that heaved the greatest sigh of relief with coming of the Sikhs were the Hindu Pandits and the Muslim Shias.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the Pandits (Brahmins) were the only Hindus to be found in Kashmir, after the aboriginal Brahmin race was nearly extinguished through persecution by the Mohammedans. The Pandits, who arrived from the 'Dekhan' (Deccan), were of darker complexion and came to differ from Brahmins found in other parts of the subcontinent. Traditionally, Brahmins were rural, purely vegetarian and proficient in Sanskrit; Kashmiri Brahmins were urban, meat-eaters and proficient in Persian. Over centuries, the Kashmiri Brahmins remained a constant feature in Kashmir. Successive governments – Mughal, Afghan and Sikh – were obliged to depend on their local knowledge and experience for revenue assessment and collection. Their indispensability, however, did not necessarily afford them protection from torture by the Muslim rulers.

At the height of their supremacy, the Afghans indulged in the most perverted forms of torture against the Pandits, Shias and the Bambas of the Jhelum valley. Asad Khan boasted that he was of the same mould as Nadir Shah, "would tie up the Pandits, two and two, in grass sacks and sank them in the Dal Lake. As an amusement, a pitcher filled with ordure would be placed on a Pandit's head and Musalmans would pelt the pitcher with stones till it broke, the unfortunate Hindu being blinded with filth".

The Pandits looked upon the coming of Sikh rule with a sense of great relief. The Sikhs put an end to these and other inhuman practices against the Hindus. They were allowed to grow moustaches, wear turbans and shoes, and apply the *tilak* (caste mark) on their foreheads. The *jazia* (tax imposed on non-Muslims by the Muslim rulers) was revoked. Hindu girls did not have to be disfigured any longer for fear of being kidnapped.

The Muslim Shias too were relieved with the coming of the Sikhs because the Afghans and the Mughals before them, were of the Sunni faith and antagonistic towards them. There was evidence to suggest that the earliest Muslim inhabitants of the Kashmir Valley were Shias, most people living in the border areas of the Valley were Shias as were the Kashmiris at Leh of the Shia faith.

Closing the western routes

The Sikhs spent the remainder of 1819 making arrangements consequent upon the annexation of Kashmir. The situation in the Valley was dismal. A famine had compelled the inhabitants to sell their kin to save themselves from starvation and hunger. The Sikhs did not speak the Kashmiri language and therefore communication with the local population was next to impossible. Matters were further aggravated when Misr Dewan Chand collected Rs 25 lakhs as war indemnity from the vanquished and reached Lahore in September.



The Fort at Attock

The earlier Sikh conquest of Attock had firmly blocked the direct access to Kashmir for the Kabul Afghans. Two indirect routes, however, were still open to them. In 1815, Afghan reinforcements had reached the Kashmir Valley through Tibet – a circuitous and difficult route. In 1816, Fateh Khan managed a passage into the Kashmir Valley from the west by marching across the adjoining Pakhli and Damtaur Hills. Two years later, Azim Khan once again traversed Pakhli, *en route* to Kabul. On that occasion, the Afghans had crossed the Indus at Darband, a Tanaoli possession, which was to secure the valley of Kashmir from Afghan intrusions, necessary to close its western entrance through Darband. Hari Singh took the first step in this direction on his return passage from Kashmir to the Punjab plains. Accompanied by Sardar Dal Singh and Diwan Bhawani Das, he did not follow the Pir Panjal route; instead, his entourage crossed the river Kishen Ganga at Muzaffarabad into Pakhli. In October, the Maharaja received a letter from Dal Singh informing him of their arrival in the suburbs of Darband (District).

First Khalsa Governor

Diwan Moti Ram was appointed the first governor of the *Sikh Subah* of Kashmir. During his tenure, Hari Singh Nalwa co-operated to facilitate governance in this remote Sikh territory, subdued rebellion and helped establish peace, providing both men and money for the purpose, but was in Kashmir for less than a year. In 1820, Hari Singh Nalwa became the Governor of Kashmir. His appointment as the first Khalsa Governor of the largest-revenue-earning *subah* of the Sikh Kingdom reflected the stature he had achieved in a short span of 15 years.



Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa

There was great significance in Hari Singh's appointment as the Governor of Kashmir. At the time, it was commonplace to appoint military commanders as governors of newly annexed provinces, Hari Singh Nalwa's appointment as governor however required him to perform multifaceted duties. Besides being the administrator of the richest, most far-flung Sikh *subah*, he was expected to subdue frequent rebellions and to annex adjoining territory in this difficult region.

When Hari Singh Nalwa arrived in Kashmir, a cholera epidemic was raging. The scourge took a toll of 35,000 persons. The economy was in a shambles. Another epidemic was destroying sheep – the source of shawl wool and raw material that formed the economic backbone of Kashmir. The epidemic raged in the neighbourhood of Leh, the major supplier of this product. There was rampant insurgency around the Valley that needed to be subdued – both Baramulla and Poonch were in a state of active rebellion.

Hari Singh was designated to go to Kashmir because he was familiar with the territory, having often been appointed to this region in the past to collect payment from difficult tributaries. He had participated in both the abortive and the final attempt on Kashmir. A strong and trusted hand was needed to settle Kashmir affairs. Hari Singh Nalwa was very well respected in Afghan circles, looked upon with

a sense of awe and his name inspired fear. No one was better suited to subdue the Khakhas and the Bambas, the most turbulent and hostile section of the population. The chief consideration for deputing Hari Singh Nalwa in this direction, however, arose from the pull of the Sikh Forward Policy, namely the annexation of Ladakh.

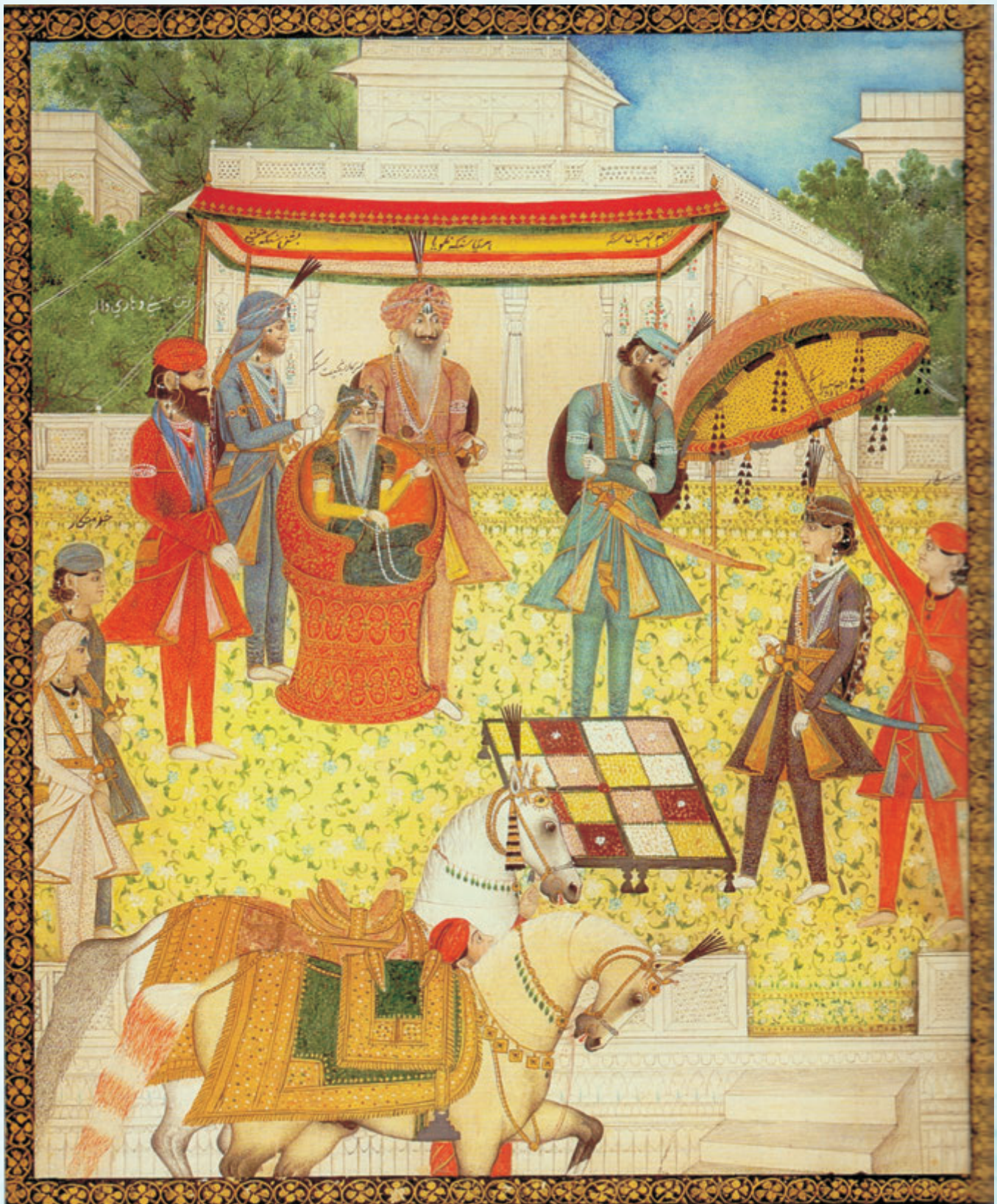
Sikhs & Kashmiris

During rule of the Afghans, the sheer distance of Kashmir from Kabul, the seat of Afghan power, resulted in the governor being invested with powers of a king. Consequently, the administration was often very tyrannical, numerous spies pervaded all ranks of society and the inhabitants were harassed by every kind of oppression. Despite this, the industrious, mechanically skilled, and stout-limbed Kashmiris were reported to be a “gay and lively people, with strong propensities to pleasure”, while the Sikhs were acknowledged as “naturally a merry people, careless, childish and easily amused, fond of hunting.” There were, however, some key differences between the Kashmiris and the Sikhs.

The Kashmiris had been in bondage for several centuries when the Sikhs arrived. The Sikhs were a free and fearless people. Unlike the Kashmiris, the Sikhs were “cavalier, hardy and capable of excessive fatigue”. Each Sikh believed that he was the equivalent of *sava lakh* (125,000) fighting men. The Afghans assured that the Kashmiris never regained their martial spirit by guaranteeing their non-acceptance into the army. If anyone endeavoured to enlist on the sly, he was discovered by the mark of the earthen stove on his thigh that he carried to keep himself warm. The Sikhs were to reverse that trend. Badri Nath, son of Pandit Gobind Ram, left Kashmir for Lahore in 1821 and entered the Maharaja’s service as a Private in the Khalsa Army. By 1833, Badri Nath was fighting in the army of Hari Singh Nalwa and eventually rose to the rank of a colonel.



Sikh cavalrymen of the early 1800s



A very rare painting depicting Hari Singh Nalwa at the Court of Lahore, painted during his lifetime : c. 1830
 Standing (left to right) : Khidmatgar, Rattan Munshi Vihariwala, Bishan Singh Munshi, Sarkar Ranjit Singh (seated),
 Hari Singh Nalwa, Raja Dhian Singh, Raja Hira Singh, Khidmatgar (names are as inscribed in Persian)

Hari Singh's administration

By 1819, Hari Singh Nalwa's reputation as the fighting arm of the Sarkar Khalsaji was well established. His fame as the vanquisher of Afghans, the erstwhile ruling class – first in Kasur, followed by his valiant action in Multan and then at the conquest of Kashmir – heralded his arrival as governor. His tenure left a lasting impact on Kashmir. He was the first close contact that the Kashmiris had with the spirit of the Khalsa. His persona left such an indelible mark on the psyche of the inhabitants that his name came to be preserved in the Sikh currency of Kashmir.



A Sikh cavalryman on the battlefield



*Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa distributing land to poor landless Muslim farmers in Kashmir:
(Painting by RM Singh)*

As the Governor of Kashmir, Hari Singh Nalwa did not make any drastic changes in administrative positions, he retained Moti Ram's revenue minister, Pandit Birbal Dhar.

It was at Hari Singh Nalwa's behest that the era of social and economic reforms was initiated in Kashmir. He was credited with having abolished the hated system of *begar*, an official Afghan imposition on all able-bodied inert in villages. During Afghan rule, they were pressed to engage in construction activities including building of mosques, forts, palaces and roads; besides serving as porters for the army - for no remuneration. The demeaning practice of riding on the back of a Kashmiri was banned, once Sikh rule was established.

Hari Singh Nalwa restored the religious freedom of the Hindus in the Valley. Those who had embraced Islam under Afghan pressure were given the choice of returning to their original faith. Forty thousand individuals offered to return to the fold of Hinduism. Perhaps political and economic advantages encouraged many Hindus and Muslims of the Valley to accept Sikhism at this time. Hari Singh Nalwa tried in vain to restore the sanctity and original glory of the ancient Hindu temples, which had been forcefully converted into *Masjids* (mosques). The Hindu Pandits had been under the domination of Muslims for so long that they

refused this offer, saying that it would turn the Muslims against them. Hari Singh's objective behind this move was to foster harmony between the two religions that had been polarised during Muslim rule.

The cholera epidemic of 1819 had forced many Kashmiris to flee the country. As a result, their lands lay fallow, which resulted in a great famine and agricultural and economic stagnation. On arrival, Hari Singh found that revenue arrears had not been recovered. The peasantry and the masses had been left with meagre

means of livelihood and this had intensified disaffection. The Sikhs revoked all the privileges the Afghans and the Mughals had accorded themselves. Though traditionally all of Kashmir was considered the property of the ruler, over time, large portions had been given away in the form of *jagirs*. When the Sikhs conquered the country, they took over most of the land “thus summarily reducing the erstwhile ruling classes that had long lived in comfort to a state of destitution”. The former ruling classes had to consider manual labour for a living. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims could all apply to cultivate the Khalsa (government) lands.

However, Hari Singh Nalwa was to be remembered in Kashmir for something he least expected. The currency minted while he was the governor had been the subject matter of much speculation. Following his departure from this *subah*, all the coins minted under the Sikhs in this province were called the ‘Hari Singhee’. No matter who was the governor, the nomenclature persisted and continued long after Hari Singh’s death. Historians had largely been at a loss to explain the reason for this, but the most popular explanation offered was that Ranjit Singh had permitted Hari Singh Nalwa to mint a coin in his own name. Support for this argument came from a coin that apparently carried the imprint ‘Hari Singh’; however, no numismatic evidence supported this claim.

The first Sikh coin issued in Kashmir is dated the year of its conquest – *Vikrami or Bikrami Samvat* 1876-which translates into 1819 in the Gregorian calendar. This makes one thing clear Hari Singh Nalwa did not start the process of minting coins during his administrative rule in Kashmir. When the Sikhs took Kashmir from the Afghans it was one of their most distant conquests, as it had



A dated photograph of the Shankaracharya Temple in Srinagar

been for their predecessor. Rather than transport coins from Amritsar or other mints in the Punjab, it was thought more practical to mint coins in Kashmir itself. Hari Singh Nalwa introduced a new coin on assuming charge, but why did he mint a base coin in Kashmir? Why did he not simply use the standard currency of the Kingdom of the Sikhs – the Nanakshahi?

When the Sikhs conquered Kashmir, its currency consisted of a great variety of coins minted at different times and under various authorities. It was reported that in 1783, a large discount was allowed on the rupee of Kashmir from its baseness of silver. The rupee struck at Moradabad (Rohilkhand) was held in the greatest estimation. Copper money of the value of a halfpenny and *cowreys* a small marine shell were also used as currency there. The commercial intercourse of Kashmir was principally with Iskardo, Ladakh, Herat, Kabul and the remoter parts of Hindustan. The currencies of its major trading partners were naturally in circulation at this time. These included the Iskardo Hun, Ladakhi rupee and the Herat Dinar amongst others. While the Cashmere rupee was worth six annas and three paise of the Calcutta sikka, the Ladakhi rupee averaged from 4-5 annas of the rupee of the East India Company. The value of the Nanakshahi rupee matched that of the Calcutta sikka.

The value of the coin introduced by Hari Singh Nalwa simply matched that of the ousted Afghans rulers. The value of the Hari Singhee was the same as that of the Kabul rupee when Jabbar Khan was Governor of the province in 1819.

Boost to trade

A major source of revenue in Kashmir was from the manufacture and sale of shawl goods. The wool came from sheep reared in the upper reaches of the Himalayas, mainly Ladakh, Changthang and Yarkand in China. Changthang, also known as Zjangtang, was a flat stretch of

land east of Leh, towards China. The goats that grazed on the plains of Zjangtang produced some of the finest shawl wool. The large number of Kashmiri merchants resident in Leh, controlled the flow of this wool into Kashmir. The shawl business provided occupation for a sizeable number of the inhabitants and was the backbone of the Kashmir economy. Apparently, the softness and warmth of this product was in some way linked to the water of Kashmir in which these shawls were washed.

In 1805, under the Afghans there were 21,000 shops employed in manufacturing shawl goods. By 1819, their number had dwindled to 6,000 resulting in a severe blow to the economy of the province. The scarcity of grain that year led to starvation deaths, besides large-scale migrations. After the Sikhs took over Kashmir, there was a steady rise in the number of shops. By 1821, the year of Hari Singh Nalwa's departure from Kashmir, their number had risen to 16,000. Hari Singh rekindled the hope of shawl weavers by granting cash loans and making shawl wool readily available, which led to a considerable expansion of this industry. Under Governor Hari Singh Nalwa's administration, the increase was in some measure attributable to the judicious management of Jawahir Mull. This native of Shikarpur was the collector of the duties on shawls and other articles of merchandise of different descriptions – exported, imported, or manufactured in Kashmir. Scarlet, white and black Kashmiri shawls were the most expensive, while green, sky blue and other shades were cheaper.

The insecure conditions under the *Barakzai* rule had led to a decline in land revenue. In order to boost agriculture, Hari Singh Nalwa ordered a reduction in land revenue. Once the poor agriculturist was freed from *begar* he could engage full-time in economically profitable activity. Hari Singh provided an immense boost to the revenue accrued from saffron by encouraging its cultivation on a commercial basis. He afforded suitable facilities to the growers and encouraged them to bring more land under saffron cultivation. Hari Singh also made a reasonable reduction in the government's share of this produce.

Hari Singh provided an impetus to handicrafts for which Kashmir was so famed. He undertook extensive measures to increase production of Kashmiri paper that was in great demand all over the subcontinent. British India requisitioned it in large quantities.

The paper industry was a means of livelihood for a large section of the population in Srinagar city and its suburbs. Famine and disease had resulted in the decline of this industry. Hari Singh Nalwa revived this industry by granting financial aid to the workers and encouraging them to manufacture a variety of paper. Kashmir also had a considerable reputation for the fabrication of gun and pistol barrels, which became an additional source of revenue to the Sikh Kingdom.

Muslims had dominated Kashmir for centuries and resented, but naturally, their subjugation by a minority community, but Sikhs were never accused of the routine inhuman behaviour attributed to the Muslims. In fact, they made every attempt not to offend the prejudices of Mohammedans. In this regard, Masson's explanation is perhaps the most pertinent.

"Though compared to the Afghans, the Sikhs were mild and exerted a protecting influence, yet no advantages could compensate to their Mohaomedan subjects, the idea of subjection to infidels, and the prohibition to slay kine, and to repeat the *azan*, or summons to prayer."

The Sikhs made no exception in bestowing charitable grants to all sections of the society, irrespective of religion. The Sikhs made *dharamarth* grants to employees of the Muslim shrines of Hazrat Bal and Makhdoom Sahib at Srinagar. Ganeshi Lal found about 400 *bairagis* (Hindu mendicants) encamped in the Nagam *paragana* (district) of Kashmir. They were on a pilgrimage to the holy shrine of Amarnath. The Sarkar Khalsaji had arranged for free rations to be distributed to the mendicants, with an additional allocation of 2 rupees per man to be given in cash on their return. The total number of pilgrims amounted to no less than 6,000 men. The annual expenditure incurred by the State in that venture alone amounted to 15,000 rupees. The practice was terminated after the Hindu Dogra, Raja Gulab Singh, took over the province from the Sikhs.

Subduing rebellion

In 1819, the Sikhs had taken both Rajouri and Poonch, Conquering these territories was probably less difficult than effecting a lasting peace. Towards the end of 1820, Hari Singh Nalwa was called upon to deal with an uprising in the Baramulla and Poonch areas. The Sardar accompanied by Raja Sultan Khan

of Rajauri went to Mirpur in pursuit of the Raja of Poonch, who retreated into the high mountain recesses. Hari Singh Nalwa requested additional forces from Lahore as trouble was also brewing with the Khakhas. In response to Hari Singh's request, Ranjit Singh set off towards Kashmir. The *lashkar* (army) had to return precipitately; winter had set in and it was not possible to traverse the Pir Panjal, the passes being snowbound.

On 1 February 1821, information was received at the court that Hari Singh Nalwa had single-handedly suppressed the uprising of Khakhas and captured their chief, Ghulam Ali. The Maharaja wrote to Hari Singh to lose no time in sending the captive with appropriate security to Lahore. There was great rejoicing in Lahore for this was a troublesome man. A celebratory firing of cannons was ordered.

The potential threat to Sikh sovereignty in Kashmir had been more serious than visualised by either Hari Singh Nalwa or Ranjit Singh. The English adventurer Moorcroft wrote to his government from Leh that the Afghans had lost an invaluable opportunity of regaining Kashmir at the time of the insurrection by the Khakhas. Besides the various Mohammedan chiefs subjugated by the Sikhs, this Englishman was in close communication with Azim Khan, the deposed governor of Kashmir and now ruling authority in Kabul.

Hari Singh Nalwa left Kashmir following the Dussehra of 1821, after a stay of one year and three months. During this period, he was administratively strong and worked diligently to establish the rule of law. Such was the confidence inspired by the Sikhs in Kashmir that many Kashmiri Brahmins, refugees from Afghan oppression, returned to the Valley. The security afforded to traders was unprecedented. "So vigorous and efficient are the measures of the Sikhs, in matters of police, that open robbery is unknown, and two to three men can conduct in safety a string of twenty ponies laden with merchandise". Hari Singh Nalwa's popularity with the ordinary Kashmiris was highlighted in 1833, when Sher Singh was appointed the governor of this province. At the time, a great famine occurred in Kashmir. Large-scale migrations occurred from the Valley. Jamadar Khushal Singh, who was sent by the Maharaja to provide succour, aggravated matters considerably. The famine drove the Kashmiris from their homes and they came to Amritsar in thousands and then 'spread out to Delhi,



Sketch of the fort at Jamrud

Calcutta and Benares. Such was the confidence that Hari Singh generated in the Kashmiris that twelve years following his return from the province a large community of them settled in Gujranwala – the *jagir* of their first Khalsa Governor.

Hari Singh's recall from Kashmir was necessitated by the pull of the Sikh Forward Policy. The activities scheduled for the martial year, commencing at the Dussehra of 1821, lay along the western frontier of the Sikh Kingdom. Maharaja Ranjit Singh had planned the conquest of Mankera in the Sindh Sagar Doab. Hari Singh's reputation as the most successful and effective commander in this region against the Pashtuns had made his presence vital for success of the Sikh Army.

Dr. Vanit Nalwa



Gurdwara Chhevin Patshahi at Pulwama, in J&K

Historic Gurdwaras of Kashmir

Text and images by Commodore Dalbir Singh Sodhi NM



Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai, Kathi Darwaza Srinagar

Gurdwara Guru Nanak Charan Asthan at Hari Parbat, Srinagar

The Gurdwara is located in the Fort on Hari Parbat Rainawari (see picture on right) which is approximately 10 kms east of Srinagar city.

During his stay in Srinagar, after religious discourse with some Brahmins at Shankracharya hill, Guru Nanak visited Hari Parbat and stayed there for some time.

Hari Singh Nalwa later constructed a number of Gurdwaras at the places visited by Guru Nanak and Guru Har Gobind Sahib. However, the Gurdwara was destroyed by subsequent rulers. Presently, within the fort of Hari Parbat exists a Gurdwara which is maintained by paramilitary forces stationed there, and often visited by the Sikh Sangat (see photo-essay by Amardeep Singh in this Issue).



Gurdwara Gur Nanak Dev ji at Awantipur



This Gurdwara is located on the National Highway approximately 35 kilometres south east of Srinagar city and constructed at Awantipur (in Pulwama District) to commemorate the visit of Guru Nanak. The Gurdwara is frequently visited by the passengers (of all faiths) travelling on the National Highway 1 and are offered *prasad* as well as tea and refreshments.

Gurdwara Nanak Asthan at Bij Behara

Guru Nanak Dev ji stayed at Bij Behara and held religious discourses with Pandit Braham Das, who then adopted the Sikh faith and took on the prachar for spreading Sikhism. A Gurdwara has been constructed to commemorate the visit of Guru Nanak to this place, located on the National Highway 1, approximately 45 kilometres south east of Srinagar.



Gurudwara Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji at Anantnag

The Gurdwara at Anantnag commemorates the visit of Guru Nanak and is located at Sherbagh (near Nagbal spring), not far from Shahabad, some 55 kms south east, of Srinagar. The Gurdwara is near a park and also has a pond.



Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji at Mattan Sahib



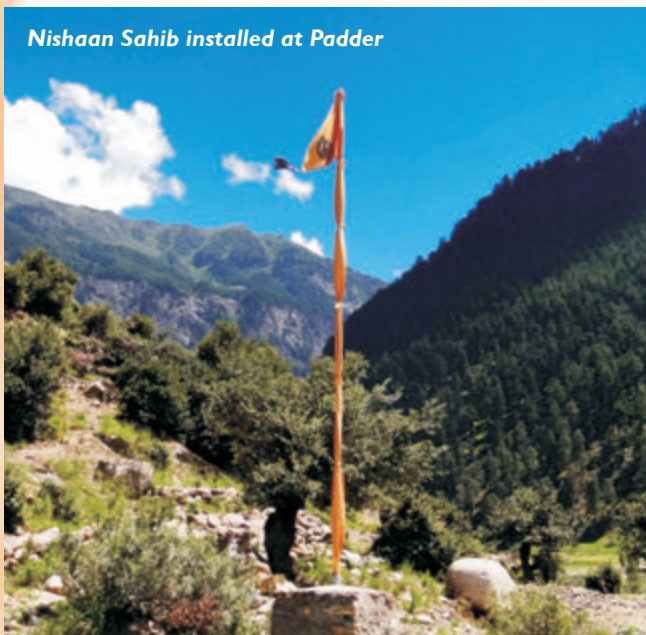
Gurdwara Mattan Sahib is at a distance of some 10 kilometres from Anantnag town, and about 65 kilometers from Srinagar.

S Hari Singh Nalwa constructed seven Gurdwaras on the three sides of the springs at this place, however subsequent rulers destroyed most of the Gurdwaras.



The present Gurdwara, co-located with Martand temples has a copy of the Mool Mantar hand written by Guru Arjan Devji (see above)

Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Darbar, Gulab Garh Padder at Kishtwar



Kishtwar is on left side of the river Chenab and has several revered religious places, the Naga cult being predominant in Paddar and Nagseni Parganas mingled with other faiths, including Buddhism. General Zorawar Singh, the Governor of Kishtwar had captured Ladakh following this route. The Chandi Mata temple (popular for Machail yatries) is on a hill in this area, the confluence of river Chander Bhaga and Bhutna Nalla, culminating as sangam with river

Chenab. Pangi is approximately 35 Kms from this place, was once destroyed by heavy floods, which also affected a small Gurdwara which existed at the time. Some land has now been acquired and a Nishaan Sahib installed with construction of a Gurdwara commemorating the visit of Guru Nanak to this place being planned.



Sidhian-di-Bagichi, Badherwa

Badherwa is on left side of the river Chenab and was generally associated with Nagas, but also known for various Muslim and Hindu shrines. Guru Nanak ji visited this place and had religious discourses with the Sidhs, staying at the garden known as 'Sidhian di Bagichi'. The construction of a Gurdwara at 'Sidhian di Bagichi' is under consideration. Presently only one Sikh family stays in Badherwa with a small Gurdwara near their house.

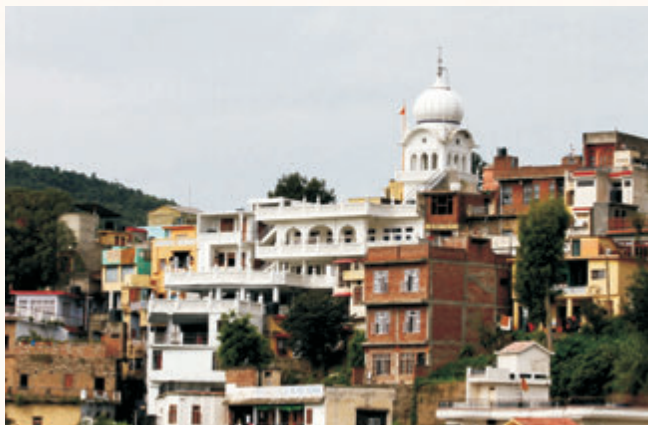
Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai, Nowshera

The Gurdwara is located in the middle of Nowshera town, approximately 85 kilometres north west of Jammu city. This was constructed to commemorate



the visit of Guru Har Gobind Sahib when Bhai Moola of Samanee village (near Bhimber) became a Sikh after meeting Guru Ji. The Gurdwara is near the Mughal Sarai where Emperor Jahangir had stayed. The first Gurdwara was built by Sant Inder Singh, and has been reconstructed by Kar Sewa carried out by Baba Harbans Singh, the construction overseen by Baba Jasbir Singh. Nowshera and the adjacent areas have a sizeable Sikh population.

Gurudwara Chhevin Patshai at Rajouri

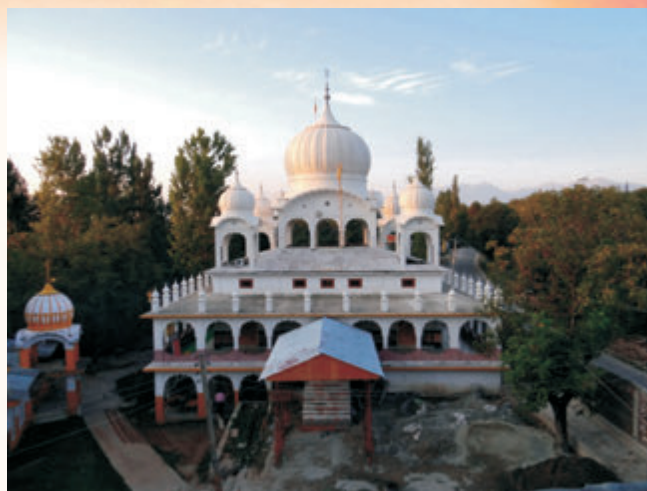


District Rajouri of Jammu Province is approximately 145 kilometers north of Jammu, in the picturesque Pir Panjal Range.

After carrying out religious discussions with the people of Nowshera, Guru Har Gobind Sahib travelled to Rajouri in 1616 where he stayed with a Sikh family while Emperor Jahangir stayed in the Mughal Sarai across the Sailani Nalla. Guru Har Gobind had religious discourses with people of this place, and many became Sikhs. The devotees had initially constructed a Dhramsals to commemorate the visit of Guru Ji to this place and subsequently a Gurdwara was constructed in 1931-32 (when Sardar Tirath Singh was the Wazir-e-Wazarat of the district). During the October 1947 invasion of Kashmir by tribals, the Gurdwara was however not affected. However, the Sikh Sangat reconstructed the Gurdwara in 1964 with the help of masons and carpenters from Punjab to give Sikh architectural touch to the Gurdwara.

Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai at Shadimarg

Shadimarg is near Rajpora in the Pulwama District of Kashmir and approx 50 kms south of Srinagar. Guru Har Gobind Sahib had entered Kashmir through the Mughal Route after travelling through Mirpur,



Jhangar, Nowshera, Rajouri and Thana Mandi. The Guru stayed at Shadimarg where the Gurdwara was built. Guru Ji had tied his horse to a Chinara tree which stands tall next to the new Gurdwara building. Guru Ji had met Katu Shah and had religious discourse with him and other people of the area, Katu Shah looked after Guru Sahib well.

It has been documented that Guru Har Gobind Sahib had been requested by Emperor Jahangir to accompany him to Kashmir and once, whilst in the nearby forest (Yarwan), Emperor Jahangir was thirsty and Guru Ji using his spear, got water from the ground to quench his thirst. A small Bawli (Khoiee is some 8 kms from the shrine) and named Khoiee Sahib is in the forest and revered by people of that area.

Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai at Khampur Sarai

Khampur Sarai is in the Chadura area of Badgam district, approximately 20 kilometres from Srinagar on the original Mughal Route from Srinagar. Guru



Har Gobind Sahib on his journey from Shadimarg to Srinagar stayed here and gave religious discourses to the people. A new Gurdwara is under construction by Kar Sewa.

Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai, Kathi Darwaza at Srinagar

The Gurdwara is located at Kathi Darwaza in the Rainawari locality at the foot hill of Hari Parbat approximately 10 Kms east of Srinagar City.



A Manji or the seat of Sikh missionary was established at Srinagar during the time of Guru Amar Das and Madho Das preached at this place. The masand or incumbent in charge of the Manji was Sewa Das. Guru Har Gobind Sahib during his travels to Srinagar visited Kathi Darwaza and stayed in the house of Mata Bhag Bhari where a Gurdwara was constructed to commemorate the visit and where Guru ji had accepted the chola made by Mata Bhag Bhari.

Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai, at Baramulla



The Gurdwara is located at Baramulla on right bank of the River Jhelum, where it exits the valley some 50 kilometres west of Srinagar.

Guru Har Gobind Sahib travelled to Baramulla after his stay at Srinagar, and visited nearby places including Kalampora Singhpora. The people of Baramulla had offered a carved stone *Takth* (throne) to Emperor Jahangir however; the Emperor presented this to Guru Sahib saying that it was for him. Guru ji also planted a Chinar tree here.



Stone throne presented by Emperor Jahangir to Guru Hargobind Sahib

The Gurdwara is on the bank of the river Jhelum and while designing the new Gurdwara on the lines of Sikh Gurdwara architecture and keeping the water tables in mind, a decision had to be taken to remove the Chinar tree. The Sikh Sangat was consulted and after *ardaas*, the Chinar tree was removed and the Gurdwara constructed on that site. The Stone Takth is installed under the canopy (Palki) where Sri Guru Granth Sahib is recited. A branch of the Chinar has been preserved and is kept for darshan.

Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai, Kalampura at Baramulla



The newly constructed Gurdwara is located on top of a hill at Kalampura / Singhpora Kalan, approximately 10 kilometres from Baramulla and 45 kilometres from Srinagar. There are two roads that lead to this Gurdwara, one from Delina and the other from Kanaspora.

Guru Hargobind Sahib during his stay at Baramulla visited Kalampura village and had religious discourse with Muslim Pir Bahlol Shah. The Muslim Pir apprised Guru Sahib about the scarcity of water in the area. With his spear (*barcha*) Guruji earmarked the place to get a well dug, which has provided water since, in perpetuity. The Sikh Sangat of Singaporer Kalan have constructed a Thara (platform) of mud where Guru Sahib sat.

Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai, Peeran Palan Uri

The Gurdwara is some 35 kilometres west of Baramulla and 15 kilometres before Uri town.

Guru Har Gobind Sahib continued to Muzzaffarabad via Uri after his stay at Baramulla. The route taken was through the Kathai range. At Peeran Palan, Guru ji stayed at a place near Sultan Dhaki on right side of the river Jhelum where he held religious discourse with five revered Muslim Peers : Peer Gulsher, Peer Bhur Sultan, Peer Rangi Immam, Peer Noor Nihal and Peer Abdul Gafoor. The stone on which Guru Sahib was seated is preserved at the Gurdwara. The Gurdwara building was damaged during the earthquake of 2006 and a new Gurdwara has since been constructed which is frequently visited by the Sikhs from all over Kashmir.



Proposed site for Gurdwara at Dulanja Uri



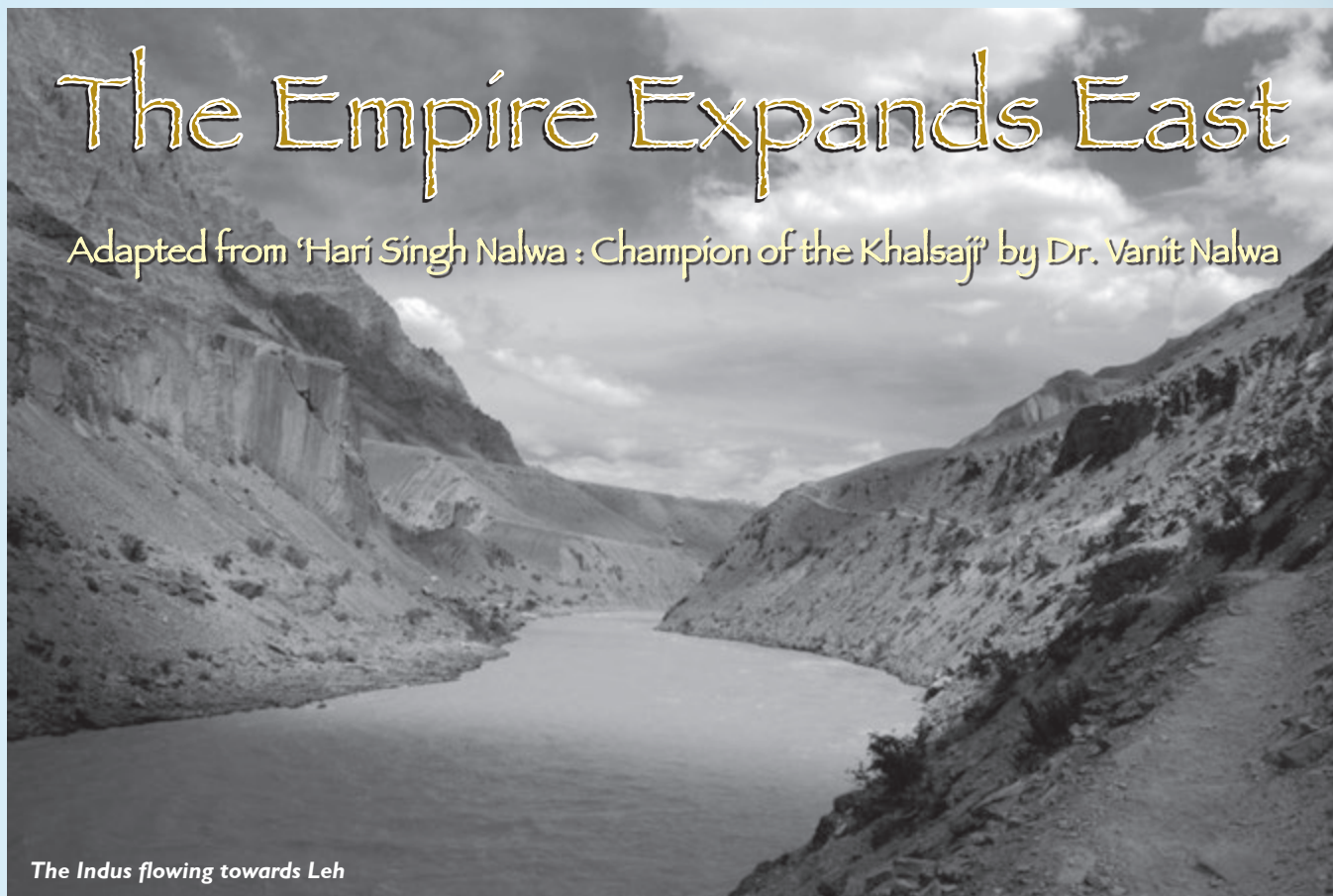
View from the Gurdwara at Peeran Palan, overlooking the river Jhelum as it flows westwards towards Uri and into Pakistan occupied Kashmir



Closer view of Gurdwara Chhevin Patshai at Peeran Palan, Uri

The Empire Expands East

Adapted from 'Hari Singh Nalwa : Champion of the Khalsaji' by Dr. Vanit Nalwa



The Indus flowing towards Leh

Ladakh incorporated into the Sikh Empire

Hari Singh Nalwa was familiar with the territory, climate, topography, hill-tribes, routes and resources of Kashmir. His appointment as a replacement for Moti Ram was made in order to streamline the administration and subdue refractory tribes, but most importantly, to annex Ladakh. When Izzut Oollah came to Lahore, Ranjit Singh enquired of him to whom the state of Ladakh was tributary. The Raja had remained silent when he was informed that it was tributary to Delhi.

Izzut had good first-hand knowledge of the proceedings of the Sikhs because of his long association with them. He had friends and relatives living both in the Punjab and Kashmir, besides

numerous contacts within the inner circles at the Court of Lahore. Mir Izzut also knew Hari Singh Nalwa's reputation. He would have guessed why Hari Singh was being sent to Kashmir. Tradition described how the Sikhs consolidated as soon as they won the battle. "They rode day and night; each horseman threw his belt and scabbard, his articles of dress and accoutrement, until he was almost naked, into successive villages, to mark them as his."

The Sikhs saw Ladakh as being a tributary to Kashmir and believed that their conquest of the latter country had entitled them to Ladakh's allegiance. However, in his attempt to make an "honourable" conquest, the scheming Englishman Moorcroft claimed



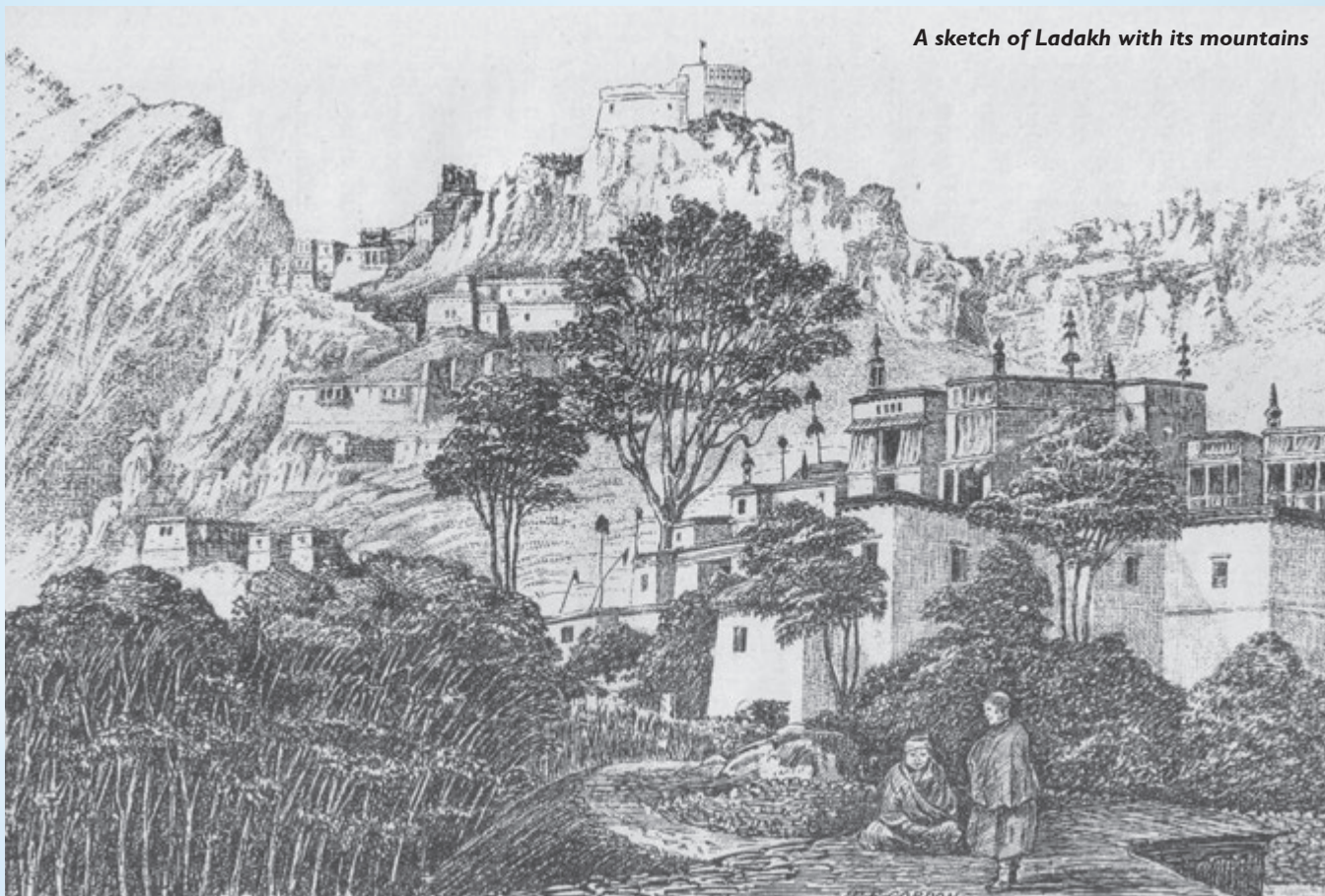
Painting of Leh town

otherwise. According to him, when Ahmed Shah Abdali attached Sirhind, Lahore and Kashmir to the Afghan Empire by conquest, Ladakh became tributary by treaty. The subedar of Kashmir only transferred its customary tribute to the King of Afghanistan, and the events that followed put the British government on the back foot. Moorcroft's subsequent actions

were in direct contravention of the Anglo-Sikh treaty of 1809 according to which the territory north of the Sutlej was totally out of bounds for the rulers of Hindustan.

Ladakh

When Governor Hari Singh Nalwa sent a messenger to Leh a few weeks after Moorcroft's arrival, demanding tribute in the name of the Maharaja from the Durrani government of Afghanistan, this marked the very first advance of the Sikhs into Ladakh. At that time, the entire economy of Kashmir depended on the shawl wool that came through that route. Hari Singh Nalwa warned the Ladakhis that Ranjit Singh would take offence if they gave any encouragement to the *firangi*.



A sketch of Ladakh with its mountains



Paintings of Ladakh landscape



Nalwa's good understanding of the *modus operandi* of the British was confirmed when he threatened Ladakhis with dire consequences for entertaining the Englishman and his party. Despite his denials, Moorcroft was colluding with both the Afghans and the Ladakhis. And, he actually went on to suggest that it would be an act of magnanimity, worthy of the British Government, "to restore the allegiance of Ladakh to the Afghans with the consent of the former state." The Kaloon sent presents to Hari Singh Nalwa in response to his message and informed them that Ahmed Shah, the Raja of Balti was about to attack Ladakh and that the Kaloon was advancing to meet him and also assured the Sikhs of any assistance if required.

In December 1820, Moorcroft's confidant Hafiz Mohammed Fazil Khan left for Lahore via Kashmir with an open letter for Ranjit Singh "for perusal by the subedar" stating his wish for the passage of British merchandise through Kashmir to Leh. Meanwhile, Moorcroft had claimed that when Hari Singh Nalwa threatened to enforce a levy, the Ladakhis allegedly offered their allegiance to the British. By end-1820,

Moorcroft was exploring different avenues to meet the demands of "our shawl manufacturers" but denied this in his correspondence to Ranjit Singh, thereby revealing his duplicity and complicity.

Moorcraft's duplicity

Between 1821-22, the Governor Hari Singh Nalwa made numerous requests to Maharaja Ranjit Singh to permit him to proceed in the direction of Ladakh. But some of Ranjit Singh's courtiers had asked him to refrain from any movement towards Leh while Moorcroft continued to be resident. Instead, the advisors suggested that the Maharaja should attempt to ascertain the length of the Englishman's stay in Ladakh and his plans. This prompted the Raja's indecision. In the interim Moorcroft continued to indulge in a double game. In Leh, he was encouraging the Ladakhis to profess their allegiance to the British government; at Lahore, with the assistance of friends and relatives if Izzut Oollah, he prevented Ranjit Singh from giving his approval to Hari Singh Nalwa to establish a military post in Ladakh.

As Ranjit Singh had suspected all along, Moorcroft had assumed diplomatic status, albeit, unauthorised. While his 'diplomacy' did not achieve the desired result for him, it influenced events in this region. In May 1821, Moorcroft signed a treaty in Tibuttee and Persian with the Ladakhis negotiating in favour of British merchants, "a reduction on nearly one-fourth of the amount of the duties levied on the merchandise of traders from the Punjab".

Moorcroft's double-crossing continued as on one end he replied to Ranjit Singh in his private capacity and simultaneously addressed a letter to Ochterlony in his official



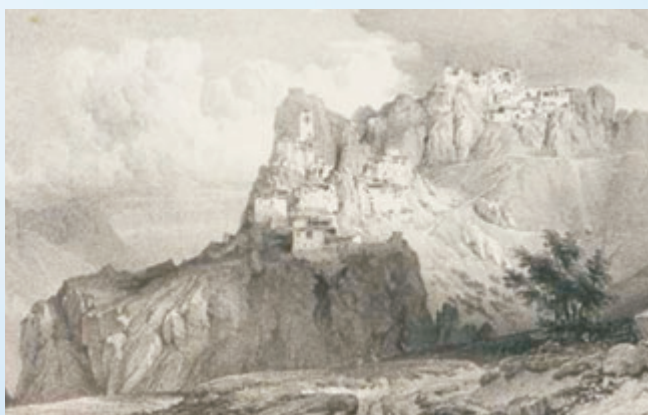
Painting of Sikh nobles, at the Lahore court. From right: Faqir Azizudeen, Hari Singh Nalwa, Akali Phoola Singh, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Prince Sher Singh

capacity asking him to dispatch men and guns to combat a potential attack by Raja Ranjit Singh who, according to Moorcroft “evinced his desire to secure the allegiance of Ladakh or to annex the country”, a request that was firmly refused. Ranjit Singh on the other hand thought it impolitic to attack Ladakh when an officer of the British government was resident there. And when he forwarded Moorcroft’s private

letter to Ochterlony “without complaint or comment”, the latter was shocked at Moorcroft’s “criticism, admonition and threats” and henceforth refused to forward any of Moorcroft’s applications to Lahore for Ranjit Singh.

The events that followed the British Governor-General’s receipt of Moorcroft’s letter to Ranjit Singh, perhaps, constitute the most severe public admonition of a Company servant. In a remarkable move, the Company apologised to Ranjit Singh and forwarded an exhortation to Moorcroft channeled through the Punjab Raja expressing the Governor General’s “considerable surprise and displeasure”.

Moorcroft did not quit his attempts at creating problems. In 1822-23, following the passage of his entourage through the Maharaja’s territory towards Peshawar, the Resident of Delhi received a letter signed by several Mohemmadan chieftains, many of whom were ex-rulers of territories now under the Sikhs and were desirous of protection by the British Government. They offered such aid as may ensure



Drawing of the rugged landscape in Ladakh

the easy conquest not only of all the territory in possession of the Sikh Maharaja but also Persia and Kashgar. Besides, chiefs from the vicinity of Ladakh, Greater Hazara, Kashmir, Attock and the trans-Indus territory, names of several principal officers of the Sikh battalions also enlisted themselves as potential British collaborators, again speaking volumes of Moorcroft's audacity. However, his downfall and sudden disappearance occurred soon after a failed expedition to Bokhara.

Hari Singh Nalwa's appointment as the Governor of Kashmir and his sudden departure were well known but in reality, the pull of the Sikh *Forward Policy* had compelled the Maharaja to recall Nalwa from Kashmir.

In 1834, history repeated itself when Henderson arrived in Ladakh at the very time it was being invested by General Zoravar Singh on behalf of the Sarkar Khalsaji. The Raja of Ladakh persuaded himself that Henderson had come to ratify the treaty that Moorcroft had entered into in the name of the Company. When Henderson protested that the Raja was mistaken and the latter showed him the original document, the awe and show writ on the Englishman's face revealed clearly that he was utterly ignorant of its existence. Despite this the Ladakhi Raja refused to let Henderson quit in order to make Zorawar Singh believe that the firangi was an envoy of the East India Company with an offer of assistance. Thus, Zorawar Singh suspended all operations and requested his master Gulab Singh for fresh orders. Gulab Singh in turn applied to the Maharaja, who was wiser with his experience earlier with Moorcroft and asked the Political Resident at Ludhiana to clarify matters. Once Ranjit Singh was satisfied that there was no inclination of interfering his expansion operations, Zorawar Singh proceeded further and later died in action trying to further Sikh conquests in this region.

Dogra motives in Kashmir

In 1820, when Hari Singh Nalwa was appointed Governor of Kashmir, he successfully restored the economy and put down the uprising of the Khakhas, a troublesome tribe, within span of a year. He also initiated proceedings to extend the boundary of the Kingdom of the Sikhs towards Ladakh. It was clear that whoever held the reigns of the government of Kashmir, which was one of the largest revenue earners of the Punjab, would have the first claim to



The hill fort of Maharaja Gulab Singh, after his 'purchase' of Kashmir in 1846 (drawing courtesy British Library)

the Maharaja's extensive realm upon his death. On the annexation of Kashmir to the Sarkar Khalsaji, the Dogras systematically set out to gain ascendancy there. Gulab Singh was given Jammu as jagir for capturing Agar Khan in Rajauri and killing Dido, who had fought to keep Jammu independent of the Sikh rule.

Following the conquest of Kashmir, Gulab Singh laid stake to the territory of Kishtwar on the ridiculous plea for resumption of the jagir awarded by Ahmed Shah Durrani to his ancestors for the service they had rendered in reclaiming Kashmir! Once his plea was sanctioned, it was now important for the Dogras to effect the recall of Hari Singh Nalwa from Kashmir if they were to extend their influence in the region. The Sardar's attempt to annex Ladakh had left them particularly nervous.

Gulab Singh and Dhian Singh never openly dared challenge Hari Singh Nalwa. The schism between the Misr and Nalwa deepened in 1822-23 when the former was sent to deal with rebellion in the high Kashmir mountains. As he was unable to fully accomplish his objective, Hari Singh Nalwa was deputed in his place and was so successful that both places were bestowed as jagir on him. Consequently, the jagirs in closest proximity to the Kashmir Valley were those of Gulab Singh Dogra to its south and of Hari Singh Nalwa to its west.

The Dogras persistently created trouble for anyone designated to govern the Kashmir Valley. Diwan Moti Ram's second spell as Governor of Kashmir ended "when the family fell into disgrace owing to the sinister influence of Raja Dhian Singh." In 1831, Kirpa Ram, son of Moti Ram and Governor of Kashmir faced Dhian Singh's enmity. In 1839, Shamat Ali passed through the Punjab and found that Gujrat, territory previously held by Mohkam Chand and then his son Moti Ram and grandson Kirpa Ram, now leased to Gulab Singh. Thus, visitors at once saw what the Maharaja had failed to see.

The English historian Vigne, who had visited Kashmir twice in the 1830s, reported that the three Dogra brothers had long been preparing for the seizure of Kashmir. And in 1835, Ranjit Singh's vassal chief Raja Gulab Singh took Ladakh. Thereafter, he was intent on the occupation of Little Tibet for completing a military circle around Kashmir and of being able to pour his troops into the valley from every side immediately upon the death of Ranjit Singh.

The active interference of the Jammu family in the affairs of Kashmir inadvertently came to the notice of Ranjit Singh in November 1834 when a letter from Mehan Singh, the Governor of Kashmir, accidentally reached the Maharaja. It informed the Maharaja that the shawl wool from Tibet was going straight to Jammu because of the inattention of the Maharaja to the affairs of Kashmir. As the entire economy of Kashmir revolved around the timely arrival of shawl wool, the place had become absolutely deserted and its affairs had considerably deteriorated. Bhai Ram Singh, appointed in that direction to report on the state of affairs, had hidden this fact from the Maharaja out of regard for the Raja Kalan. This information now greatly incensed Ranjit Singh.

Interestingly, Ranjit Singh never once visited Kashmir in his lifetime, although it was his most

valuable possession. Kashmir affairs were in the hands of those he could trust and he was reluctant to give its administration in the hands of any of the European officers in his employ - or the Dogras. By the end of 1836, the administration of the province was in a shambles, large numbers had migrated from the Valley and Gulab Singh was closing in from every side. He was clearly out of favour with Ranjit Singh towards the end of 1836 because of his systematic endeavour to establish his authority in and around Kashmir. Ironically, just when Hari Singh Nalwa was being considered as Governor for a second term, he died a patriot's death in the Battle of Jamrud and Kharak Singh was appointed as the new Governor, a move welcomed by the Sikhs.

It has been often questioned as to why Hari Singh Nalwa did not request assistance from Lahore but in reality, he had made at least four requests for reinforcements to Ranjit Singh, informing him that the Afghans had reached Jalalabad. There was a lapse of over a month between the receipt of the Sardar's first application and the day of battle. His second letter was received on 22 March; the third on 21 April intimating the Raja that Mohammad Afzal Khan had reached the foot of the Fort of Jamrud and set up an entrenchment with artillery action ensuing from both sides. However, Sikh troops did not commence serious movement until news of the Sardar's injury was received. The last letter was written just before Hari Singh's death and it was most conceivable that quarters inimical to Hari Singh would have done everything in their power to stop the Maharaja from going to the Sardar's assistance and the catastrophe could have been prevented if the Maharaja's troops had acted with promptitude.

Perfidy of the Dogras

Jamadar Khushal Singh's stance was somewhat more direct as Hari Singh Nalwa had expressed lack of confidence in the *Ghorcharra Khas* belonging to the former. This lack of confidence was based on the Jamadar's open hatred for the Sardar. On the heels of the battle at Jamrud, Khushal Singh expressed his true feelings in a dispatch to Dost Mohammad Khan, wherein the Jamadar, while referring to the death of Hari Singh openly stated that the "common enemy" was removed.

Hari Singh Nalwa's deputy, Mahan Singh was so close to the Sardar that he was often referred to



Battlefield of Jamrud at the mouth of the Khyber Pass : Hari Singh Nalwa laid the foundation of the fort, visible in the background, to strengthen the Sikh base at Peshawar in the north west frontiers of the Kingdom

as his “adopted son”. It seemed that by either craft or design, Mahan Singh had won the confidence of Sardar Hari Singh. Events following the Sardar’s demise clearly suggest that Mahan Singh was a Dogra collaborator. Mahan Singh gained material benefit at the behest of none other than Hari Singh Nalwa’s chief antagonist, Dhian Singh. It was in response to a call of help from Mahan Singh that Hari Singh Nalwa went forth to Jamrud. Mahan Singh continued to be ensconced in the fort while Hari Singh went out into the battlefield. Following Hari Singh’s death, his family was reduced to destitution and the only person who benefited in a significant way was Mahan Singh and his benefactors at the Court of Lahore were the Dogras.

The Maharaja was so overwhelmed by the loss of his great and indomitable army commander that he

seriously contemplated proceeding first to Jalalabad and then to Kabul to avenge his death. On seeing the difficulty of effecting peace in the regions previously under Hari Singh’s authority, he even wondered about giving Peshawar back to Sultan Mohammed Khan and Pir Mohammad Khan on the condition of receiving a tribute of some horses and other articles. Grief, however, was soon replaced by anger, directed against his slain army General. Of course Hari Singh Nalwa’s supreme sacrifice for his country was not lost on Ranjit Singh but the valiant warrior’s sons and wife were deprived of their legitimate share despite Hari Singh Nalwa’s status as one of the richest jagirdars in the Punjab. Sadly, his family was dispossessed of practically every material thing he had earned.

While Hari Singh Nalwa’s inheritors were busy with internal feuds, plans were afoot to deprive

them not only of their funded property but also of their very subsistence. It was an unusual event in history when an individual's dedication to duty and supreme sacrifice were punished rather than rewarded. Eventually, it was this aspect of Ranjit Singh's mentality that contributed to the downfall of the kingdom. With the death of Hari Singh Nalwa, the decline of the Kingdom of the Sikhs began as there was no army general of his stature in the entire Empire. When Ranjit Singh died in June 1839, all the hidden conspiracies came to the fore. Court intrigues by the Dogras resulted in the successful elimination of all possible heirs to the throne of the Kingdom of the Sikhs. Despite the prevailing anarchy, the Sikhs did not surrender their kingdom without an epic fight and the British in reality 'won' the Anglo-Sikh Wars by bribing the Dogra generals in command.

Raja Gulab Singh Dogra was negotiating the best deal for himself, bargaining with the British for personal possession of Kashmir. Gulab Singh Dogra had planned the acquisition of Kashmir for decades. All his energies were focused usurping the territories that today comprise the Indian States of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. He achieved his goal through perfidy. His cruelty distinguished him — he committed acts of the greatest ferocity such as skinning his prisoners alive, he kept his own people, the Dogras, on a tight leash by recruiting one man from every household in and around Jammu into his contingent and thus held every family at ransom to prevent any dereliction in duty.

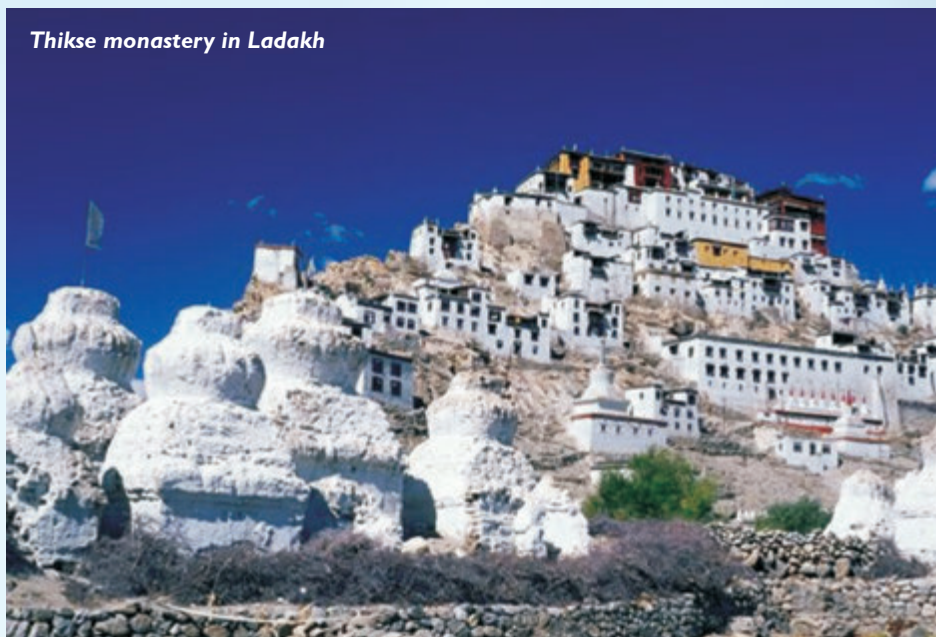
Gulab Singh attempted to take possession of Hari Singh Nalwa's jagir of Hazara following the Sardar's death, but after his Jammu troops were twice defeated, the Dogra quickly surrendered the territory interchanging it with land near Jammu. In return for this favour, while still chief minister of the Sikhs, he furnished the British with funds to fight the Sikhs in Hazara! Throughout Ranjit Singh's rule, the Dogras were hostile towards the British but Gulab Singh's antagonistic stance vanished completely when he felt "his inability

to support himself without the countenance of the English". By his own admission, he stood with folded hands declaring he had become the *zurkharid*, or golden-bought slave, of the Viceroy.

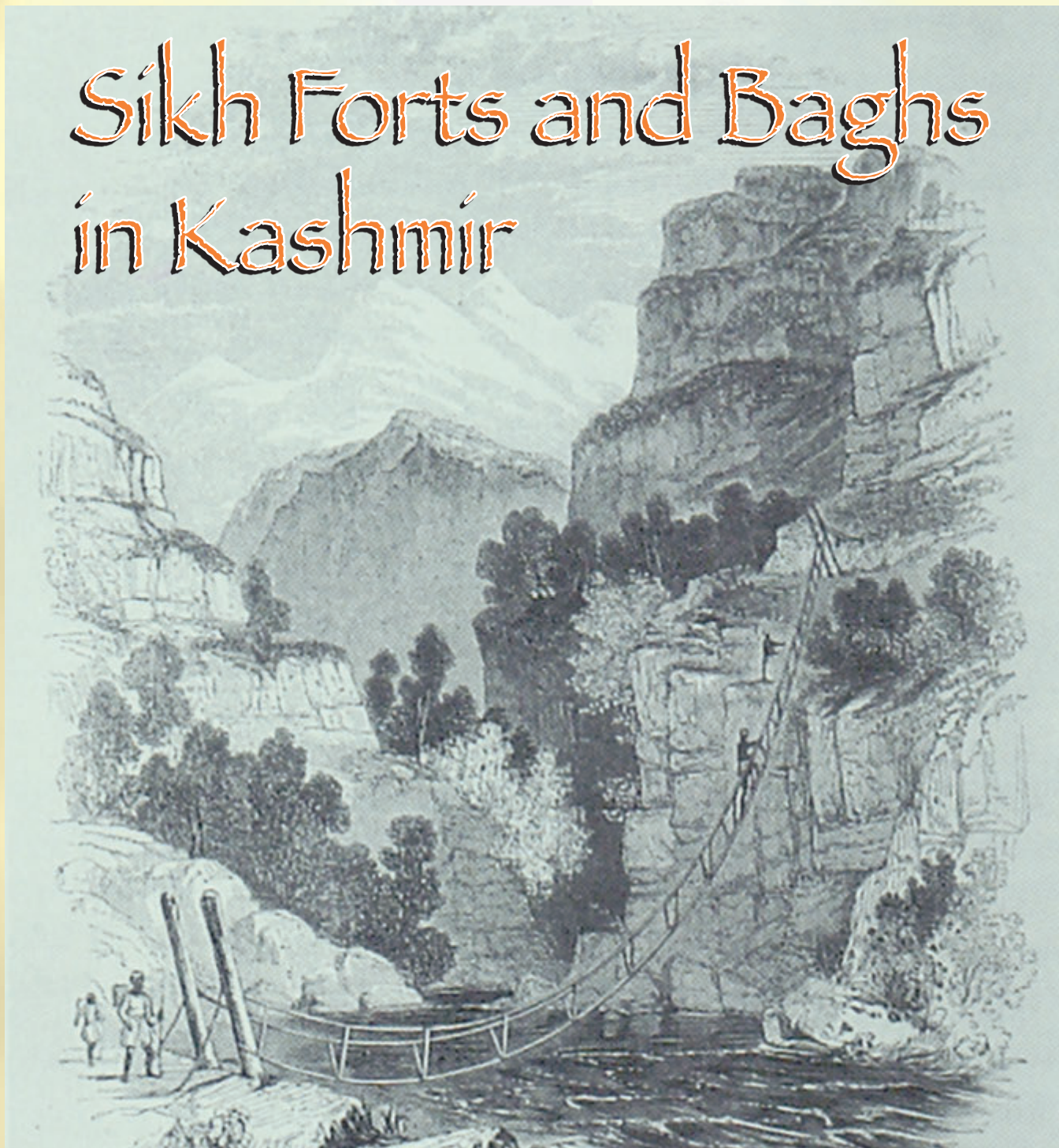
An infamous treaty then ceded to Raja Gulab Singh, all of Kashmir and its dependencies, "all the hilly or mountainous country, with its dependencies situate eastward of the river Indus and westward of the Ravi, etc." The cruelty attributed to Gulab Singh was unmatched. His British collaborators compare him to the tyrants Nero and Caligula. They invested Gulab Singh with the title of 'Maharaja' at Amritsar, on 15 March 1846 but Cunningham was immediately transferred from the Political Department of the East India Company and sent back to regimental duty after he revealed how the British Government had used the treacherous Gulab Singh to further their own ambitions.

Thus came to an end the Kingdom of the Sikhs — one of the last nations in the Indian subcontinent to lose its independence to the British. Hari Singh Nalwa entered the annals of the history of the subcontinent as one of its most valiant patriots. He had upheld the Khalsa code of honour, self-respect and independence. He irrevocably blocked entry into the subcontinent through the Khyber Pass, having successfully withheld an invader that completely outnumbered him. Even in death he emerged as the victor. In one lifetime he had redeemed eight centuries of humiliation suffered by his countrymen.

Thikse monastery in Ladakh



Sikh Forts and Baghs in Kashmir

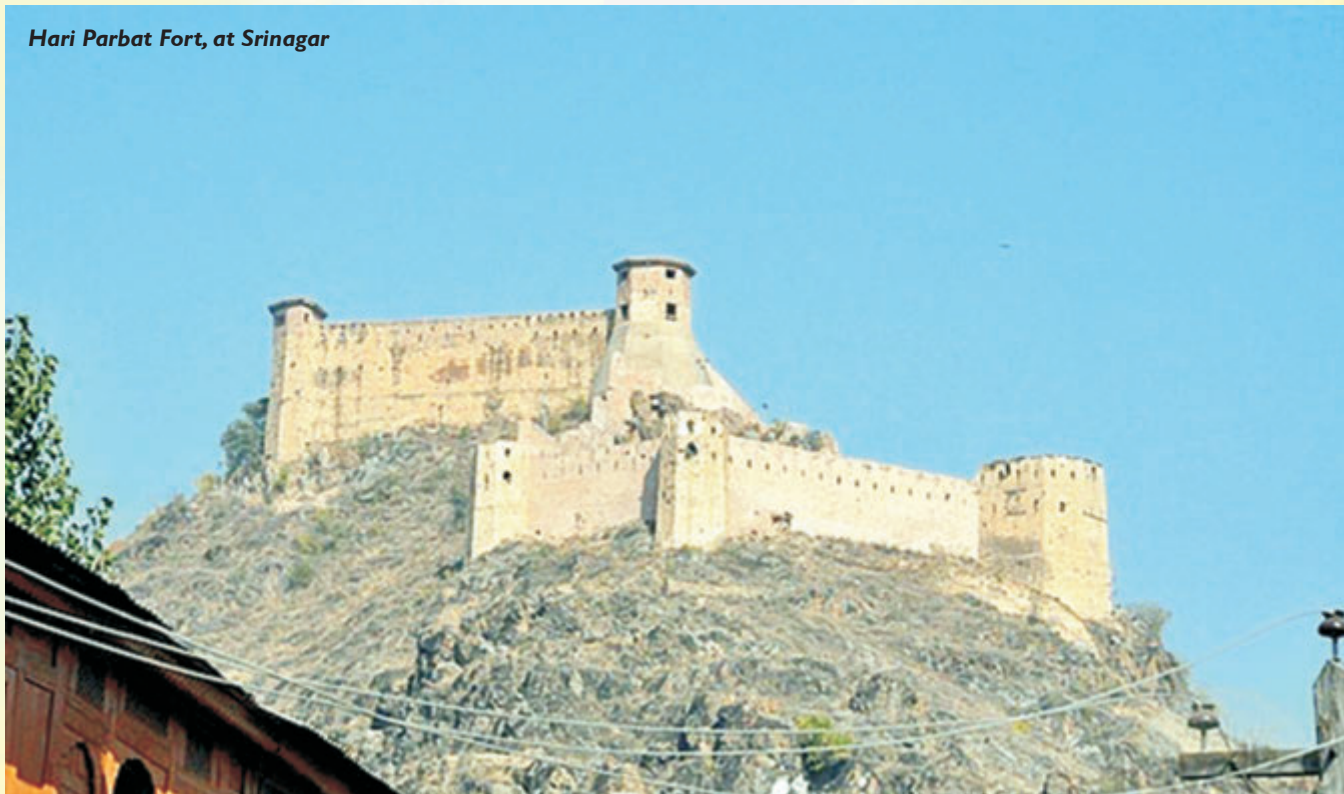


Remarkable suspension bridge at Uri leading to the fort built by Hari Singh Nalwa across the river Jehlum, in the Baramulla region : sketch by Arrowsmith, c. 1840.

The extensive range of structures built by Hari Singh Nalwa, each distinguished on some count, suggest that he had a fine sense of aesthetics and the talent of a builder. "He considered himself the treasurer of Guru Nanak's spiritual wealth and

spent his money for religious purposes." Most of the structures built by the Sardar were for public use. Had he ruled in peaceful regions and times, this talent would have surely manifested itself more completely. His philanthropic nature and deep religiosity,

Hari Parbat Fort, at Srinagar

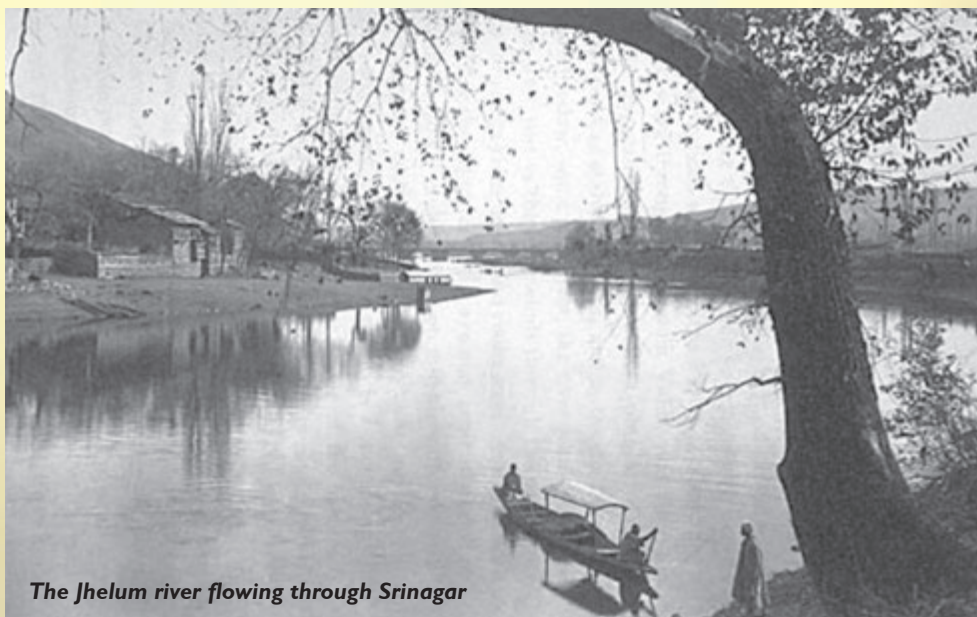


however, extended beyond the building of shrines and the performance of rituals.

Hari Singh Nalwa built two forts in Kashmir, the most prominent being the fort at Uri. Some of his fiercest encounters were with the hill-tribes inhabiting the Baramulla region. The Uri bulge was a strategic position for maintaining security of the Kashmir valley from the frequent disturbances created by the turbulent Bambas and Khakhas. The Hyderabad stream joined the Jhelum in the Baramullah Pass. Hari Singh Nalwa, the military Commander, built a strong fort there garrisoning it with Sikh soldiers. The fort of Ghorigurh stood on the banks of the Jhelum, while the Uri Kilah was over and against it, on the perpendicular height. A rope bridge, thrown over the roaring flood, stretched from the deep abyss to the mountain above.

Har Singh ka Bagh

In Srinagar, the garden planned by Hari Singh Nalwa lay along the right bank of the Jhelum and is described thus by Vigne: "The river passes within half a mile of the foot of the Tukt, and is nearly two hundred and fifty yards in width, before it enters the city. Its banks are fringed with willows, and among them is a



The Jhelum river flowing through Srinagar

summer-house, with a white cupola, built by the Sikh governor, Hari Singh Nalwa. An avenue of poplars of nearly a mile in length, runs through the cornfields parallel to it, from the foot of the Tukt, to the Amir's bridge; close to which is the Shyr Gurh (the city fort), or residence of the Governor..."

After the Dogra Gulab Singh "purchased" Kashmir from the British, he built houses in Hari Singh Nalwa's style along about half a mile along the river for European visitors. The garden now lies in the heart of the city of Srinagar.

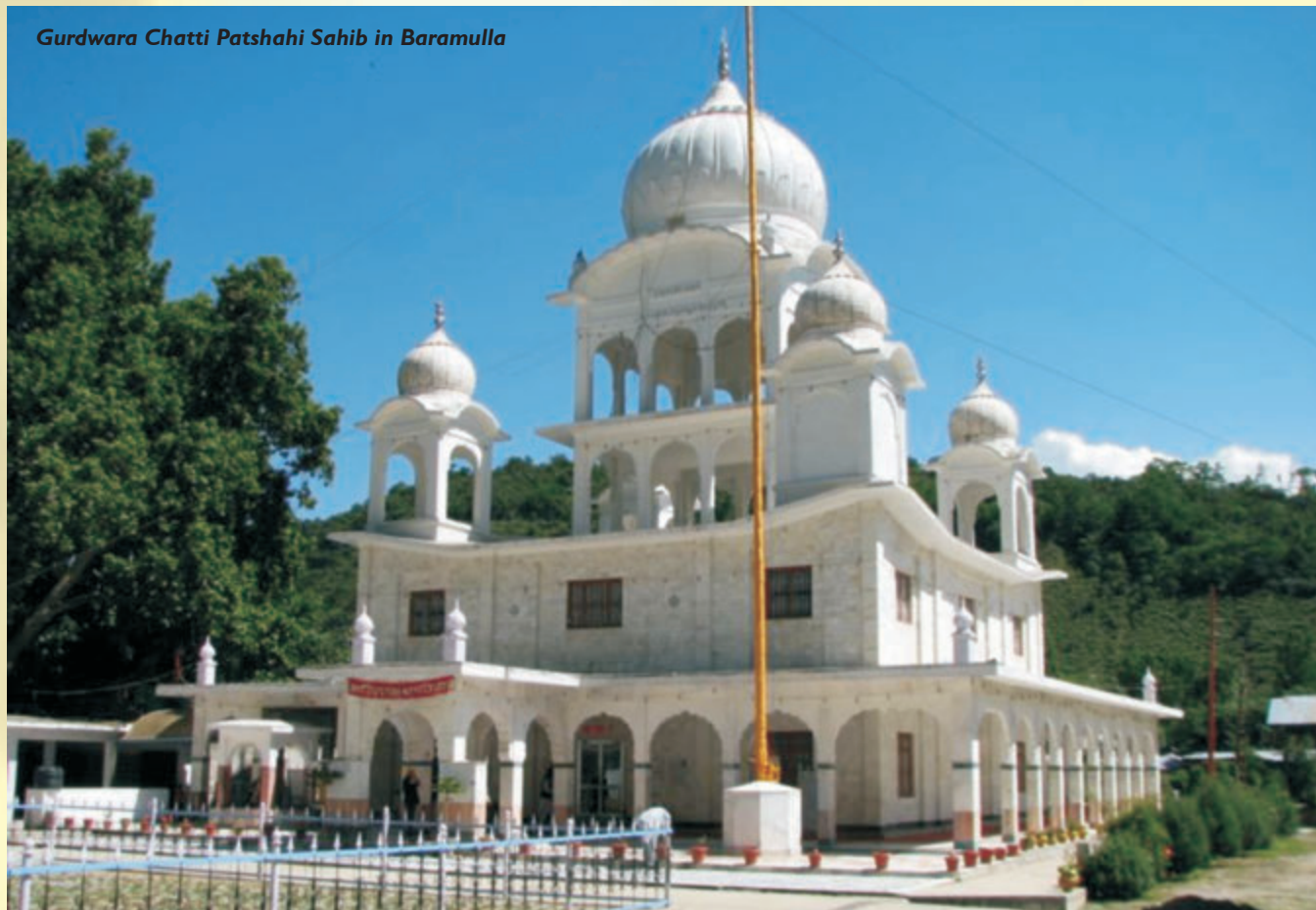
Gurdwaras

With Kashmir's long association with Sikh Gurus, Hari Singh Nalwa commemorated their visits by building shrines at the sites visited by them and bestowed jagirs to facilitate their maintenance. Mattan, about three miles to the east of Islamabad (Anant Nag), was visited by Guru Nanak, where he held a discourse with Pandit Brahm Das, the most eminent of the Kashmiri Pandits. 'Mattan', a corruption of Marttand, was an ancient and famous Hindu temple dedicated to the sun god.

(A similar temple, dedicated to the sun god, was in Mulasthan (Multan).) The main temple was destroyed by Muslim invaders. These temples were referred to by the Brahmins as Pandavon-ki-Lari or Khana Panduwa, signifying Pandu houses. The Salt Range temples in Katas were also similarly addressed, these temples being the sole vestige of the ancient kingdoms that existed there before onslaught of the Muslim invaders.

An early description of the Sikh shrine in Mattan was given by Moorcroft, who visited that place in mid-1823. Half a mile to the northwest of *Khana Panduwa* stood the village of Bhuvan. There he found two reservoirs considered holy by the Hindus, and according to him, appeared to have belonged to the ruined palace that was in their vicinity. The reservoirs were from six to eight feet deep, filled with crystal clear water and swarmed with tame fish (similar to the pools found at Panja Sahib). They were surrounded by a dharamsala erected recently and tenanted by some Brahmins. However, the Dharamsala identified by Moorcroft was the Sikh shrine built by Hari Singh Nalwa, which came to be reverentially addressed as

Gurdwara Chatti Patshahi Sahib in Baramulla





The 19th century Hari Parbat Bridge, Srinagar

‘Mattan Saheb’. In the 1980s, the original building was replaced with a new one and Hari Singh installed six Guru Granth Sahibs with one bearing his signature still there in the late twentieth century.

Guru Har Gobind visited Baramulla in 1620 and Hari Singh Nalwa built a gurdwara there to commemorate the Guru’s visit. Teachings of the last Guru of the Sikhs encouraged his followers to provide hospitality to those who visited Sikh shrines, no matter what their religion, caste or creed. Guru Gobind Singh’s directive to his attendant Bhai Santokh Singh was, “Keep my kitchen ever open, and receive offerings for its maintenance...” According to the eminent historian Hügel, the dharamsala was a “very tasteful building of stone in which was erected a throne, adorned with red and yellow silk carpets, and hung with richly-ornamented curtains. On this throne was seated the old priest...” This edifice came to be called the *Chhevin Patshahi Param Pillan*.

On reaching the valley, Guru Har Gobind stayed in Srinagar and Hari Singh Nalwa commemorated this by building a gurdwara outside Kathi Darwaza, now known as Gurdwara Chhatti Padshahi. Before departing from Kashmir as its Governor, the Sardar had offered Ardas at the Gurdwara of Devi Angan, instituted to commemorate the visit of Guru Har Rai in 1660. Records indicate that Hari Singh Nalwa visited the shrine on 24 *Asu* vs1878 (7 October 1821) and fixed a jagir of land and bestowed in cash to the gurdwara.

Hari Singh Nalwa founded two habitations in the city of Srinagar. The first was in the neighbourhood of the Shergarh fort (old Secretariat) and called

Shahid Ganj. The second was called Guru Bazaar. Shaid Ganj was reserved for the residence of the Akalis and Nihangs and the other was reserved for Sikh *granthis* and Hindu *sadhus*. Hari Singh maintained close relationship with all four major religious groups.

Communal Harmony

Hari Singh Nalwa’s tenure as the Governor of Kashmir brought about a major change in the attitude of its population. The Kashmiris, known for their nonchalant life, soon took serious cognizance of law and order. His governance fostered a spirit of communal harmony of the kind not witnessed in many centuries. Now in the 21st century, Muslims in Srinagar continue to prepare and serve langar at the Gurdwara Chhatti Padshahi, built by Hari Singh Nalwa, to congregations on the birth anniversary of Guru Har Gobind Sahib. Coins minted under Hari Singh’s administrative rule in Kashmir that came to be called the Hari Singhee, generated much discussion and debate among historians and numismatists. It was reported that the coin was struck in the Sardar’s own name – either on his own authority or with the concurrence of Ranjit Singh. According to them, proof of this came from a Sikh coin minted in Kashmir that read ‘Obverse: Sri Akal Jeo; Reverse: Hari Singh Yak Rupaya’. However, from amongst the numerous coins minted in Kashmir during the Sikh period on display in museums and in private collections, no coin with the above inscription has ever been reported.

Dr. Vanit Nalwa

Visiting Kashmir – that was once part of Afghanistan



Hari Parbat fort on top of the hill, strategically overlooking Srinagar city

A photo essay by Amardeep Singh

A little known fact is that if not for the ambition of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Lion of the Punjab, who ruled from 1799–1839), to expand his empire into Kashmir, this region would arguably be part of Afghanistan today.

Prior to the 14th century, Kashmir had witnessed the Vedic period evolve into Buddhism, followed by Kashmir Shaivism and then around 14th century, under spiritual guidance of Sheikh Nooruddin Noormai (Baba Reshi), Islam started gaining ground. Between 1354–1540, various Sultans ruled Kashmir. Then in 1540, the central Asians invaded the valley, when Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat invaded on behalf of Mughal emperor, Humayun, thus starting the era of Mughal rule.

In 1738 AD, Emperor Nadir Shah, the Shah of Persia (who ruled from 1736–1747) and founder of Afsharid dynasty, invaded India with a fifty-thousand strong army, weakening foundations of the Mughal empire. This subsequently paved the way for Ahmed Shah Durrani (who ruled Afghanistan from 1747–1772)

to invade Kashmir in 1753 and expand reaches of the Durrani Empire of Afghanistan.

Kashmir had now become a part of Afghanistan.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh of Punjab, having pushed the Afghans out of what is now the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan, established the western frontier of his empire with its capital at Peshawar, before turning his full attention northwards towards Kashmir. His objective was to reclaim Kashmir from the Afghans.

In 1814, Ranjit Singh had sent an abortive expedition to Kashmir while retreated from Tosamaidan pass. Four years later, in 1819, he sent a force under Diwan Chand, leading to ousting of the Durrani Afghans from Kashmir and making it a part of the Sikh empire. The boundaries of the Sikh empire now extended from Peshawar on the West to river Sutlej in East (upto where the British Raj extended) and from Multan in South, to Kashmir in the North.

The Sikh rule in Kashmir lasted for some three decades. Ranjit Singh was a liberal ruler in whose cabinet there was a representation in high posts from

both the Hindu and Muslim communities. His Prime Minister was the Dogra Dhian Singh of Jammu, whom he had trusted the most. Dhian Singh's brother, Gulab Singh, was a commander in Ranjit Singh's army. After the demise of Ranjit Singh in 1839, Gulab Singh deceived the Sikh kingdom by secretly joining hands with British to cut off the military supplies to the Sikh army fighting at Ferozeshah in 1846. In exchange, Gulab Singh Dogra was given an independent title of Maharaja of Kashmir.

Clearly, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's conquest of Kashmir in 1819 is precisely the reason why this area is today a part of India. With annexation of the Sikh empire by British in 1849, the region of Kashmir also came under jurisdiction of the British. Thereafter, nearly a century later, at independence of India in 1947, Kashmir became part of the Indian Union although it remains the bone of contention with Pakistan.

Visiting Kashmir

Hari Parbat is the hill overlooking Srinagar. Owing to the hill's vantage point, during Shuja Shah Durrani's Afghanistan rule of Kashmir in 1808, a large fort was built on the top for strategic defence

of the city. The Durrani flag flew above the fort till Maharaja Ranjit Singh, replaced it with the Nishaan Sahib in 1819.

I had heard that inside the fort there was a small Gurdwara built in 1820 by the Sikh Governor of Kashmir, General Hari Singh Nalwa. In current times, owing to militancy threats and garrisoning of the fort by Indian troops, one rarely has an opportunity to visit the Gurdwara. However, we were able to find a local Sikh, who took us to top of the hill, assuring us that the Gurdwara was still functioning, managed by defence personnel.

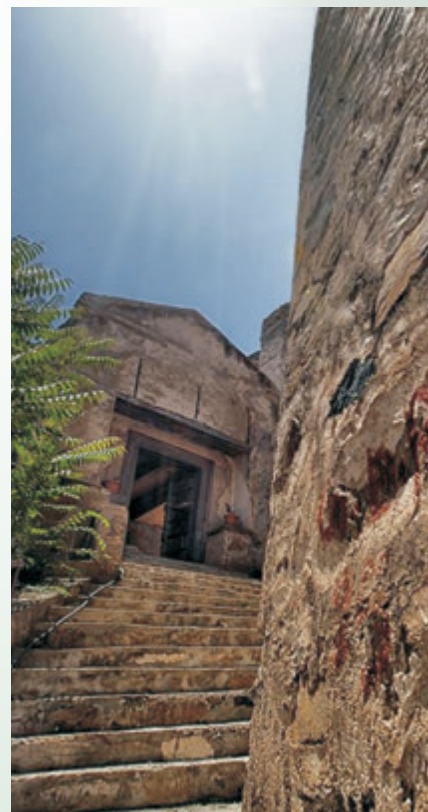
A lone Sikh gentleman from India's paramilitary forces maintains the Gurdwara, performing daily services as he read us a hymn from the Holy Granth and gave us Prashad.

Much time has gone by but the take over of Kashmir by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1819 is today, symbolically represented through the fluttering Nishaan Sahib hoisted at the Gurdwara on Hari Parbat.

In this photo essay, I am sharing with readers what I observed at the fort.



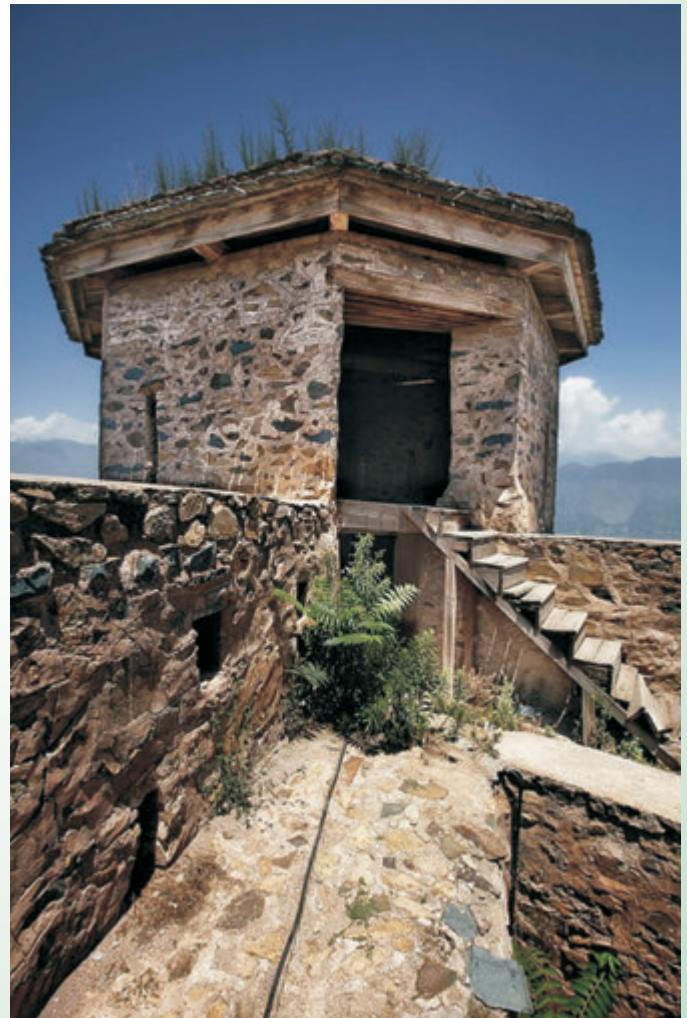
Gate that leads to the hill, which then has to be ascended to reach Hari Parbat fort.



Stairs leading to Hari Parbat fort.



Inside view of Hari Parbat fort, which includes a mosque at the centre



Watch tower at Hari Parbat fort.



Boundary wall of Hari Parbat fort overlooking Srinagar city



Gurdwara inside Hari Parbat fort



Sikh policeman at Sewa in the Hari Parbat Gurdwara



The Nishan Sahib over the fort

Amardeep Singh is based in Singapore and his works can be seen at www.amardeepphotography.com

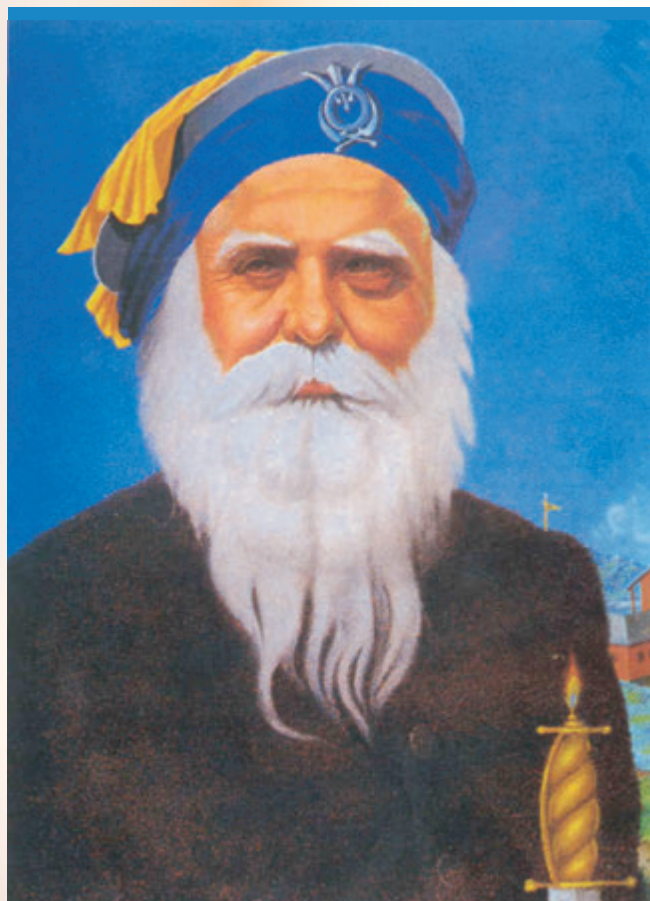
Some eminent Kashmiri Sikhs of the 20th Century

Those who have been acclaimed for their work and achievements include:

Akali Kaur Singh, who was one of the bravest Sikhs of his times who fought for the cause of the community's welfare. He was born in 1890, in a small village Padder-Chakar in Kashmir. Akali Kaur Singh was a saintly writer and scholar and his Punjabi literature deals with socio-religious matters, mainly connected with the Sikh religion. Among his notable works are *Shri Guru Shabad Rattan Parkash* (1923), *Tatkara Varian Bhai Gurdas* (1929), *Estry Sanket Mochan* (1925) and many more. His ancestors were linked to S. Amolak Singh, who was baptised by Guru

Gobind Singh at the age of eight. Akali Kaur Singh founded the Guru Nanak Ashram Chakar and Boarding house, which was a premier educational institute for Kashmiri Sikhs upto 1947. He also started a newspaper 'Kashmir Sikh Samachar' which was published until 1947 and influenced religious, political, social and economic aspects of the Sikhs. He was a veritable jewel among Kashmiri Sikhs, and passed away in 1953.

Bhai Sher Singh was a noble Sikh who was at once a scholar, an educationist, and administrator of great eminence. Born in September 1893 at Rawalpindi, he was six years old when his father passed away. He studied at the Mission High School Rawalpindi and did very well throughout his educational career. Completing his M.Sc chemistry in 1916 in Punjab, he joined the Kashmir Forest Department in 1920 and later went on to be promoted as deputy conservator. Before that he was a professor at Khalsa College Amritsar for some years and presented a research paper on Sikh religion at the world religion conference in Chicago in 1921. Being a good scholar and writer, he wrote many books and articles for the propagation of Sikh faith including *Atam Darshan*, *Wahe-Guru Darshan*, *Dashmesh Darshan*, *Krishan Lila Rahaset*, besides translating the Japuji Sahib and Sukhmani Sahib into English verse. He had his permanent residence at Baramulla.



Jathedar Kapur Singh was one of the most outstanding personalities amongst Sikhs of Kashmir. He was born at village Ambor (Muzaffarabad) in 1901 and was associated with the management of different religious, political and social organisations. He was chief of Akali Jatha

Muzaffarabad and Gurdwara Parbandak Committee Chavien Padshahi Nulchi and participated in the 1935 Gurdwara Sopore elections. Kapur Singh was elected as the first president of J&K Khalsa Darbar on 4 August 1941. Under his presidentship two historic conferences were held in Srinagar (1943) and Muzaffarabad (1944) wherein representatives of the Shiromani Akali Dal from Punjab participated. In July 1945, he pooled resources along with S. Rudh Singh Tyagi, S. Mohan Singh Nirman and S. Lochan Singh (RS Pura) in order to renovate Gurdwara Sri Guru Nanak Dev Narbal (Anantnag). He also remained president of Gurdwara Punja Sahib (Hassan Abdal) for several years. He died at village Kakarwara during the tribal raider's onslaught in October 1947.



During his time, **Budh Singh Tyagi** was one of the most outstanding public figures of Jammu&Kashmir. He was a renowned politician and parliamentarian and was closely associated with important political events that occurred in the State. Born in May 1884 at Mirpur, in a Hindu family, his father Lala Ganesh Dass was a treasurer of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and resided in

Lahore. S. Budli Singh joined in the Department of Bandubasth and later on became office Naib Tehsildar of commissioner Tonlab. He was promoted to Tehsildar in 1912 and was elected as a member of Parja Sabha from Mirpur and Poonch. S. Budh Singh was a good orator and often lectured in gurdwaras. He was stage secretary of Akali Conference Srinagar held on 1928 and published many pamphlets including *Mulazinat-ke-Jindgi* and *Faryad-i-nayiet*, *Kisan Kidastan*, *Dard-e-dil*, *Geriban ke dukh ka elaj*, *Meri Karachi Yatra* and more. He was appointed Deputy Commissioner in 1925 but resigned shortly thereafter, and thereafter lived a simple life. He was one of the Panj Payaras who laid the foundation stone of historic Gurdwara Panja Sahib. In 1930, he actively took part in the National freedom movement. It was because of the efforts of S. Budh Singh Tyagi and Raja Mohd Akbar Khan of Mirpur that Sheikh Mohd Abdullah changed the entire complexion of the freedom struggle by giving it a national character and in 1939 opened it to Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs.



S. Sant Singh Tegh is a man of sacrifice and was a staunch patriot. Born on 13 April 1909 in village Hattian Dupatta, he had good command over many languages. As a staunch Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh, he did remarkable work to help the 1947-holocaust refugees and fought many battles for the welfare of Sikh community. He was President of the

Kisan Committee Muzaffarabad in 1933 and Gurdwara President in 1934. Sardar Tegh joined National Conference and remained its General council member from 1938-50. He remained Gen Secretary of Gurdwara Chavien Padshahi in 1945 and later was elected first president of State Akali Dal from 1950-57.

S. Kartar Singh Komal is a social worker, orator, poet, a missionary Sikh historian, who crusaded for enactment of the Gurdwara Act, which ended hegemony of the mahants. Born in 1913 at village Fujipur (Srinagar), his descendants were prominent soldiers like Sahib Singh Shaheed who fought in the army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He was a teacher at Khalsa High school, remained an active worker of Shiromani Khalsa Durbar and Kashmir Central Sikh League. He has published an Urdu fortnightly 'Karam Veer', also edited a newspaper *Shamsheer* and his publications include *Dharam Tujh* (1936), *Komal Hulare* (1958), *Smaj Sudhar Bare Anmol Gurmat Vechar* (1982), and many more.

S. Kirpal Singh was a man of principles and very honest and hardworking. Born in village Bhatpura (Baramulla) he was enrolled at the Baramulla school and resided as boarder in Guru Hargobind boarding house and graduated from Sri Partap College, Srinagar and later started a Khalsa middle school at Satirna (Rafiabad). As headmaster of the school, he imparted education to Muslim, Sikh and Hindu children from the rural areas of Hamal (Rafiabad). He was an excellent hockey player and represented the Kashmir Valley in All-India hockey matches at Lahore. He fought against the tribal intruders and was one of the youth leaders in 'Balgam Chhura Morcha', which defended the people against the invading *Kablis*.



At the Gurdwara, Paonta Sahib

Hukumnamas of Guru Gobind Singh

The Tenth Divine Master of Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh issued 52 Commandments (*Hukumnamas*) at Nanded in 1708 to his Sikh followers, which included the Sikh Sangat of Kashmir, Afghanistan and throughout India. These 52 Hukamnamas or edicts gave directions and instructions on the pristine values to be followed by a Sikh.

Guru Gobind Singh affixed his personal seal to the document, a copy of which is maintained with great reverence at Gurdwara Paonta Sahib on the banks of the river Jamuna as it exits the Doon Valley (see photo).

- ◆ *Dharam dee kirat karnee*
Earn your living by honest work.
- ◆ *Dasvand denaa*
Donate a tenth of your earnings to charity.
- ◆ *Gurbanee kantth karnee*
Learn Gurbani by heart.
- ◆ *Amrit velae utthnaa*
Rise at Amritvela, before dawn.
- ◆ *Sikh sevak dee sevaa ruche naal karnee*
Devotedly serve those Sikhs who serve others.
- ◆ *Gurbanee de arth Sikh vidhvanaa tuo parrhnae*
Study the essence of Gurbani from learned Sikhs.

- ◆ *Panj Kakaar dee rehit drirh kar rukhnee |.*
Adhere resolutely to the five articles of faith (5Ks).
- ◆ *Shabad da abhihas karnaa*
Apply the sacred hymns to life.
- ◆ *Sat Saroop Satgur daa dhian dharnaa*
Contemplate the beautiful truth of True Enlightener.
- ◆ *Guru Granth Sahib Jee noo Guru mananaa*
Believe in Guru Granth Sahib ji as the Guide to enlightenment.
- ◆ *Kaarjaan dae arambh vich ardaas karnee*
Before undertaking any task, first perform the ardaas.
- ◆ *Jaman, maran, ja viah mokae jup da paatth kar tihaaval (Karaah Parsaad) kar anand sahib dia punj paurian, ardaas, pratham panj pyaariaan atae hazooree granthee noo vartaa kae oprunth sangat noo vartaaouna*
At naming and marriage ceremonies, as also at funeral services, recite paath; while making Karah Prashad recite Japji Sahib; perform five verses of Anand Sahib and ardaas and then distribute Karah Prashad to the Panj Pyare, attending Granthi and then to the sangat gathered at worship.
- ◆ *Jab tak Karaah Parshaad vartadaa rahae sadh sangat addol batthee rahae*
Until Karaah Parshaad has been served to all, the congregation should remain seated.
- ◆ *Anand viah binaa grahist nahee karnaa*
Without Anand marriage ceremony, carnal relations should not happen.
- ◆ *Par istree, ma bhain, dhe bhain, kar jaanane. Par istree da sang nahee karnaa*
Other than your lawful wife, consider all women as your mothers and sisters.
- ◆ *Istree da mooh nahee phitkaarnaa*
Do not abuse your wife.
- ◆ *Jagat jootth tambaakoo bikhiaa da tiaag karnaa*
Discard falsehoods and poisonous tobacco.
- ◆ *Rehitvaan atae naam jupan vaalae gursikhaa dee sangat karnee*
Make companions of Gursikhs who follow the Rehat and recite the Divine Name.
- ◆ *Kum karan vich daridar nahee karnaa*
Work hard and avoid laziness.
- ◆ *Gurbanee dee kathaa tae keertan roaz sunanaa atae karnaa*
Listen to Kirtan and understand the essence of Gurbani each day.
- ◆ *Kisae dee ninda, chugalee, atae eirkhaa nahee karnee*
Do not gossip or slander, nor be spiteful to anyone.
- ◆ *Dhan, javaanee, tae kul jaat da abhiman naee karnaa (Nanak daadak tahe duae goath. Saak guroo Sikhan sang hoath)*
Do not be proud of riches, youthfulness or lineage. (All Guru's Sikhs are siblings of one family.)
- ◆ *Mat uchee tae suchee rakhnee*
Maintain high standards of purity in religious discipline.
- ◆ *Shubh karman tao kadae naa ttarnaa*
Do not shy away from virtuous acts
- ◆ *Budh bal da daataa vaheguroo noo jaananaa*
Appreciate intellect and power as gifts of the all-knowing wondrous Lord.
- ◆ *Sugandh (kasam sahu) dae kar itbaar janaaoun vaalae tae yakeen nahee karnaa*
Have no faith in oaths sworn by those only wanting to convince.
- ◆ *Sutantar vicharna. Raaj Kaaj dian kamaan tae doosrae mutaa dia purshaan noo huk nahee daenaa*
Maintain independence of thought. In the affairs of governing, do not give the power of religious authority to those of other faiths.
- ◆ *Raajnatee parhnee*
Study and learn about policies of governance.
- ◆ *Dushman naal saam, daam, bhaed, aadiak, upaa vartnae ate uprant udh karnaa*
When dealing with enemies, practice diplomacy, employ a variety of tactics and exhaust all techniques before engaging in warfare.
- ◆ *Shaster vidyaa atae ghorhae di savaari da abhiaas karnaa*
Train in the skills of weaponry and horsemanship.
- ◆ *Doosrae mataa dae pustak, vidyaa parhnee. Pur bhrosaa drirh Gurbanee, Akaal Purakh tae karnaa*
Study the books and beliefs of other faiths, but keep trust in Gurbani and Akal Purakh.
- ◆ *Guroopdaesaa noo dhaaran karnaa*
Follow the Gurus' teachings.

❖ **Raheraas da paath kar kharai ho kae ardaas karnee**

After reciting Rehras [evening prayers], stand up to perform Ardas.

❖ **Saun valae sohila atae 'paun guru pani pita...' salok parhnaa**

Recite the late evening prayer Sohila and the verse "Pavan guru pani pita..." before sleeping.

❖ **Dastaar binaa nahee rehnaa**

Never be without the turban, wear it always

❖ **Singhaa da adhaa naam nahee bulaunaa**

Address a Singh by their entire name, including Singh or Kaur.

❖ **Sharaab nai saevanee**

Do not consume alcoholic beverages.

❖ **Sir munae noo kanaiaa nahee daenee. Uos ghar daeve jithae Akal Purukh dee sikhee ha, jo karza-ai naa hovae, bhalae subhaa da hovae, bibaekae atae gyanvaan hovae**

Do not given a daughter's hand in marriage to a patit but to a household where the tenets of Sikhism are respected, to a household without debt, one of a pleasing nature, which is disciplined and educated.

❖ **Subh kaaraj Gurbane anusaar karnae**

Maintain all business affairs in accordance with the Gurbani.

❖ **Chugalee kar kisae da kam nahee vigaarnaa**

Do not gossip.

❖ **Kaurha bachan nahee kahinaa**

Do not speak in bitterness.

❖ **Darshan yaatraa gurdwaaraa dee hee karnee**

Make pilgrimages for visiting Gurdwaras.

❖ **Bachan karkae paalnaa**

Keep all promises made.

❖ **Pardaesee, lorvaan, dukhee, apung manukh dee yataahshkat seva karnee**

Do as much possible to serve and aid foreigners, those in need, or in trouble.

❖ **Putaree da dhan bikh jananaa**

Considering a daughter's property is repugnant.

❖ **Dikhaavae da Sikh nahee banana**

Do not behave as a Sikh only for show.

ਦਸਮ ਪਿਤਾ ਜੀ ਵੱਲੋਂ ਨਾਂਦੇਤ ਵਿਖੇ ਕੀਤੇ ੫੨ ਹੁਕਮ

੧. ਕਿਸੇ ਧਰਮ ਦੀ ਕਰਨੀ। ੨. ਦਸਵੰਧ ਦੇਣਾ। ੩. ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਕੰਠ ਕਰਨੀ। ੪. ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਵੇਲੇ ਜਾਗਣਾ। ੫. ਪਿਆਰ ਨਾਲ ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਨੀ। ੬. ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਪਾਸੋਂ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦੇ ਅਰਥ ਸਮਝਣੇ। ੭. ਪੰਜ ਕਰਾਜਾਂ ਦੀ ਰਹਿਤ ਧਿਰੁ ਰੱਖਣੀ। ੮. ਸ਼ਰਧਾ ਦਾ ਅਭਿਆਸ ਕਰਨਾ। ੯. ਧਿਆਨ ਸਤਿ-ਸਰੂਪ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਦਾ ਕਰਨਾ। ੧੦. ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਮੰਨਣਾ। ੧੧. ਸਭ ਕਰਾਜਾਂ ਦੇ ਆਰੰਭ ਵੇਲੇ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਕਰਨੀ। ੧੨. ਜੇਮਣ, ਮਹਨ, ਵਿਆਹ, ਅਨੰਦ ਆਦਿ ਸਮੇਂ ਜਪੁ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਕਰਕੇ, ਕਤਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਤਿਆਰ ਕਰਕੇ, ਅਨੰਦ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ, ਅਰਦਾਸ ਕਰਕੇ, ਪੰਜਾਂ ਪਿਆਰਿਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਹਜ਼ੂਰੀ ਗ੍ਰੰਥੀ ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਵਰਤਾਰਾ ਵਰਤਾ ਕੇ ਰੱਖ ਉਪਰੰਤ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਵਰਤਾ ਦੇਣਾ। ੧੩. ਜਦ ਤਕ ਕਤਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਵਰਤਦਾ ਰਹੇ, ਸਾਰੀ ਸੰਗਤ ਅਕੇਲ ਬੈਠੀ ਰਹੇ। ੧੪. ਵਿਆਹ ਅਨੰਦ ਫਿਨਾਂ ਗ੍ਰਹਿਸਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨਾ। ੧੫. ਪਰ-ਵਿਸਤਰੀ ਮਾਂ, ਭੈਣ, ਧੀ ਕਰ ਜਾਣਨੀ। ੧੬. ਵਿਸਤਰੀ ਦਾ ਮੂੰਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਫਿਟਕਾਰਨਾ। ੧੭. ਸਜਣ-ਸੁਠ ਤਮਾਜੁ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਦਾ ਤਿਆਗ ਕਰਨਾ। ੧੮. ਰਹਿਤਕਾਨ ਤੇ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦੀ ਸੰਗਤ ਕਰਨੀ। ੧੯. ਜਿਤਨੇ ਕੰਮ ਆਪਣੇ ਕਰਨ ਦੇ ਹੋਣ, ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਕਰਨ ਵਿੱਚ ਆਲਸ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨਾ। ੨੦. ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਦੀ ਕਥਾ ਅਤੇ ਕੀਰਤਨ ਰੋਜ਼ ਸੁਣਨਾ ਤੇ ਕਰਨਾ। ੨੧. ਕਿਸੇ ਦੀ ਨਿੰਦਾ, ਚੁਕਲੀ ਤੇ ਈਰਖਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨੀ। ੨੨. ਧਨ, ਦੁਆਲੀ, ਕੁਲ-ਜਾਤ ਦਾ ਮਣ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨਾ। ੨੩. ਮੋਤ ਉੱਚੀ ਤੇ ਲੁੱਚੀ ਰੱਖਣੀ। ੨੪. ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮ ਕਰਦੇ ਰਹਿਣਾ। ੨੫. ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਛਲ ਦਾ ਦਾਤਾ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਨੂੰ ਜਾਣਨਾ। ੨੬. ਕਸਮ, ਸਹੁੰ ਚੁੱਕਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਤੇ ਇਤਬਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨਾ।	੨੭. ਸੁਤੰਤਰ ਵਿਚਰਨਾ। ੨੮. ਰਾਜਨੀਤੀ ਵੀ ਪੜ੍ਹਨੀ। ੨੯. ਸ਼ੇਰੂ ਨਾਲ ਸਾਮ, ਦਾਮ, ਭੋਦ ਆਦਿਕ ਉਪਾਓਂ ਵਰਤਣੇ, ਉਪਰੰਤ ਚੁੱਧ ਕਰਨਾ ਧਰਮ ਹੈ। ੩੦. ਸਸਤਰ ਵਿੱਦਿਆ ਤੇ ਖੇਤ-ਸਵਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਅਭਿਆਸ ਕਰਨਾ। ੩੧. ਦੂਸਰੇ ਧਰਮਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਪੁਸਤਕਾਂ, ਵਿੱਦਿਆ ਪੜ੍ਹਨੀ, ਪਰ ਭਰੋਸਾ ਧਿਰੁ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ, ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਉੱਤੇ ਹੀ ਰੱਖਣਾ। ੩੨. ਗੁਰੂ ਉਪਦੇਸ਼ ਧਾਰਨ ਕਰਨੇ। ੩੩. ਰਹਿਦਾਸ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਖੜੇ ਕੇ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਕਰਨੀ। ੩੪. ਸੋਣਾ ਸਮੇਂ ਸੋਹਿਲੇ ਦਾ ਪਾਠ ਕਰਨਾ। ੩੫. ਕੋਸ ਨੱਥੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਰੱਖਣੇ। ੩੬. ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਪੂਰਾ ਨਾਮ ਨੈ ਕੇ ਝੂਠਾਉਣਾ, ਔਧਾ ਨਹੀਂ। ੩੭. ਸਰਾਬ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੀਣੀ-ਨਿਪਾਉਣੀ। ੩੮. ਭਾਵਨੀ (ਸਿਰ ਮੁੱਲੇ) ਨੂੰ ਕੰਨਕਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇਵਣੀ। ਉਸ ਖਰ ਦੇਵਣੀ ਜਿਥੇ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਦੀ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਹੋਵੇ। ੩੯. ਸਭ ਕਾਵਜ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਦੀ ਤਾਇਆ ਤੇ ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਅਨੁਸਾਰ ਕਰਨੇ। ੪੦. ਚੁਕਲੀ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਕੰਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਢਿਙਕਾਰਨਾ। ੪੧. ਕੋਣਾ ਬਚਨ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦਾ ਹਿਰਦਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੁਖਾਉਣਾ। ੪੨. ਵਰਜਨ ਯਾਤਰਾ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਹੀ ਕਰਨੀ। ੪੩. ਬਚਨ ਕਰ ਕੇ ਪਾਣਨਾ। ੪੪. ਅਤਿਥੀ, ਪਰਦੇਸੀ, ਸੰਤਵੰਦ, ਦੁਖੀ, ਅਪੇਂਡ ਮਨੁੱਖ ਦੀ ਯਥਾਸ਼ਕਤ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਨੀ। ੪੫. ਧੀ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ/ਧਨ ਬਿਖ ਕਰ ਜਾਣਨਾ। ੪੬. ਦਿਖਾਵੇ ਦੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਨਹੀਂ ਬਣਨਾ। ੪੭. ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕੇਸਾ ਸੁਆਜਾਂ ਸੰਗ ਨਿਬਾਹੁਣੀ। ਕੇਸਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਗੁਰ ਸਮਾਨ ਜਾਣ ਅਦਾਬ ਕਰਨਾ। ੪੮. ਚੋਰੀ, ਯਾਰੀ, ਠੱਗੀ, ਧੋਖਾ, ਦਫਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਰਨਾ। ੪੯. ਗੁਰਸਿੱਖ ਦਾ ਇਤਬਾਰ ਕਰਨਾ। ੫੦. ਝੂਠੀ ਕਥਾਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਦੇਣੀ। ੫੧. ਝੂਠ ਨਹੀਂ ਕਹਿਣਾ/ਬੋਲਣਾ। ੫੨. ਲੰਗਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਇਕ ਰਸ ਵਰਤਾਉਣਾ।
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ਆਉ ਅਸੀਂ ਪੁਣ ਕਰੀਏ ਜੋ ਸਮਾਂ ਲੰਘ ਗਿਆ ਸੋ ਲੰਘ ਗਿਆ ਅਸੀਂ ਜੁੱਲੇ ਰਹੇ ਹਾਂ ਅੱਜ ਤੋਂ ਦਸਮ ਪਿਤਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਹੁਕਮਾਂ ਤੇ ਪੂਰਾ ਉਤਰਨ ਦੀ ਕੋਸ਼ਿਸ਼ ਕਰਾਂਗੇ

❖ **Sikhi kesaa-suaasa sang nibhaaounnee**

Live and die a Sikh with hair intact and unshorn.

❖ **Chori, yaari, tthugi, dhokaa, dagaa bahee karnaa**

Abstain from thievery, adultery, cheating, deception, swindling and pillaging.

❖ **Jhutthi gavaahee nahee daenee**

Do not make false statements.

❖ **Dhroh nahee karnaa**

Do not participate in fraud.

❖ **Langar Parshaad ik ras vartaaunaa**

Serve langar and prashad with impartiality.

❖ **Sikh da itbaar karnaa**

Have confidence in a Sikh.

Courtesy : The Kalgidhar Society, Baru Sahib

Translating Gurbani

Nishaan's Editor for the Americas, Dr IJ Singh, writes on the "perils and pleasures" of translating from the Gurmukhi



Painting of Bhai Gurdas, writer, historian, preacher and religious figure, who was original scribe of the Guru Granth Sahib.

Today, there is perhaps no continent or country where Sikhs are not present. Wherever we have ventured, we have taken our lifestyle, family values, seductive cuisine, song and dance, and our incomparably enterprising spirit. And we have taken along Sikhi – a unique, universal and timeless message – a way of life that makes us what we are.

We now have a globally connected existence of a nation without walls.

Historically ours has always been a polyglot reality, but now more so than ever. Generations of Sikhs are growing up outside the comfortable cultural cocoon of the Punjab and India. Their *norma loquendi* is no longer

Punjabi or any Indic language; the cultural context, too, has dramatically shifted.

The mythological antecedents of India have shaped many of us, not because they were essential to core values of Sikhi, but because Indian mythology was the overarching cultural context of India. This lore is now alien to a new generation of Sikhs. Many diaspora Sikhs may be more conversant with Greek folktales than with the Indian. This is not unexpected or unwelcome; technology merely hastens the process.

Sikhs in the diaspora remain in an increasingly complex bind, much as any immigrants. We dearly value, what is for us, many of us, our mother tongue, Punjabi, but within our lifespan it has already diminished to a transactional presence, effectively limited to social banter, music and humour. We are not comfortable enough to pick up a book of poetry, history or philosophy in it, and so we usually don't.

Then there is English, but in that, too, our command of the language is frequently transactional. We master it to the extent demanded by our work that puts food on the table, but rarely, if at all, for the pleasure of ideas on history, poetry or philosophy in it.

So, the education of the mind is often effectively stalled in both Punjabi and English.

Now consider this: The repository of our spiritual heritage – Guru Granth Sahib – is traditionally penned in the Gurmukhi (Punjabi) script, but contains little of present-day modern conversational Punjabi vocabulary. In fact, Gurbani showcases the lexicon of many Indic and Middle Eastern languages extant when it was composed 300 to 500 years ago. It is written in the vernacular of the times with copious references to Indian mythology. These are not meant to endorse mythic legends, but to frame the teaching such that it would resonate with the average Indian of that time.

Why?

Clearly, no matter the topic, teaching is best couched in the culture, context and language of the student or else the lesson is lost. I can vouch for this, having taught a very different discipline for umpteen years in the North American university setting.

Most Sikhs in India, but even more, those who have spent lives outside it, are not quite so adept in the Indian languages, and absolutely at sea in much of Indian mythology. Plus, those legends have little or no relevance to our present day lives.

In brief, I submit that many of us are equipped to handle neither any Indian language nor English with much finesse or fluency beyond a rudimentary transactional level. We are equipped to peruse history, philosophy or poetry in neither English nor Punjabi. And the mythology only distracts us. Hence, the dire need of translations; they connect us to the eternal and essential message of Gurbani without disconnecting us from the modern world in which we live.

Moreover, our sacred writings are largely cast in inspired poetry that, to us, is divine. And I don't need to tell you the difficulty in deciphering the mind of a poet when he plays with words, language and meter in the cause of poesy.

Ergo, critically essential are good faith efforts to translate the poetry of Guru Granth to capture its lofty message; how else would we understand or adopt it as a blueprint for our life.

Why translate?

Think a moment of any conversation, no matter how simple, no matter if it is with an arch enemy

or a soul mate. Isn't it accompanied by some thought about what the other person really meant or understood? Isn't that, in effect, a translation of the simplest communication? Understanding the other demands tuning into (translating) his or her moods, gestures, body language and words, and mining them for meaning.

Translation then is the only effective way to delve into what another mind has to offer. War and peace stem from translating or mis-translating each other before framing responses. I aim today to plough a path between the pitfalls and rewards, the bouquets and the brickbats when we dive into translations.

The literary output of human civilizations of yore often comes to us via translations. That's how we know of Homer, the greatest poet of ancient Greece, and of Virgil and Ovid, of similar standing in Rome of a bygone era. We celebrate Kalidasa as the preeminent playwright and poet of ancient India and we access his work through modern translations of it.

How accurately does a translation capture the mind and insights, even the beauty of the poet's meter and language? Such questions are rarely laid to rest, but they give birth to new scholars of the original language and also the one in which a translation is done. Countless PhDs result from such effort.

Times and cultures change, as do languages. Over time, the vernacular becomes opaque, literary language even more so. For instance today, only a few hundred years after Chaucer, his *Canterbury Tales* defy comprehension without translation into modern English. Similar hurdles abound in engaging with classics of Western civilization, such as the writings of Plato, or German and Latin Masters.

How good is any translation? This is not so easily answered, but it deserves an exploration. As examples, let's revisit two classics: the poetry of Omar Khayyam and the King James New Testament.

And then we will segue into the matter of translation of Guru Granth Sahib.

Omar Khayyam was a Persian poet and astronomer who lived from around 1048 to 1131. Some of his quatrains (*Rubaiyat*) have seen at least 15 translations in English and also in German, French and even Indic languages, including Hindi and Bangla.

Why so many English versions? Obviously, scholars suspected a lack of fidelity in the available renderings. In fact, some critics derisively labeled the immensely popular version by Edward FitzGerald as the "*The Rubaiyat of FitzOmar*." FitzGerald himself published five editions in 30 years that show significant variations among them.

A translation depends on how the translator interprets the philosophy and context of the original message. My second example, even more instructive, comes from Christianity.

Many versions of the New Testament exist. The earliest was in the Koine Greek language; some chapters were possibly in Aramaic. Some Hebraic scholars deem the label "New" Testament to be a misnomer open to misinterpretation; they reason that the term "Christian Bible" would be a more accurate title.

The first English translation of the Christian Bible was by followers of John Wycliffe but it was banned in 1409. King Henry VIII authorised an English translation, The Great Bible; another version (The Bishop's Bible) followed in 1568.

The puritans who were part of the Church of England were upset by these versions. In 1604, King James convened the Hampton Court Conference. It proposed a new translation that became the Authorised Version of the Bible in English, and was prepared between 1604 and 1611 by 47 scholars, all members of the Church of England.

Opposition to this Bible surfaced early. Hugh Broughton, a Hebraist scholar, condemned it in 1611; Broughton said that "he would rather be torn in pieces by wild horses than that this abominable translation should ever be foisted upon the English people."

But a hundred years later, it became the Bible in all Anglican and Protestant denominations and remains unchallenged today. However, The Roman Catholic Church continues to follow its own Bible that has seven more books than the King James version.

The history of scriptures in most religions is equally convoluted, except that the Guru Granth Sahib of the Sikhs was compiled by the Founder-Gurus themselves and its authenticity remains unchallenged.

My purpose is not to judge any scriptures but to explore problems inherent in translation and

transmission of a heritage. The many Sikh sites on the Internet are abuzz these days with translation projects. I welcome them but I also wonder.

When my interest in the Guru Granth awakened, my intimacy with its language and grammar was minimal. My stumbling eased when I discovered the 1966 UNESCO publication -- an English translation of selections from Guru Granth and related writings by five iconic masters of the grammar and lexicon of Sikh scriptures – Trilochan Singh, Jodh Singh, Kapur Singh, Bawa Harkishen Singh and Khushwant Singh, and edited by a poet, George Fraser. I still find this by far the best translation, way above any that I have ever seen. It captures the magic, even though now the language seems a little archaic, and the book remains incomplete.

In the early 1970s the first complete translation of Guru Granth Sahib in English by Manmohan Singh appeared. (Ernst Trump's translation was way earlier, but it was incomplete.) Manmohan Singh's phraseology was often awkward; sometimes he left me wondering exactly what he meant. As translations by Gopal Singh, Trilochan Singh, Sant Singh Khalsa, Pritam Singh Chahil, and Kartar Singh Duggal appeared I eagerly pounced on them, but was left flailing and wondering by the language, style or clarity.

In time, I graduated to exegesis in Punjabi by Bhai Vir Singh, Professor Sahib Singh or others. Sometimes they, too, left me untouched and baffled; at times, they appeared to mix unquestioned traditional or mythological lore with the pristine purity of the Guru's message.

All our existing translations bar two are solo efforts – one person's endeavor. The exceptions are the UNICEF publication and the four-volume *Shabdarth* in Punjabi which is not a complete translation, but a guide to difficult words and concepts throughout the Guru Granth; it is published by the SGPC and no single author is identified.

Of many that are possible, I offer you brief examples where the traditional translations often leave me stranded.

Should one literally interpret Baba Farid's recommendation to kiss the feet of the enemy? Or, for that matter, what to make of the traditional take on

the cycle of birth and death; or that even our smallest action is controlled and prewritten by God, which would then leave us no free will and no option to act otherwise.

I don't quite see that a Creator – that Gurbani assures us repeatedly cannot be measured, has no form, shape, colour, caste or gender – sits out there somewhere micromanaging my puny existence, keeping track of all my sins committed or contemplated, and yet all of my actions are in accord with God's prewritten dossier on me.

Such matters often leave one wondering what exactly the Guru meant.

As I see it, living a life in *Hukum*, like walking in the shadow of God, transcends Gurbani's literal rendering. To me it becomes to live in the present – in the moment – to have the courage to change the things we can change, to accept with serenity (as *Hukum*) what we cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.

After all Gurbani is mystical poetry – full of allegories, analogies and metaphors, seldom to be literally translated. Ultimately, the follower of a faith has to interpret what the teaching and the doctrine or traditions mean to him or her.

A translator's lot is never easy. He has to know two cultures intimately: their languages, idioms and traditions, the land and the people, the history and mythology that have shaped them. And then the translator has to navigate between the two realities seamlessly. In the process of translation an early obvious loss is the inability to capture the rhythmic flow and cadence of inspired poetry that transcends the literal rendition.

Given the richness of the original language, grammar and mythology, any translation project promises to be a life-long unfinished quest. Remember that a translator needs to merge the cold-blooded mind of an analyst and grammarian with the warm joyous heart of a poet in an existence of faith. A daunting task but surely, many dedicated translators will come out of it steeped in Sikhi.

Even when the language is not so alien or abstruse, differences in interpretation between equally brilliant minds are not uncommon. Look at the laws of any country. Without plausible and differing interpretations of the same law a society would not

need thousands of lawyers, so many different levels of judiciary, and the courts would never be so busy ferreting out the truth.

For example: what exactly did the framers of our Constitution really mean – is America a Christian nation? How is the line between Church and State to be interpreted? Do differences in interpretation of civil rights exist or don't they?

This says to me then that I, or any Sikh, will always have to struggle to make sense of what the Guru likely meant from an inadequate translation, no matter how good it appears to be. And that becomes the lifelong path of a Sikh.

Do I still get lost? Often! But I am reassured by Gurbani that my smallest, hesitant step towards the Guru would be reciprocated by the Guru covering miles towards me. In other words, grace would pervade and prevail. And that with further analysis, cogitation and reading a sense of the poetry would emerge.

When I realised this, I knew that I was on my way home.

And that's how I grew to like "bad or inadequate" translations. I love all translations; particularly the ones that don't seem so good or easy. They place the onus on me. I then stop and wonder if the Guru could have meant what the translator implies. If the translations had been excellent, I might never have made the struggle my own.

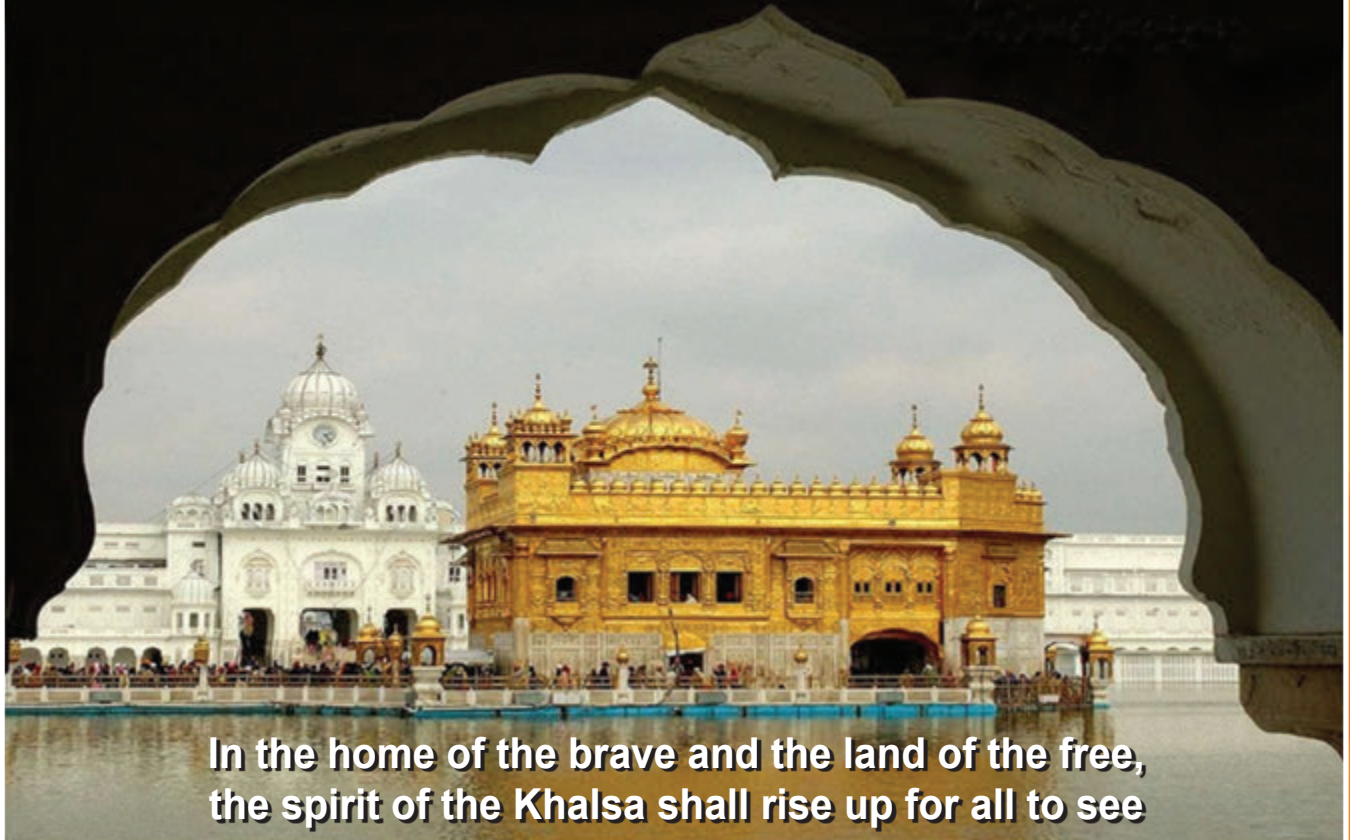
That and a hefty dose of grace make my relationship with the Guru Granth semipiternal. Guru Granth tells us (p. 594) "*Dithay mukt na hoveyee jichhar sabd na karay vichhaar*," it is not the sight of the Guru Granth but thoughtful engagement with the Word that will liberate one.

I laud the translation initiatives but warn of the rocky road ahead, and that what we translate today is not for ever; it would need retranslating and tweaking by every new generation.

No person and no interpretation may be guaranteed to be totally true today and forever. The best scholar or translator, like a lawyer, can only guarantee honesty of effort, not purity of result.

Explore the translations, old and new, and keep at hand the original text of Gurbani.

The Chardi Kalaa Foundation



In the home of the brave and the land of the free,
the spirit of the Khalsa shall rise up for all to see

Strategies for True Happiness – Naam Simran

- ❖ Naam Simran – leads to a state of equipoise and Chardi Kalaa, transcending pleasure and pain

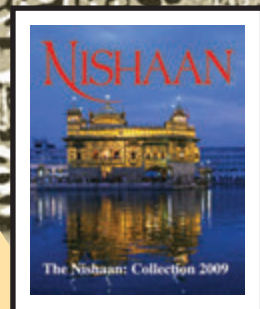
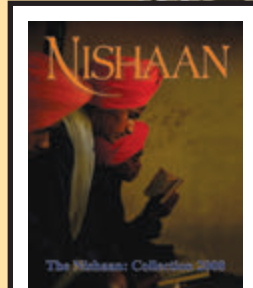
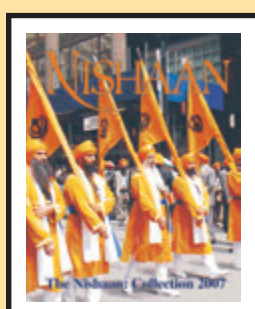
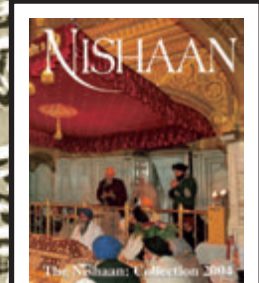
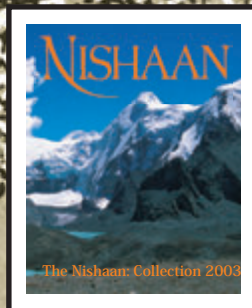
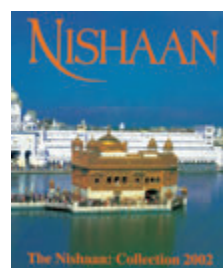
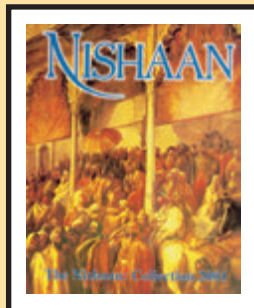
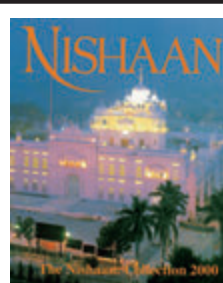
ਕਬੀਰ ਹਰਿ ਕਾ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਜੋ ਕਰੈ ਸੋ ਸੁਖੀਆ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ॥ Kabeer,
whoever meditates in remembrance on the Lord, he alone is
happy in this world.

ਇਤ ਉਤ ਕਤਹਿ ਨ ਡੋਲਈ ਜਿਸ ਰਾਖੈ ਸਿਰਜਨਹਾਰ ॥ ੨੦੬ ॥

Protected by the Creator Lord, he shall never waver, here or here-
after ॥ 206 ॥ - Kabeer, SGGS pg.1375

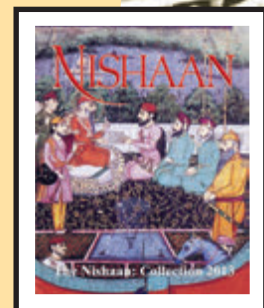
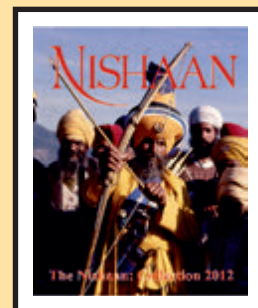
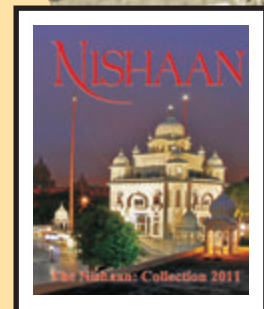
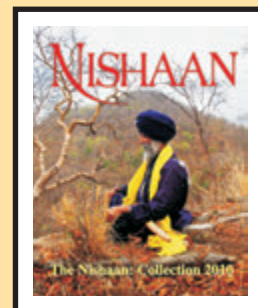
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