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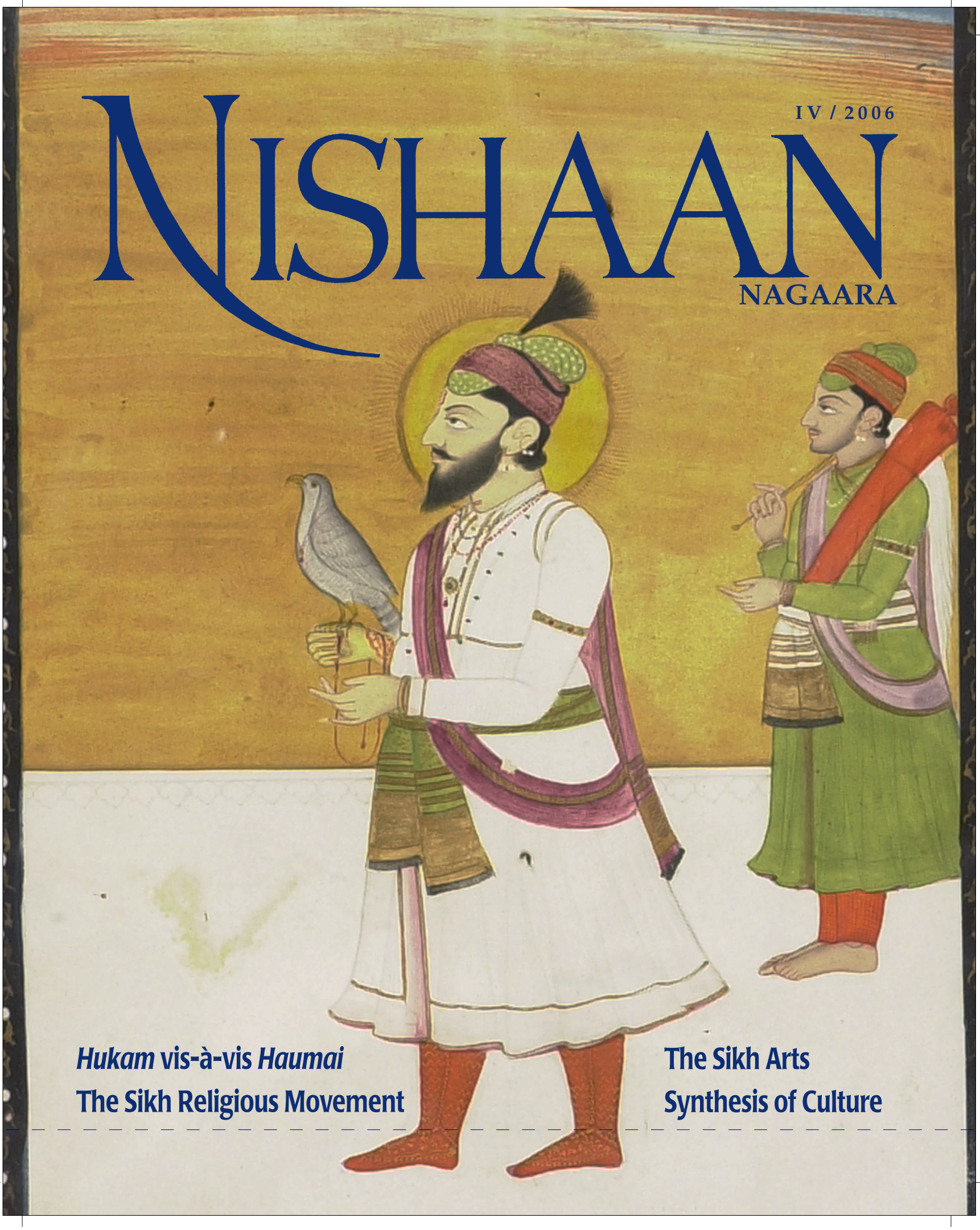

Hukam vis-à-vis *Haumai*
The Sikh Religious Movement

The Sikh Arts
Synthesis of Culture

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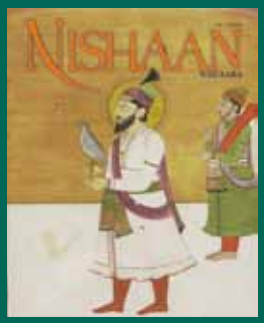

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Editorial

HUKAM

These thoughts on *Hukam* in Sikh scriptures were penned by Professor Darshan Singh Maini who was Editorial Director of the *Nishaan* for several years after its beginning. 'DSM' as he was universally known, passed away in January 2007 and in our humble tribute to him, we reproduce some excerpts from his writing on the subject which appeared in the Nishaan Issue II/2001.

The concluding lines of the first *pauri* of Guru Nanak's greatest composition, the *Japji* says:

Hukam Raja-ee Chalna

Nanak Likhia Naal

To live in the Will of God, Nanak,

Is the writ ordained thereof.

This primal concept is elaborated in the second *pauri* in rich ramification. From the Creation willed into existence by Him to the questions of birth and rebirth of greatness and station, of nobility and meanness and so on. With the Master's characteristic opulence of thought and variations in the *Japji* and in his other great *banis, Hukam* remains a running refrain. No wonder, this concept develops into a nuclear theme in the compositions of the first five Gurus in the *Adi Granth* compiled by Guru Arjan Dev.

To be sure, *Hukam* informs the thought of the later Gurus also, particularly of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the Tenth or Final Master, Guru Gobind Singh in a very special sense, though its first form is made manifest in the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev himself. That supreme event is seen as an awesome example of the Will of God as such as of his devotee, the Guru's cheerful acceptance of his ordained fate, a triumph of his prayerful spirit on the heights. Later, Guru Tegh Bahadur's sense of *bahana* and complete resignation (as expressed in his swan song, *Nauvan Mohalla* in the *Guru Granth*), and the entire life of Guru Gobind Singh which warranted the sacrifice not only of his great father, but also of all his four young sons, among other ordeals of supreme struggles are but an epical extension of the theme of *Hukam* and *Razaa* in dharma and deed.

Since the expressions, *Hukam, Razaa* and *Nadar* are of Arabic-Persian languages, it is obvious that the Sufi movement of Islamic *darveshes* and divines which had deeply touched Indian consciousness in the centuries preceding Guru Nanak's advent had also later found an eloquent and rich variation in the Sikh scriptures. And the new overtones developed into sounds of symphony which comprehended such thoughts from Hindu *bhaktas* and Dalit devotees too.

What needs really to be understood is the way that reconciles the acceptance of God's Will and Command with evil and unmerited suffering in present life. The concept of past karma and punishment somehow doesn't always explain certain contradictions and difficulties encountered in the process. For the *gurbani's* apotheosis of life's endless blessings, magnaminities, postures and opulences and man's forceful, God-conscious participation the affairs of the world ought to cancel out whatever baggage of karma he carries with him. And if this life is only an opportunity, a boon and a blessing to redeem oneself, then the presence of evil in all its form and its effects in unwarranted suffering, even if taken as a test of one's readiness for redemption somehow do not quite go well with the deepest humanist thought in Sikh scriptures. Somehow, the agony of understanding abides.

That all contradictions and contraries and polarities are reconciled in the grand design of God is a well-known concept, and at the humanist level, one finds it so eloquently and magnificently expressed in the work of those earthy mystics who celebrate life with all its beauties—and terrors.

As compared with Sikh theology, the Christian is so deeply involved in the problematic of evil as to have made it a primal issue. From the ideal of 'the original sin' and Adam's fall, Satan has never been absent from its theological thought and strongly colours the conduct of certain extremist, fundamentalist churches, both in Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The Manichean school, in particular, has developed a kind of pathological pedagogy and rhetoric.

Obviously, my references to British and American writers in an essay on the theme of *Hukam* would strike some readers as an odd exercise, but since I did not find anything in this depth and range in the Punjabi novelist and playwrights (whose work has come to my notice in some measure), I felt inclined to offer examples from the literature I'm more familiar with. The idea was to suggest that the question of evil in its profoundest form still remains to be seen critically examined in Sikh theological thought, and still remains to be dramatised in Punjabi fiction and drama.

It is not as though the question of evil receives no visionary attention in the *bani* of the Sikh Gurus and divines, only it hasn't in a major way, concerned our theological thinkers and explicators. And the reasons are obvious enough, for even the consciousness of evil (as in Guru Nanak's pointed reference to the menace of murderers, cut-throats, and the whole evil tribe in the *Japji*) and the evocation of the evil, of ungodly political power and tyranny in his Babar Vani doesn't, in Sikh thought, assume vast inexplicable dimensions. To live morally and authentically in the midst of evil is assumed, for in the final analysis, it does not disturb the spiritual equipoise if one is attuned to the Will of God.

However, in Sikh thought, the idea of *sada vigaas* of the spirit is always in buoyancy whatever the ground realities, lays aside the question of pure tragedies and unmerited, inexplicable suffering. It's a supreme concept, but men and women can seldom rise above their nature which has constitutive darknesses, Freudian depths in it. *Nam Simran* is, of course, the only way out, but those immersed in the sea of suffering know how arduous is the condition that demands a positive response when all manner of negativities keep the mind pushing into the pit of uncertainties.

I think, it's in that area that the modern scholars of Sikh theology have to come up with arguments that are, to be sure, subsumed in the *bani* of the Gurus, but need to be made more transparent for those whose knowledge and reach are limited. One would wait for an authoritative, well-researched, well-documented essay or treatise on the obstrusive question of evil.

I wrote this about six months before mid-December 2000, when I felt the touch of God on my body and being. God's grace had, in sum, materialised to lift my spirits, and regenerate me. The last issue of the *Nishaan* carried two little poems from me, one called *Shukrana* in Punjabi (my first-ever to be published) and the other in English entitled 'A Request, A Prayer'. In my new poetry volume, to be published later this year, the whole concluding section carries the poems that seek to translate my partial vision and recovery. And I think, my observations on suffering, nadir, hukam and evil now fall into a pattern I had been seeking for so long. I'm, therefore, concluding this article with one of the new poems:

The Third Ear

As I lay in the warm winter sun,
Soaked in the sea of waves
Washing over me, dissipating
The arctic chill of years
In my stricken bag of bones,
Bee-hives of tender, lyric dreams
And memories began to buzz
As though the summer were
wintering in a world apart.

Supine, surprised, sweetened
In the lawn-bed, and in a swoon,
I heard, I thought, a symphony
Of bird, bud and breeze,
And the third ear deep within me
Responded, as it were, in concert,
Erasing lines, levels, latitudes,
Joining the ear and the heavens
In a nuptials of naked notes.

And thus moments dissolved
Into moments, echoes into echoes,
And I felt blessed as though touched
In the noon of my being,
Eyes enchanted, turning tears
Into stars in the grinning sun,
Carrying me, a wandering feather,
Over the far heaths and hills,
My greening, I knew had begun.

DSM

Hukam vis-à-vis Haumai
The Guru Granth Perspective

Hukam (Divine Will) and *Haumai* (individual will), are the cardinal concepts of Guru Granth Sahib, and both are apparently antagonistic to each other. There are frequent references in the holy scripture enunciating to this fact that realization of *hukam* leads to the elimination of ego.[1] On the one hand, there is one God who manifests Himself as Divine Will and, on the other hand, there is man, who is created by God. Man is endowed with a sense of individuation in accordance with his past deeds, but he has to obey the dictates of Divine Ordinance, for his final fulfillment. Man is, indeed, the centre of the universe, being assigned with superior status in the hierarchy of creation. Man has a dual nature, both shallow and profound, either of which may become habitual.[2] While the former consists of his natural endowments, that is, sensations, instincts, ego, doubt and personal interests, the latter includes spiritual aspects,which is freedom of spirit and self-transcendence.[3] The ultimate end of human life is to transcend this duality, to realise the oneness of reality and this is possible only by reconciling individual will with that of the Divine.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to analyse both concepts from the philosophical point of view to highlight first, the ontological as well as cosmological status of *hukam*, second, the nature of *haumai* as a psychological propensity and third, how and in what way the realisation of *hukam* leads to the elimination of *haumai*?

Hukam as an imperative, or Divine Will, is a theological concept, which was not prevalent in ancient Indian tradition. *Hukam* is both subjective as well as objective and is variously defined by different scholars. In the words of Dr Sher Singh, *hukam* stands for conative tendency of conscious-*chit* 'Brahman'. God as doer (*Kara*) is mere Will and not an audible sound. God is both transcendent and immanent, i.e., *Nirguna* or *Aphur* state which is the Unknowable Will and *Sarguna* or *Saphur* state which is Will or *hukam* and is the source of whole creation.[4] Generally, *hukam* is understood as operating in two ways, i.e. as an external law or command and as internal to self.

According to Dr Avtar Singh, *hukam* is not any external law applied to the self, but is integral to it.[5] Speaking about the all-pervasive or universal aspects of *hukam*, he further says, "it is within self in the sense that the self has to realise it from within, but it is objective in the sense that it is the ideal which the self has to realise and as universal it transcends this particularity."[6] However, *hukam* is defined as "precisely our real being, the best in us, which is good and just and is approved by God or to say, it is God manifesting in us."[7] Referring to the internal aspect of *hukam*, Dr Jodh Singh defines it as "the analytical discriminatory wisdom lodged in every man".[8]

A vivid exposition of the all-pervasive nature of *hukam* is given in the beginning of *Japuji Sahib*, where a question is posed as "how can one become *sachiar* and how can get rid of falsehood?". The instant answer given is "by abiding to the Divine Will which is inscribed within every person"[9]. As a cosmological dynamic principle, *hukam* regulates the whole cosmos and manifests itself in multifarious ways. Nothing is beyond the purview of *hukam*, rather all cosmic processes such as the creation of all forms of species and their sustenance, variation in the status of creatures, occurrence of joy and pain, blissfulness and transmigration of individual soul, and so on are within *hukam*.[10] The expanse of *hukam* is beyond limits and it encompasses not only this world but also the underworld sphere, regions, and forms.[11] The all-comprehensive nature of *hukam* is explicitly defined in *Rag Maru*:

> *Tis through the Lord's Will that one comes (into the world) or leaves this world.*
>
> *Yea, it is through the Will that the world came into being;*
>
> *And the heaven and the earth and the underworld;*

And He upholds the creation too through His Will.

Yea, whosoever submits to the Will is robed at the Lord's Court and him the Lord causes to Meet with and Merge in His Truth.[12]

Therefore, the origin, sustenance and dissolution of the cosmos is within the domain of *hukam*. Man's emergence in the world and his disappearance, his conception and process of taking birth takes place in accordance with the Divine Will. The evolvement of the world and the enjoyment of earthly things is possible only in Divine Will.[14]

Hukam is also portrayed in the form of theological determinism, which takes into account all the psycho-physical activities of man. Human life is transitory and death is an inevitable reality, nonetheless, the supreme aim of life is to reunite with the Ultimate Reality. However, man's subjection to death or mergence in truth is not in his hands, but is determined in accordance with Divine Will.[15] All the spiritual, moral and cognitive pursuits of man's life occur in Divine Will, therefore, he has no power to choose for the attainment of liberation or degeneration into hell; involvement in worldly *maya* or devotion to God; realization of knowledge or remaining in ignorance.[16] This all-pervasive *hukam* is also ineffable, inscrutable and beyond human comprehension and, therefore, cannot be described in words. None can define the limits of Divine Ordinance as well as the deeds of the Supreme Being which are beyond any account.[18] However, the Sovereign God who gives commands and determines the way of life is Himself carefree.[19]

The question arises, how does *hukam* operate in man's life? There is no doubt that all happens in Divine Will, yet the operation of Divine Will is not arbitrary, but is in accordance with man's past deeds.[20] Man cannot obliterate the writ of eternity, because it is written by Divine Will and this cannot be erased by any human efforts. Man gathers only that which is written in his lot in accordance with past deeds. This process is a mystery for ordinary man, who, being in ignorance, always commits the error of assuming himself as the doer. Only the God-oriented person can realise it by the Divine Grace.[21] Such enlightened person's enjoyment, equanimity, peace of mind, contemplation of Name, etc, all occur in Divine *hukam*.[22]

Haumai, on the other hand, is ego, self-centeredness or self-assertion which leads to a sense of individuation by delimiting man's consciousness. Generally, it is held that ego is the product of man's interaction with the physical and social environment.[23] Man's physical structure, family, social values and other institutions are responsible for the formation of ego. If this type of attitude becomes confirmed, then such a person finds greater security in his own capacities, his mental and intellectual efficiency and his worldly possessions. This type of behaviour creates in man a feeling of self-assertion and vanity, and always keeps him away from his real self.[24]

The paradoxical nature of *haumai* is delineated in *Guru Granth Sahib*, stating the cause of its origin in *hukam* itself. *Haumai* originates in man in accordance with the Divine Will. Though *haumai* is a chronic malady, yet it has a remedy that lies in itself. Guru Angad has explicitly defined this nature of *haumai*:

The nature of Ego is that we act in Ego.

The bondage of Ego is that we are bound in the cycle of birth and death.

How is Ego born? In which way is the release?

Yea, this is the Lord's Will that, in Ego one follows the Writ of habit.

Ego is a chronic malady: yet it is treatable,

If Lord be in Grace, one practices the word of the Guru.

Says, 'Nanak': "Hear ye men, thus is this malady cured."[25]

However, man's ego is the basis of his personality and it permeates throughout his life, regulates his behaviour pattern and determines his conduct. This type of ego expresses itself in divergent ways, viz, in the form of individual ego and in the form of collective ego. The individual ego is reinforced due to one's status, power, possession, wealth, beauty, and so on, and it alienates man from his higher self as well as from his fellow-beings. The Sikh Gurus have emphatically condemned this type of *haumai* which in its most subtle form appears in the performance of righteous deeds, acquisition of knowledge, religious ceremonies, rituals, possessions of wealth and of caste. This evil of ego grips the whole world and one can get rid of it only through the word of the Guru.[26]

On the other hand, collective egoism may appear in the religious or sectarian form and is more formidable than individual egoism. It isolates one

religious group or sect from another and is the cause of all conflicts, disputes and multifarious social and political problems.

As a psychological propensity, *haumai* is the principle of ownership as well as of unification of mental states. It is dependent on intellect (*buddhi*) which produces mental states through which objects of mundane world can be perceived. The Ego cannot function in its absence. Hence, it creates co-ordination among the various mental states of an individual as well as differentiates one individual from the other. The human body is the outward manifestation of ego. The birth of a person is due to the assumption of a new body by the empirical ego, which survives bodily death. Hence, man's finitude is not due to his bodily existence, but due to the ego.[27] Defining *haumai* as the cause of everything, Guru Amar Das says:

> *The human body itself is individuation; all creation manifests itself in individuation.*
>
> *But individuation leads to utter darkness and so one knows not (the unitive experience).*[28]

Therefore, the world came into being through a sense of individuation (*haumai*) and it comes to grief, forsaking the Divine Naam.[29] Admittedly, *haumai* is a great and subtle psychological barrier between man and God. It works in man's life as a self-evident reality, contaminates all his deeds and serves as a stumbling block in the way of self-realization. Man visualises the worldly objects with this ego-consciousness and thereby classifies them into categories and assumes the attitude of self-assertion. His reaction to certain situations, his acceptance, rejection and gratification of some values is regulated by this ego-formation, it also determines man's attitude of stability in his response to certain social issues, his stands and commitments, his own ideas, his relations and his values which differentiate him from others. In this way, man's self-identity as evolved and dependent on the stability of ego-consciousness may become impediment in the way of progress. If man is adamant to certain patterns of behaviour, they will serve as anchorage relative to which he visualises his status, prestige and feels secure in the social scheme. Hence he tries to protect and maintain the stability of these anchorages and would not allow any change and divergence in his strong commitments and if it is there, that may create psychic disorder and tension.[30]

Haumai, in this sense, is a great malady and it indicates maladjustment of an individual to his surroundings. Man's identification with the false self delimits his consciousness and creates fragmentary and narrow vision. This type of attitude is, therefore, the cause of all evils, such as selfishness, hatred, vanity, jealousy, rigidity and dogmatism and creates a feeling of self-centeredness, self-alienation, self-doubt and inner-emptiness. These mental ills found outward expression in three ways, viz, ambition for worldly possessions and accumulation by misappropriation, recognition or status and striving for power. Thus alienating himself from his inner self, such persons finds security in mundane things which enhance his illusions and instigate him to exploit others. This type of nature of egoistic person is vividly portrayed in Guru Granth Sahib where it is stated that no one can satiate the thirst of desire, just as the fire is not satiated with any quantity of firewood.[31]

Now the question arises, how does realization of *hukam* lead to the elimination of *haumai*? There are two types of statements in the holy scripture, one stating the supremacy and all-pervasiveness of *hukam* and the other depicting man's ego-consciousness (*haumai*) expressing itself in the form of a separate identity. It is, however, emphatically stated that by realizing, understanding and submitting to the Divine Will, one can transcend the ego-consciousness. There are frequent references to substantiate this fact, viz, *hukam pachanai*, *hukam bujhai*, *hukam maniai*, *hukam razai chalna*, *hukam samaie*. The realization of *hukam*, indeed, is a sign of union with God.[32] No type of wisdom at the cognitive level can excel the realization of *hukam*.[33]

There is no denying the fact that man emerges in Divine Will. Nonetheless, with his ego-consciousness, he may obey or disobey the Divine Will. This egoistic tendency of man is beautifully explained by W E Sangster as:

> *Within a tiny orbit, we can withstand even God. We cannot pluck the sun from the sky or extinguish the stars or stop the whirling planets, but we can turn our backs upon God, and live as though He were not there.*[34]

A similar view is expressed by William James when he observes that everything in nature and every creature is the working of God. The creature

has no power to create anything or to change the course of events or the working of God, but he has the Free Will which he can use in concurring with or resisting the working of God in nature.[35]

Hukam is an immanent principle and the emergence of all beings is within *hukam*, though all beings are not attuned to *hukam*. The egoistic nature of man is a step towards man's defiance of Divine Will and causes the individual soul's duality from the Supreme Soul. So long as man's consciousness is ego-centric, all his thoughts, feelings and actions are directed towards self-gratification for which he suffers, and when he realizes the Divine Will, he becomes blissful.[36] The self is taken as one whole and not as split into transcendent and empirical elements. Defining the nature of self, Professor Nirbhai Singh opines, "so far as the self is in the cocoon of the ego, his deeds are hypothetical imperatives, but once it realises as categorical imperative".[37] Here all contradiction between 'ought' and 'is' transcended by reconciliation of *haumai* with *hukam*. This reconciliation is possible by realising and submitting to the Divine Will. Nevertheless, the submission does not mean passive surrender to the Divine Will, rather it is a conscious recognition of duties as such, as well as their performance is the realization of *hukam* in *raza*.[38] It also points to the continuous efforts of man to negate the individual will's separate ego vis-à-vis the Divine Will.

There is presence of divine in man, but what he needs to realise is the consciousness of this divine presence. For this purpose, the integration of inward and outward nature is the preliminary condition. The stress ought to be on inward vigilance and outward efficiency in order to transform life in spiritual terms. The self of man has to go within it to know its divinity as well as to get outside of itself to realise its cosmic nature and finally it has to go beyond itself to have a living contact with the Supreme Being. When man's individual will surrenders itself to the Divine Will through contemplation of the word of the Guru, the divine preceptor, then the opposition disappears and there remains no dichotomy between the subject and the object. This type of realization or the oneness with Divine Will, is indeed cosmic consciousness which liberates man from the fluctuations of impulsive life as well as from the limits of social injunctions and moral codes and inculcates in him a spirit to participate in cosmic love.[39]

A person with a diverse enlarged consciousness is a free moral agent and active in social life. His actions are not motivated by any selfish desire but by an altruistic spirit. By his acts, he participates in the working of God, not under any moral obligation but spontaneously as a functional expression of his evolved nature. By attuning to *hukam* (Divine Will), man attains spiritual enlightenment and such a person is denominated in the holy scripture as *jivan-mukta*, *gurumukh* or *brahmajnani* and this state is known as *sehaj-avastha*, *turiya avastha*, *param pad* and *amara-pad*.[40] This cosmic consciousness means realization of the inner unity and identity as well as intuitive perception of the inner truth of things and beings. This type of consciousness is not a complete extinction of ego-consciousness, but rather its sublimation though transcendence and participation in the cosmic consciousness.

However, the philosophical implication of submission to Divine Will lies in the attainment of the spirit of equanimity or indifference to the joys and sorrows of life. Such a God-oriented person serves others, contemplates and merges in *hukam*.[41] Here one may ask, is it possible for man to obey or to disobey the Divine Will at his own initiative? It is clearly mentioned in the holy scripture that only those can submit to *hukam* on whom is bestowed Divine Grace.[42] But Divine Grace is not arbitrary but is conferred on those on whom the Writ is so inscribed due to their own deeds.[43]

To recapitulate, the concept of *hukam* vis-à-vis *haumai* is expatiated from the metaphysical Will as from the psychological perspective in Guru Granth Sahib. To realise the *summum bonum* of life, i.e. non-duality between the individual will and the Divine Will, the prerequisite condition is to realise the nature of *haumai* as well as of *hukam* and thereby submission to the Divine Will. This type of submission or surrender does not lead to inner emptiness or to a state of nothingness, rather it strengthens the true self by emancipating man from his finitude. Hence, the emphasis is not on complete extinction of ego, but it is on the sublimation of ego-consciousness and this can be attained by losing oneself in a higher goal than oneself or by transforming one's ego-centric pattern to God-centered pattern and thereby participating in universal or cosmic consciousness.

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13. ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਨਿੰਮਿਆ ਪਿਆਰੈ ਹੁਕਮੈ ਉਦਰ ਮਝਾਮਰ ।। ਹੁਕਮੈ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਜੰਮਿਆ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਊਧਉ ਸਿਰ ਕੈ ਭਾਰਿ ।।
Ibid, p. 636.

14. ਹੁਕਮੈ ਪਰਪੰਚ ਪਸਰਿਆ ਹੁਕਮਿ ਕਰੇ ਰਸ ਭੋਗ ਜੀਉ ।।
Ibid, p. 1081.

15. ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਭੇ ਊਪਜਹਿ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਹਿ ।।
ਹੁਕਮੀ ਕਾਲੈ ਵਸਿ ਹੈ ਹੁਕਮੀ ਸਾਚਿ ਸਮਾਹਿ ।।
ਨਾਨਕ ਜੋ ਤਿਸੁ ਭਾਵੈ ਸੇ ਥੀਐ ਦਿਨਾ ਜੰਤਾ
ਵਸਿ ਕਿਛੁ ਨਾਹਿ ।।
Ibid., p. 55.

16. ਹੁਕਮੇ ਮੁਕਤੀ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਨਰਕਾ ।।ਹੁਕਮਿ ਸੈਸਾਰੀ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਭਗਤਾ ।।
ਹੁਕਮੇ ਹੋਛਾ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਦਾਨਾ ਦੂਜਾ ਨਾਹੀ ਅਵਰੁ ਥੜਾ ।।
Ibid, p. 108.

17. ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਕਹਿਆ ਜਾਈ ।।
Ibid, p. 1.

18. ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਜਾਪੀ ਕੇਤੜਾ ਕਹਿ ਨ ਸਕੀਜੈ ਕਾਰ ।।
Ibid, p. 1241.

19. ਹੁਕਮੀ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਚਲਾਏ ਰਾਹੁ ।।
ਨਾਨਕ ਵਿਗਸੈ ਵੇਪਰਵਾਹੁ ।।
Ibid, p. 2.

20. ਹੁਕਮਿ ਚਲਾਏ ਆਪਣੈ ਕਰਮੀ ਵਹੈ ਕਲਾਮ ।।
Ibid., p. 1241;
ਪੂਰਬਿ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਕਿਉ ਮੇਟੀਐ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਲੇਖੁ ਰਜਾਇ ।।
Ibid, p. 59.

21. ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਆਵਦਾ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਜਾਇ ।।
ਜੇ ਕੋ ਮੂਰਖੁ ਆਪਹੁ ਜਾਣੈ ਅੰਧਾ ਅੰਧੁ ਕਮਾਇ ।।
ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਕੋ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੁਝੈ ਜਿਸ ਨੋ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰੇ ਰਜਾਇ ।।,
Ibid., p. 556.

22. Ibid, p. 962.

23. *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol. 14, Collier Macmillan Inc., London, 1968, p. 152.

24. K G V, Durckheim, *The Way of Transformation* (tr by Ruth Levinnek and P K Travers,) George Allen and Unwin London, 1971, p. 88.

25. ਹਉਮੈ ਏਹਾ ਜਾਤਿ ਹੈਉਮੈ ਕਰਮ ਕਮਾਹਿ ।।
ਹਉਮੈ ਏਈ ਬੰਧਨਾ ਫਿਰਿ ਫਿਰਿ ਜੋਨੀ ਪਾਹਿ ।।
ਹਉਮੈ ਕਿਥਹੁ ਊਪਜੈ ਕਿਤੁ ਸੰਜਮਿ ਇਹ ਜਾਇ ।।
ਹਉਮੈ ਏਹੋ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੈ ਪਇਐ ਕਿਰਤਿ ਫਿਰਾਹਿ ।।
ਹਉਮੈ ਦੀਰਘ ਰੋਪਜੈ ਹੈ ਦਾਰੂ ਭੀ ਇਸੁ ਮਾਹਿ ।।
Guru Granth Sahib, p 466 (tr. Dr gopal Singh, op cit, Vol 2, p. 460.

26. ਐਸਾ ਗਰਬੁ ਬੁਰਾ ਸੰਸਾਰੈ ।।
ਜਿਸੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਗਰਬੁ ਨਿਵਾਰੈ ।।
Ibid., p. 224.

27. NK Devaraja (ed.) *Indian Philosophy Today*, Macmillan Company, New Delhi, 1975, pp 73-75.

28. ਹਉਮੈ ਸਭੁ ਸਰੀਰੁ ਹੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਉਪਤਿ ਹੋਇ ।।
ਹਉਮੈ ਵਡਾ ਗਬਾਰੁ ਹੈ ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਬੁਝਿ ਨ ਸਕੈ ਕੋਇ ।।,
Guru Granth Sabib, p. 560, (tr) Dr Gopal Singh, op. cit., p. 548.

29. ਹਉਮੈ ਵਿਚਿ ਜਗੁ ਉਪਜੈ ਪੁਰਖਾ ਨਾਮਿ ਵਿਸਰਿਐ ਦੁਖੁ ਪਾਈ ।।,
Ibid, p. 946.

30. *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, Vol 14, pp. 153-158

31. Guru Granth Sahib, p. 672.

32. ਪ੍ਰਭ ਮਿਲਣੈ ਕੀ ਇਹ ਨੀਸਾਣੀ ।।
ਮਨਿ ਇਕੋ ਸਚਾ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੀ ।।
Ibid., p. 106.

33. ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣੈ ਖਸਮ ਕਾ ਦੂਜੀ ਅਵਰ ਸਿਆਣਪ ਕਾਇ ।।
Ibid, p. 991.

34. Christian Advocate, March 6, 1952, p. 7.

35. Quoted by Aldous Huxley, *The Perennial Philosophy*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1969, p. 191.

36. ਜਬ ਲਗੁ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਬੂਝਤਾ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਲਉ ਦਖੀਆ ।।
ਗੁਰ ਮਿਲਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਪਛਾਣਿਆ ਤਬ ਹੀ ਤੇ ਸੁਖੀਆ ।।
Guru Granth Sahib, p. 400.

37. Nirbhai Singh, *Philosophy of Sikhism*, Atlantic Publishers, New Delhi, 1990, pp. 227-28.

38. Avtar Singh, op. cit. p. 130.

39. Radhakamal Mukherjee, *The Way of Humanism*, Academic Books, New Delhi, 1968, p. 80.

40. Guru Granth Sabib, pp 359, 154, 227, 725.

41. ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਮੰਨੈ ਸਹ ਕੇਰਾ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਹੀ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਏ ।।
ਹੁਕਮੋ ਸੇਵੇ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਅਰਾਧੇ ਹੁਕਮੇ ਸਮੈ ਸਮਾਏ ।।
Ibid, pp. 1422-23.

42. ਹੁਕਮੁ ਭੀ ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਮਨਾਇਸੀ ਜਿਨ੍ਹ ਕਉ ਨਦਰਿ ਕਰੇਇ ।।
Ibid., p. 510.

43. ਨਾਨਕ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਮਨਾਇਸੀ ਭਾਈ ਜਿਨਾ ਪੁਰੇ ਕਾਇਆ ਨਾਉ ।।
Ibid, p. 1419.

Dasam Granth

Scholastics of Guru Gobind Singh

Dasam Granth is a monumental work, an encyclopaedia, as it were, in which all the possible themes and forms of verse are treated with the skill of a virtuoso. It represents all the traditions and currents of literature, devotional as well as secular, side by side with new experiments that a true poetic genius would love to make out of the sheer exuberance of creative energy. It reflects the spirit of the times, when the saint and the hero were the natural leaders of society and the state; when religious intolerance and political insecurity deeply affected the minds of people in the reign of incompetent or irresponsible rulers; when men and women were, as a rule, interested more in activities that sustained life rather than in politics: and when the rhythm of life was rather slow and leisurely.

That age is gone, its natural leaders are gone, its milieu, too, is gone. The state has forged new powers and new values. Society has forged a new consciousness. The poets respond with new sensibilities. The milieu inspires new themes. And the past has been relegated into neglected books.

Before delving into the literary significance of the work, it is necessary to gather up the myraid threads in a brilliant pattern.

The *Dasam Granth* enshrines the literary traditions of devotional and didactic verse found in the *Adi Granth* as well as those by Kabir and other *Bhaktas*, in Punjabi as well as in Braji. The *Jaap* is an example of the one, and *Shabad Hazare* of the other, while *Akal Ustat* and *Sri Mukhibak Swaiya*, are examples of the both. In a part of the *Akal Ustat*, there is a vein of satire to which the saints occasionally gave vent when they grew impatient of the slow-awakening of social conscience against tyranny of caste, or of the superstition and ignorance of the mind of the masses.

The *Shabad Hazare*, penned by Guru Arjan Dev is a short lyric quivering with tragic pathos, the anguished cry of a dedicated heart. It strikes the note of humanism which emerges from the poetry of *Bhaktas* who appeal to God in the name of humanity.

The *Gian Parbodh Granth*, which appears to be an incomplete treatise, is an exposition, in the form of a dialogue, of practical philosophy or Dharma (Raj, Daan, Bhag and Mokhsh), on which Bhishma Pitamaha–the great Mahabharata warrior–discoursed before he passed away on the field of Kurukshetra. Evidently, it is an attempt at the revival of the epic philosophy illustrated with incidents from the reigns of kings like Parikshi, Janmejaya and of *rishis* (saints) like Kashyap, Uttank and Austik.

The *Bachitar Natak Granth* follows the Puranic tradition of legends laud with history and retells the deeds of valour performed by Chandi, Chaubis Avtars, Brahma, Rudra and still others. Further, this gives an account of battles fought by Guru Gobind Singh himself in fulfillment of the mission with which he had come into the world. In these numerous heoric actions charged with the thrill of *vir rasa*, are described with a verve and zest that only a solider-poet is capable of. The heroic poetry of Bhushan, the war balladry of Rajputana echoing over the sands of Bhatinda, would have thrilled the soldiers of Sikh faith into re-living the ancient scenes once again. On the communal plane, life had become a constant struggle for existence. The Marathas and Rajputs had taken up the challenge and resolved not to submit any longer to political tyranny. Poetry became an echo of their great spirit.

The heroic exploits of Chandi have been rendered into verse three times, twice in Braj and once again in Punjabi. Before the readers are called

upon to imagine or witness the scenes of action, the horrors of war and engines of destruction in play, they are introduced to epical heroes like Data, Paras Nath, Rama, Krishna and to heroines like Sati Ansuya, Durga, Sita and Radha.

Together with a pageant of allegorical figures like Kamdev, Basan, Hulas, Anand, Bharam, Kalah, Bair, among others in the story of Paras Nath Avtar, the sketches of the heroes form an excellent gallery of portraits. The art of portrait painting reveals a skill that improves upon the conventional technique of *Nayikabhed* and *Nakh-Shikh* which the Riti school– founded by Kashmiri poet Vamana–introduced in the seventeenth century and specimens of which we possess in *Birah Natak* in the *Krisanavtar* and elsewhere.

Contemporary influences are hard to shake off. One adopts them as one adopts the climate into which one is born. The art evolves itself in conformity with technique as in the *Krisanavtar* on the one hand and in the *Jaap* and *Sastra Nam Mala* on the other but transcends its weaknesses in the hands of a master, and achieves refreshing effects in portrait-painting.

Romance was the breath of life in the Punjab of those days, with hills in the north and the west, deep impenetrable jungles along the rivers and a desert to the south. Every village had a watch-tower and every town, a fort. People in adversity migrated by the hundreds, and travelled in caravans. The sight of a stranger spread an alarm and one village gave a signal to another by the beat of a huge drum. The folklore of such a life could not but be romantic, tales of hair-breadth escapes, deeds of chivalry, thrilling adventures, magic, ghosts and news of abduction or clannish fight over a woman. The *Pakhyan Charitra* drew upon such stuff; and one finds in it the romantic tales from varied resources; the Punjabi as well as the Persian, the Pathan or Mughal as well as the ancient, floating scandals of the neighbourhood as well as the infiltrated ones of Rajasthan. These form a body of purely secular form of literature that carries on the native tradition of story-telling which was then primarily oral.

The poetry of the *Dasam Granth*, like the Hindi poetry of the day, has several elements of conventionality in it. This conventionality consists in the traditional use of themes, plot, imagery, from and metre. Form and metre are traditional modes of musical speech, that have been forged by the regional genius after generations of experimentation; but the same cannot be said of theme, plot of imagery. While it is left to geniuses to invent new forms or metres, even the trio can introduce fresh imagery and variety of themes. In Hindi poetry of the middle ages, the stories of Ram and Krishna have been told over and over again. Guru Gobind Singh has, however, *extracted the element of heroism from them without projecting the attitude of a worshipper*.

In plot constructions also, certain conventional devices have found their way into the *Dasam Granth*, a stepmother being enamoured of her step-son and on his refusal to gratify her desires, her anxiety to put him to death; a minister relating a series of stories to the king to enlighten him; the introduction of *Barahmasa* or *Shatritu* to depic–pangs of separation; seeing one's lover in a dream; failing in love with a person at the sight of a picture; change of form; change of sex and so on. The use of such conventions in the Granth is well planned. They have been employed to start the story or give it a turn in the character-narratives.

"Conventionality", says Keay, "in the use of metaphors is another feature of Hindi poetry. Some of these metaphors do no correspond with the fact of nature, but the Hindi poets are never tired of repeating them. The separation of *chakva* bird from its mate at night; the eager waiting of the *chatrak* bird, who is supposed to drink only raindrops, for the beginning of the rainy reason; the *chakar* bird, that is never happy except when gazing on the moon; the swan that knows how to separate milk from the water with which it has been mixed – these and many other stock metaphors are continually recurring in Hindi poets". The same may be said in poetry of the *Dasam Granth*.

Apart from conventional symbolism there is in the *Dasam Granth*, as in Hindi poetry of the *Ritikal*, much of other imagery which is not only conventional but also commonplace. In the description of beauty in this Granth are certain comparisons as the, moon-faced, deer-eyed, cuckoo-voiced, with an elephant-gait, etc. which are found in abundance as the common stock of poets of the period. But many beautiful similes, drawn from a true observation of nature at first hand, are, also, resplendent in poetry of the *Dasam Granth*.

The literary genre, the acrostic, in which every verse begins with the letters of the alphabet in a strictly serial order, is not new. It is said to have its origin in the Apbhransha period of Hindi literature. In the *Adi Granth* a smaller composition of Kabir appears under the name of *Bawan Akhri*. Jayasi also wrote a composition like this under the name of Akravat. The saint poets like Rajjab, Haridas and Sundardas, attempted this kind of composition under the name of *Bawan Akhri*. In the *Dasam Granth*, too, we find similar compositions. It is, however, interesting to note that of the four acrostics found in the *Dasam Granth*, one is conventional, and the others are of a rare type the Hindi literature in that the verses end with the letters of alphabet in serial order, though of course, terminating in vowels which is unavoidable.

Another conventional feature of the *Dasam Granth* which brings it into line with the literature of the *Ritikal*, is its encyclopaedic nature. It covers a wide range of human knowledge including ayurved, astrology, human psychology, geography, hunting warfare and music, and in fact all the sciences and arts to which references have been made. There is a long list of diseases of diverse nature, diseases that have come down to us in the wake of life. They are not only physical ailments but include mental worries as well. The common astrological beliefs, such as the conjunction of the moon and mars that augurs well, also find expression. A psychological touch is imparted to the well-known medical treatment that a wound or cut is healed by fomentation. Indelible pictures of the various places in the country are drawn in a string of well-chosen similes. Intimate knowledge of the habits and ways of various games and birds of prey is displayed. Long lists of various kinds of missiles and weapons of warfare in the descriptions of wars are frequently drawn. Mention of different raags and enumerations of various musical instruments and presentation of word pictures of the strain flowing from them are also contained there in.

The *Dasam Granth*, appears from this summing-up, to be a monument to the genius of Medieval India centred at Anandpur in the Punjab. Its importance is three-fold:

It is a source of material for students of history who turn over the pages of the *Bachitra Natak* for the account of battles that the soldier-writer gives, and those of the *Zafarnama* that Guru Gobind Singh wrote to Aurangzeb as a letter of protest against the breach of the royal word. Historian after historian from Cunningham downwards, has drawn upon the material for its authenticity and clarity.

In the history of Braji literature, as in that of the Punjabi, the *Dasam Granth* has carved a niche for itself, next in order, perhaps, to that of the *Adi Granth*. *Chandi di Var* in Punjabi possesses a place of pride in the Punjabi literature as the first and finest specimen of poetry of viras written in Sirkhandi Chhand for the first time. The Punjabi genius at Anandpur accepted and maintained the literary traditions and conventions of the Braji verse, and at the same time put on them its native stamp of devotion and valour.

It went still further. It re-oriented the art of autobiographya as in the *Bachitra Natak*, and the art of fiction in the *Pakhyan Charitra*, probably the reflexes of a greater ego and a greater tendency towards escapism dominating in Punjabi character.

Apart from historical value of the content and of the experiments made in art forms, the poetry of the *Dasam Granth* has its intrinsic literary value: *lyricism, portrait-painting and heroic as well as narrative verse,* which have made a refreshing appeal to the modern generation. In any selection of the medieval Braji verse, the *Dasam Granth* would yield rich harvest.

Passages of lyrical beauty are found in every form of verse, devotional, heroic or erotic, rich in imagery and music and instinct with emotion. In the *Akal Ustat*, and *Shabad Hazare*, however, we find short lyrics like 'gems of purest ray'. Some of them are poignant, the cry of a soul in anguish.

In portrait-painting or even in description of nature, verse of the *Dasam Granth* attains a high water-mark in achieving effects of beauty or passion in *shringar rasa*.

The heroic verse of the soldier-poet is charged with sentiments of valour and martial music and gives a thrill of the war balladry of the oral tradition. Even the devotional verse of the *Jaap* seems to have caught something of the declamatory or recitative rhythm of the heroic verse, for God is Sarab Loh and Durga, the incarnation of the *primal shakti*. The swift and sonorous verse tries to echo the hurry and din of action, and the words seem to act for the strokes of weapons, the volleys of bullets, the neighing of steeds and trumpetings of elephants, the shouts of

the fighters and the groans of the dying. The reader is transported to the very scenes of battle.

A survey and study of the *Dasam Granth* and a brief summing-up tempts one to estimate its place in Hindi literature. Apart from the large variety of themes and metres found in it, on the basis of the number of verses (16,237, excluding Persian and Punjabi compositions) alone, this Granth stands as the biggest work in Braji, surpassing even the *Sur Sagar* which has only 4,936 available verses. Moreover, like the *Sur Sagar* it is not confined only to Muktak Kavya: it constitutes both the Prabandh and Muktak types of poetry.

In war poetry, Bhushan's *Shivraj Bhushan*, *Shiva Bavani* and *Chhatarsal Dasak* take precedence of the *Dasam Granth* in time as well as in epic quality. It may be suggested, as already mentioned elsewhere in this volume, that the author of this Granth drew inspiration from illustrious predecessors with a common cause, Shivaji, but in var and war balladry of the Ritikal, the *Dasam Granth* in Braji as well as Punjabi verse may be said to bear the palm in the person of our soldier-poet who regarded sword as a symbol of Sarabloh (All-steel) God. In autobiographical poetry, there is a Jain poet Banrasidas (1586-1641) of Jaunpur. But it was left to Guru Gobind Singh to make a fresh experiment in his world of medieval poetry. In the Nirgun school of devotional poetry the *Dasam Granth* offers a fine blend of purely devotional poetry and satirical or didactic verse of the school of Kabir and Guru Nanak. In fiction, the *Pakhyan Charitra* contributes the largest collection of Upakhyan (tales) in Hindi literature and further marks a stage in the evolution of short story, in which character dominates. Coming to the Punjab, one may observe that the *Dasam Granth* comes next to the *Adi Granth* in bulk of composition as well as in literary importance. In its secular character, however, the *Dasam Granth* is the greatest contribution to the Braji literature, a monument to the versatile genius of Guru Gobind Singh. Further, the *Dasam Granth* in a way, is a great step towards rescuing much of the old Indian thought and culture from becoming stagnant in the ancient language of the country, which had become inaccessible to the general public, and transmitting it into the language of the people.

In the variety of metres, the *Dasam Granth* ranks next only to the works of Keshavdas, but in the broadness of canvas and poetic forms and moulds, it surpasses the latter.

The Alankars used in the *Dasam Granth* are not only myriad but apt and striking. They have been pressed into the service of sentiment, emotion and motive very deftly. They impart potency to the manifestation of a suggested sense. With the poetry of the *Dasam Granth*, as emotion increases, expression swells and figures of speech foam forth with the result that we have the cumulative enjoyment of sound, idea and emotion, all in one flash. The emotion expressed by these Alankars may be found elsewhere for these are long-established poetic conventions but in many places a new flight is shown, that is sometimes marvelous.

The poet's genius (Pratibha) presents ever fresh aspects in the domain of Dhwani. The same thought, when made to glow by the poet's imagination, appears as new.

Whatever the merits of good poetry, be it Rasa, Guna, Alankar, Dhwani or Riti or even metre or musical form, in the *Dasam Granth* all these merits of good poetry combine to give it a unique position as work of great poetical value in the Hindi and Punjabi literatures. We may, therefore, justifiably conclude that the *Dasam Granth* is one of the major glories of Hindi literature.

The *Dasam Granth* has been lying in obscurity for centuries. The educated Punjabis have turned their mind to western literature. The pious have recited the Jaap for their devotion. The Nirmala scholars have given their preference to the Adi-Granth and Vedant over its secular verse. While the holy Granth has been transliterated into Devnagari script by the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee at Amritsar, such has not yet been extended to the *Dasam Granth* for its secular character. Consequently, it has, with the exception of the *Jaap*, *Akal Ustat* and *Bachitra Natak*, remained a sealed book to the world of Braji or Hindi. It is still waiting for a literary enterprise in the Punjab that would rescue it from its age-old silence and solemnity and publish various parts of it, at least, in Devnagari, which it richly deserves.

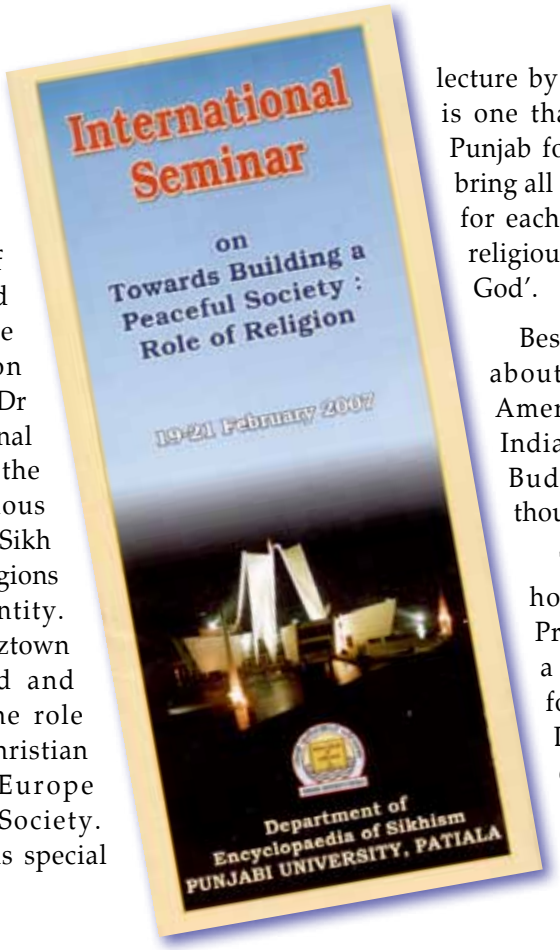
Dhasom Pol Asta
"The poetry of the Dasam Granth"

See *Nishaan* II/2006 "The Classical import of Dasam Granth".

Seen left to right are Swaran Singh Boparai, Bhayee Sikander Singh, Prof Edmund Webber, Dr Dharam Singh, and Prof Samdhong Rimpoche.

The Role of Religion towards Building a Peaceful Society

The Punjabi University in collaboration with the International Inter–faith Centre, Oxford organized a three day seminar on 'Building a Peaceful Pluralistic Society: Role of Religion'. The seminar was organised by Dr Dharam Singh, Head of the Department of Encyclopaedia on Sikhism and was widely attended. Dr Joy Barrow, Director of the International Inter–faith Centre at Oxford read the keynote address highlighting various aspects, especially uniqueness of the Sikh Faith in its accepting plurality of religions while maintaining its unique identity. Dr Javier Cerallos, President of Kunztown University, USA gave a detailed and extremely informative account the role of the Catholic Church and the Christian thought process in medieval Europe in relation to South American Society. Interestingly, he summarised up his special lecture by saying that 'the final lesson is one that you have known here in Punjab for 400 years. Religion should bring all together in peace with respect for each other, recognising the most religious strive to bring men close, to God'.



Besides the above personalities about fifteen participants from America, Canada, Germany and India, presented papers on Jain, Buddhist, Christian and Sikh thought and perspectives.

The concluding session was honoured by the presence of Professor Samdhong Rimpoche, a very senior scholar and former high functionary of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile and one who has now withdrawn into *sanyas*.

Prof Edmund Webber

The context of Zafarnama

Baisakhi of 1699 saw the emergence and establishment of a society of Gurmukhs, the God-oriented people whom Guru Gobind Singh Sahib referred to as "The nation of Guru oriented people wishing well of all mankind."

Two centuries earlier, Guru Nanak had called upon mankind to rise and realise their potential, invoke divine strength and stand up to oppression and evil. [His sensitivity to the suffering of humanity in India compelled him to protest, even to Divinity. He invoked the will of God, which promotes the whole creation for strength and purpose to the oppression, social religious and economic.] He was delineating a path (ਪੰਥ) for which the primary requirement was commitment, total and absolute. It was a path of love, love for the Divine, love for creation, love for mankind and through this creation of this alone does he manifest. The commitment to tread this path has to be total,uncompromising and unrescindable. "To tread this path of love, you must come prepared to die." Guru Nanak laid the foundations and the framework and thus outlined the direction whereby such a people could take strength.

God, or the Divine being did not reside or preside from a throne in an imaginary heaven or elsewhere. He resides in His Beings and thus can only be reached through them. The Universe, the Creation (ਬ੍ਰਹਮੰਡ) is the Truth because it and Him are one. It was emphasised that realization must come in the context of this world and not hereafter. And if the fruit of *Naam* had to be reaped, the seed had to sown in the fields of action, of practise and not theoretical dialecties, cogitation, philosophical dissertations or ritualism of the Brahmanical sort. He asserted that for humans to realise their potential, human society had to be reworked, reoriented or transmuted. *Kirat Karo, Wand Chhakho, Naam Japo,* the three fundamentals were thus established in Kartarpur by Guru Nanak. Through the next two centuries as the following of Guru Nanak's way of life, grew and spread, its practices, institutions and traditions took root and flourished.

The concept of man who has the name of God on his lips and a burning desire to fight against all kinds of tyranny and operation, (ਤੇਹਰਿ ਚਿਤ ਮੈ ਜੁਧ ਬੀਚਾਰੈ) thus saw concretisation. Establishment of the Harmandir, installation of *Shabad* as focal point in form of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, establishment of *Manjis* and the network of Sikhs attached to their Guru, steadily encompassed India.

The individual Sikh grew from a serf to a self respecting human and learnt to walk erect. A just society where *no one would torment the other* became the norm. Every individual has his own free spirit and his own beliefs. He must be allowed to exert and flourish socially and economically. Amritsar, the sea of nectar, thus became reality. Significantly from the Guru in human form, the Guru in Shabad form became the centrality of a new habitation.

The dedication and spirit of the individual were at their peak. Guru Arjan Dev's martyrdom demonstrated the highest form of acceptance of the Divine will in the process of serving humanity for its upliftment. It set the first and the ultimate standard for the inner strength of a human who commits himself to walk Guru Nanak's path, path of love, dedication and in service of mankind and of God.

Having established this facet of the Panth, the concept of *Sant Sipahi* emerged. Guru Angad had already laid emphasis on physical strength and well being of the Sikhs. Guru Arjan too had selected men with prowess in use of arms, such as Bhai Babak, the bard, into his service.

When at the age of twelve, Guru Hargobind was handed over the sceptre of Guru Nanak's authority. He donned two swords, as desired by his martyred father, symbolic of spiritual and sovereign individuality. This warrior Guru then asserted the right of Gurumukhs to defend themselves, their values and their society.

The two swords merged into one and became the 'Khanda' of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. To him it signified Divine dynamism The Divine was unlimited force, synonymous with "Will of God in action". Henceforth Sikhs would invoke this as symbolic of the Ultimate.

For these two hundred years Sikhs had been moulding, casting and transmuting their lives, conduct, social institutions and values on the directions of the House of Nanak. Then on the Baisakhi of 1699 the journey from Amritsar to Anandpur was completed. Sikh practices and values were reaffirmed and constitutionalised. Whatever the Sikhs were practicing since Guru Nanak's time now became their 'statute', a law they swore by. They had

lived life of utter commitment, and on this day the Sikhs took an oath of commitment now that the Khalsa had fully evolved. The Khalsa was established as a definite living social entity, sovereign in itself.

Proletarian of the Divine

In the words of Arnold Toynbee, "Guru Gobind Singh anticipated Lenin by a couple of centuries. He was a true socialist in thought, word and deed. Whereas Guru Nanak gave meaning of life, Guru Gobind invested death with a new purpose." Consecrated life became an objective and reality.

Swami Vivekanand could not but help say that "By a flash of his sword Guru Gobind Singh filled the dying soul of India with life-giving light and truth, and lo! It shone in glory again in life of the newborn Khalsa! The light of reality had kindled the spark of life in the dying soul of India."

"Under Guru Gobind Singh's leadership, nationalism itself became religion and the result was the creation of a fraternity unique in character," admited even die-hard antagonists of the Sikhs in the early twentieth century.

But above all, the Khalsa lived poised on the sword's sharp edge, and died upholding its cold steel. Indeed iron had gone into his soul at his nativity. However, it would be a great mistake to associate the Khalsa with wanton wars and bloodshed. He took to the sword because of a crisis of conscience.

Guru Gobind Singh made emphatic statements to the effect that Akal Purakh could be perceived in the material world and had to be!

The entire world with sentient and non-sentient beings are, in essence, one with the Supreme Reality. This spiritualisation of the manifest social phenomena makes it real and, thus, worth living. In creation of the Khalsa Panth, he gave us an ideal person and an ideal social structure in microcosmic form. This is what Guru Nanak had envisaged and sown the seeds for. Sikhs were required to be ever in a mystic communion with the Real One by attuning themselves completely to the Divine Will. But this did not turn them into ascetics, indifferent to affairs of the world. Rather this mystic communion transformed them into morally and ethically uplifted and socially awakened individuals who strove, even sacrificed, for the sake of justice, love, equality, righteousness and self-respect in human affairs.

Deceit in the garb of "Divine intervention" has of course been used in unequal battles in the cause of "just action". Once again the Mughal establishment in connivance and at the behest of the hill Rajas swore on the Holy Quran and the holy cow, not to harm the Guru and his Sikhs, if they voluntarily vacated Anandpur. True to their traditions, deceit served their purpose. But the Khalsa and their *Marad-e-Kamal Guru* were made of different stuff. They suffered harassments and tragedies, the Guru lost his four sons in the cause of Truth, but survived. Resurrected and unvanquished in spirit, he questioned the very fundamentals on which Emperor Aurangzeb was basing his polity and ran his empire. To the Mughal emperor he wrote:

I have no faith in your oath (taken on Quran)

He who believes in your oath on the Quran,

He is bound to be degraded in the end.

(Zafarnama)

And then the Guru clarified his mission unambiguously:

It is I who have killed the wily hill-chiefs

As they are idol worshippers

And I am an idol-breaker. *(Zafarnama)*

"Without political power, dharma (the rule of law) can not be established; and without dharma society was an admixture of scum". "Religion without political freedoms and diginity was an abject slavery and politics without religious morality an organised barbarism".

Guru Gobind Singh clearly differentiated between revenge and justice in the *Zafarnama,* a much admired and oft-quoted philosophical epistle that he addressed to Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor. In it he clearly discussed alternatives that are available to people in an unjust society governed by unresponsive rulers. His edict was *"When all other means have failed, it is just and rightful to take to the sword".*

He was not a pacifist, nor can his Sikhs ever be. But his life also exemplifies certain conditions for war. "Non-violent methods of conflict resolution must be exhausted. You do not go looking for war; it must be thrust upon you. Weapons are not picked up lightly; they are never used without grave and long consideration. Alternatives must always continue to be explored even during war. And arms must be laid down as soon as feasible alternatives appear. Even so, forgiveness remains at the core of all actions. That is why Guru Gobind Singh was willing to meet with Aurangzeb when he appeared returning to peace.

Bhayee Sikandar Singh

Key that reveals the Truth

Gurmukhi

Let us be 'Guru-Lingual'!

I recently visited India from the US and, as in the past, went to Amritsar for *darshan*. During my earlier visits I did not get to spend much time in Amritsar, but this time I spent some more days there.

One day I was in a park and overheard a young Sikh boy sitting on a swing asking his mother to give him a push, so he could enjoy his swing ride. The striking thing was that the youth and his mother were talking to each other in Hindi.

This was an utter surprise because I was expecting that, at least in the Punjab where Punjabi is the official language and taught in schools and spoken in the market place, this would be flourishing. But this was not the case. Indeed it was painful to observe that in the *Guruan di dharti*, the cradle of our culture and ethos, our language was not spoken. I have also seen that in places like Delhi where Sikh children go to Sikh schools and learn Punjabi at school, and can read from *Guru Granth Sahib*, they still talk to their friends and parents in Hindi. In the case of Delhi, I have heard parents justify the use of Hindi because they are taught in Hindi in school and if they speak in Punjabi the kids misapply Punjabi words in their schoolwork, which affects their grades!

Cultural Deprivation: Living in America I had experienced a similar scenario with Sikh children. As immigrants, the parents' efforts were directed at securing themselves financially. However, for their children they wanted to mainstream them as far as possible. So, they would only converse with their children in English. In the process of excelling academically, the children were deprived of the privilege of being well versed in another language. But in our efforts to equip our children in language skills of the academic world, and level the field of competition for them, we have deprived them of their heritage, culture, social and emotional bonds.

The well known poet, author, and naturalist, Diane Ackerman says, "Whatever languages they (children) hear become an indelible part of their lives, providing the words they'll use to know and be known. If two languages are spoken at home, they'll become bilingual." She provides us with a clear case to expose children to multiple languages simultaneously. She further adds; "A bonus of bilingualism is that it forces a child to favour one set of rules while ignoring another and that trains the brain early on to focus and discriminate, to ignore what's irrelevant and discover arbitrariness of words." As she has pointed out, MRI scans of the brain show that Broca's area is the speech centre of the brain. When little children learn a second language, they use the same part of Broca's area for both. According to Ackerman, "To the brain, they are one language."

This is precisely the reason that little children may mix words from two languages and use them interchangeably. It is for this reason that parents opt to teach children one language so that it would make them excel at school and help them become successful later in life. We, as parents, think that we can introduce the child to an additional language at the later stages of life. We are not only making our task difficult but also the child's task challenging. Because during the first few years the brain is plastic, so busily reconstructing itself that it can almost "inhale a language", in the words of Ackerman.

Mental Plasticity: However, an effort to teach a language later in life takes more brainwork as it has to recruit other parts of the brain for help. I can attest from my personal experience that while in school we were required to learn three languages (English, Hindi, and Manipuri), but our parents expected us to excel in the fourth one, Punjabi, at home. Although I would not claim to have done the very best in languages, I believe that I acquired enough proficiency that I could manage well. Ackerman adds, "Learning a language as grown-ups is heavy hitting. Language is so difficult that only children can master it."

Again, I can testify to this statement based on my own experience in Korea, where my children – without being taught a single world of the Korean language – far excelled in Korean compared to us, the parents. In fact, during our shopping trips they would often act as our interpreters!

It is imperative that we realise that, even if the children take a little longer to master a language because they are multi-lingual, the benefits far outweigh the efforts to expose them to another language at a later age. In fact, it may never materialise as grown up children may have their own agenda, priorities, and learning their mother tongue may not be appearing rational to their thinking. They may also find excuses because they have to prepare for an entrance examination, or for college admission, or that they do not have time to allocate the requisite resources for their mother tongue.

Early Exposure: As children start identifying sounds by the time they are six months old, it is the right time to expose them to the Guru's given language, Gurmukhi, along with other education. When children get ready to go to school they are not just equipped to grapple with challenges of education, but would be equally proficient in Gurmukhi and Punjabi. It is this association of early childhood that will keep the child connected to his roots and rich heritage. This association and connection, like a centripetal force, will keep the child from being thrown out of orbit by the forces that child will be exposed to in school and college. It can be argued that the child can still be connected to the Guru as translations of Guru's *shabad* and teachings are readily available in English, Hindi and other languages. Yes! The translations are there and they will definitely provide the essence. But how can the translations provide the emotions, feelings, meter of poetry, or the state of mind that the Guru is expressing? Diane Ackerman says: "A poem records emotions and moods of life beyond normal language that can only be patched together and hinted at metaphorically." In this case this is not just poetry but also feelings and description of the Creator's wondrous universe.

In *Guru Granth Sahib* we have melody along with poetry which has the energy of an entirely different scale and which cannot be translated. In fact, the entire *Guru Granth Sahib* is in poetic form for us to experience the splendour of its music, along with the plethora of emotions to inspire, counsel and guides us towards the goal of spiritual development.

Heritage: Let us therefore make our children 'Guru-Lingual' if we want them to lead a successful, balanced life and inculate Guru's wisdom. If the learning of a vernacular was not important enough then those Westerners who have embraced Sikhism later in their lives would not have put the kind of effort to learn the language in order to fully absorb, feel and relate to the Guru's message. Their experience should help us realise what we are in the process of losing our rich heritage and soul uplifting connection if we do not take advantage of Guru given endowment.

Such connection and relationship have to be created early and there is no other effortless manner than to expose children to Guru's words, *shabads* right from birth. Even before the children learn to speak, they build association with sound. Let their association be with Guru given words and sounds. Thus, if they build up this foundation then their emotional bonding will be so strong, which when nurtured properly will peak to become the guiding light of their lives. This will blossom into a unique and unparalleled lifestyle. The Guru's has only spoken what God the almighty has spoken through them. The Guru has testified to this in these words:

> *Whatever the (Lord! The Almighty!) Guru has preached, I am saying so listen to the Teachings, Siblings of Destiny.*
>
> *By building on this relationship a blossoming of love through the Gurbani takes place as Guru has described:*
>
> *One who has love within, obtains the Blessed Vision of the Lord. One, who enshrines affection for the Word of the Guru's Bani, meets with Him.*

Kindling the spirit: Thus, for a Sikh becoming a 'Guru-Lingual' is not a matter of just becoming proficient in another additional language because there is much more to it. It is to create an environment of life style transformation, culminating in the ultimate meeting with the Lord. Let this provide us with incentive and impetus to connect with wisdom of the Gurus.

As parents, we have a duty towards our children and let us connect them to the Guru's wisdom and prescribed life style by making our children 'Guru-lingual'. Let us not leave a legacy that we were the generation responsible for withering away of our language, the heritage and knowledge for exploration of 'the inner world', and breaking the cycles of reincarnation. Let us be the generation that saved such treasure from extinction. It is time to marshal our resources and, as parents, form support groups to rekindle this light, not just for our coming generation but for entire mankind.

Bhupinder Singh

Sikhs: a Synthesis of Indian Culture

The question whether Sikhs are Hindus should have no place in contemporary times. This is usually asked when there is friction between Sikhs and Hindus, and as I desire peace between them, do not feel comfortable in having to answer the question. But as it is being forced upon Sikhs, and perhaps also on Hindus, I wish to state some bare facts, historical and religious, which may help the sincere enquirers in understanding the true relationship between these two great communities.

What is meant by Hinduism? Is it to be taken as a *culture*, or a *religion*?

Most people take it as a culture, to which the peoples are supposed to belong whose ancestors were Indo-Aryans or were influenced by Indo-Aryan institutions. Some would simplify this by saying that all those whose religions were born in India are Hindus. If we take Hinduism as a culture then what is the position of Sikhs? Some Sikh leaders too have keep expressed the view that they are not Hindus by faith, but they belong to the Hindu 'type of culture'. This comes of not understanding the meaning of culture, which is often confused with civilization or the manner of life. It does not mean *civilization* but the *intellectual side of civilization*. It means that peculiar

training of the mind which makes a people think, feel and do things in a peculiar way. In practice it refers to the modes of thought, as expressed in philosophy and Religion and ways of taste, as expressed in art and literature.

If we examine the fundamentals of Sikhism and the evolution of its faith, we find that this movement was a rapproachement between Hindus and Muslim culture, but was not identified with any one of them. The whole genius of the time was moving in the same direction, and the Sikh Gurus were no exception to the rule. The Bhakti movement was the work of Gurus and saints who combined in their preachings not only what was inherited from the Hindu past but what was best in Muslim outlook too, with its freedom from monistic and polytheistic ideas and a strong sense of joy in life and wordly duty. The basis of Sikh theology, too has the same synthesis between Hindu and Muslim thoughts. The idea of unity of God itself underwent a tremendous change. He no longer remained an abstract entity of the Hindu philosopher, or a being outside and above nature, as conceived by the Muslim divines but a personal being at once immanent and transcendent. The similarity of views had become so common that Guru Arjan felt no difficulty in incorporating the writings of Hindu and Muslim saints in the Holy Granth compiled by him.

Another feature of this synthesis was the use of a common vernacular for religious purposes, instead of the Sanskrit or Arabic which exclusively belonged to either community. In the Punjab the clearest proof of Hindu culture being distinct from Sikh culture is the fact that the two people have not agreed on the matter of the vernacular, the Hindus adopting Hindi and the Sikhs Punjabi as the medium of their expression. Punjabi adopted by Sikhs has been culturally so developed by the combined efforts of Sikhs and Muslims that in it references to Muslim tradition are as frequent as to Hindu and Sikh traditions.

In music too some innovations were made by musicians like Tan Sen, who is credited by Abul Fazl with having introduced 'great developments' into this art. He is accused by conservative Hindu musicians of having falsified the traditional Raags, which implies that he made some necessary departures from the old modes in order to suit Muslim taste. The Sikh Gurus also made some modifications in the same manner, as is evident from their omission of certain measures like Hindol, Megh, etc., because they led people to extreme joy, and Deepak, Jog, etc., because they made people very melancholy. Both these extremes were against the spirit of Sikhism which work for *Sahaj* or a steady vision of life. They therefore avoided the use of these Raags, except when they could be used to modify other Raags; as for instance, Hindol was combined with Basant to vivify its serene joyfulness, and Deepak was used to highten the seriousness of Gauri and to make it more vigorous. In Tilang, Aasa and other frontier Raags, a visible combination was made, not only in the execution of music, but in composition of the pieces set to music too, Arabic and Persian words being used as frequently as Hindi ones.

Besides music, other arts also show the same combined development. In architecture, the Sikhs adopted the Indo-Saracenic style, which was a mixture of Hindu and the Muslim styles. The Rajputs, who were under the influence of the Mughals, may have continued the mixed tradition, but the recent Hindu renaissance has fallen back on the archaic Hindu style and carefully avoids any medival mixture. The Sikhs, however, still stick to the synthesis adopted in the days of the Gurus. The difference can be realised if we compare the styles used in the buildings of Hindus and Sikhs. The Hindu Colleges, *gurukulas* and the Benares Hindu University are built in the pure Hindu fashion; and if any mixture is allowed, it is of the cheap state public works style, but no trace of Muslim arches or domes, is allowed to contaminate the purity of the square brackets and pointed *shikhars*. On the other hand, buildings of the Sikh temples at Patna, Nander or any other far-flung place, of the Golden Temple, Saragarhi Memorial and the Khalsa College, Amritsar are in the mixed style which became current in the Mughal days.

In painting, Hindu artists are still emphasising an expressionless art, which may be classically Hindu and perfectly in keeping with the meditative mood of ancient India, but it is un-Indian in so far as it omits to take cognizance of the change in the spirit of India brought about by the virile West. Muslim painters like Chughtai, on the other hand, seem to be fond of colour and are less deep and suggestive in expression.

Sikh painters including Thakur Singh, Sobha Singh and others are combined the two effects and are more realistic. In this they are following the tradition of their forbears, who even in the days of Sikh rule were in the forefront of those who were for realism in art. In the Punjab they were the first to cultivate the sense of perspective in drawing distances, to depart from mere symmetry and to introduce variety and fine shadings in colour.

It would appear from these observations that while Hindus and Muslims are tearing up the solder set by their medieval ancestors and are reviving their individual past, Sikhs are still trying to keep the happy synthesis intact. They refuse to be drawn to one side or the other because they believe that the evolution of a unified nation is possible only on the lines followed by them.

If we take Hindusim as a religion, we have to determine what its essential features are. It has been found very difficult even by great Hindu thinkers to ascertain upon even one thing common to all Hindus. Even the word 'Hindu' is not acceptable to all those who go by this appellation. Arya Samajists, Jains, Brahmos, Buddhists and others have, at one time or another, rejected this name and have resented such application to them. Perhaps the belief in the Vedas is shared by most of the Hindus. Next to it is the doctrine of transmigration of souls. Caste system is another thing that distinguishes Hindus from all the rest of people. Respect for the cow is another feature of Hindu life. Tiraths or holy places are also respected by the different denominations of Hindus. Untouchability, in one form or another, enters into their daily behaviour and does not allow them to have free intercourse with people of other denominations. Even when converting people of other religions they have to subject the new converts to a process of *Shuddhi* or preliminary purification, which is not thought necessary in the case of those who come from higher castes.

Guru Nanak began his teachings with the fundamental declaration: *'There is no Hindu, no Muslim.'* In Var Ramakali he says, 'It is nonsense to be called a Hindu or a Muslim.' Bhai Mani Singh in his *Gyan Ratnawali* says, "The pilgrims asked Baba Nanak at Mecca whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim, and he replied, 'I am the witness of both'." When he passed away, both Hindus and Muslims quarreled over his remains, one party thinking that he was a Hindu and the other that he was Muslim.

Guru Arjan too declared in his Book:

I don't keep the Hindu fast, nor that observed by Mohammedans in Ramzan.

I serve Him, and Him alone, who is my ultimate refuge.

I believe in the same Gosain who is also Allah.

I have broken off with the Hindu and the Muslim

I won't go on Hajj to Mecca or do worship at the Hindu places.

I shall serve only Him and no other.

I won't worship idols or read Namaj

I shall lay my heart at the feet of the One Supreme Being,

We are neither Hindus nor Mussalmans

We have dedicated our bodies and souls to Allah-Ram.

The mission of the Sikh Gurus was to approach all people and to unify them. Guru Nanak says, 'The true Guru is one who can unite all sorts of people' (Sri Rag). The first converts to Sikhism came from Muslims as well as Hindus. Guru Nanak left a host of followers in Mesopotamia, Persia and other countries that he visited. We learn from the *Janamsakhi* of Seva Das (1588) that Kiri of Pathans and many other places in India, inhabited by Muslims, came over to the faith of Nanak. Bhai Gurdas (1629) in his 11th Var mentions many Muslims, among the prominent Sikhs living in different localities. Examining the cases of these conversions it appears that Pathans, Sayyads and Shias, whose races had been defeated by the Mughals were more inclined to accept Sikhism than the Mughals who had too much arrogance of the conqueror in them to adopt the religion of the conquered. The chief complaint of Jahangir against Guru Arjan, as recorded by the Emperor himself in his *Tauqak*, was that so many of the simple-minded Hindus, nay, many foolish Muslims too had been fascinated by the Gurus ways and teachings.

With conversions from all quarters, it was difficult, if not impossible, for caste restrictions or untouchability to remain. It is held by some Hindu writers, like Indubhusan Banerji (in his *Evolution of the Khalsa*), that the earlier Gurus, particularly Guru Nanak, never meant to criticise the institutions of caste, sacred thread, or holy pilgrimages. Whatever else great prophets may or may not have been, it is certain that they were sincere. You cannot imagine Guru Nanak stating that 'Caste is nonesense' (*Sri Rag*), that it is 'blindness of the soul' on the part of a Brahmin to twist a sacred thread and put it round the necks of others (*Var Asa*), and that `pilgrimages, austerities, formal acts of mercy, alms giving and religious fights are dispensed with, when one gets even a grain of the honour of God's Name' (*Japji*). It is certain however that the Gurus wanted to remove these customs root and branch. It takes two parties to effect a reform, the reformer and the party to be reformed. The Gurus knew what sort of material they had to handle. The corruption of many centuries could not be removed at once. "It took the Gurus ten generations to effect some of the reforms they had initiated. And yet some remained unaffected upto the last. One of them was abolition of the 'caste system'. The difficulty of the task may be gauged from the fact that Islam and Christianity too had tried to break this mindset steelframe, but who can say that they have succeeded? The Sikh Gurus did succeed in the beginning, when hosts of Muslims and lower caste people were assimilated in the fold of Sikhism. But when the forces released by Sikhsim brought on religious persecution. Mohammedans, Sikhs and Hindus found themselves in the same situation, and as would happen in such cases they had to club their resources together and to suspend all their inter communal controversies. The caste system could not be broken in these circumstances, although the pride of caste which was a hindrance in the way of true religions was totally removed. The Jats who were considered Sudras enjoyed the greatest prestige along with the Khatris, and the Brahmins were no longer held in esteem. 'All the four Varnas were equalised'. (Bhai Gurdas).

In order to remove Hindu prejudice against Muslims and Sudras, who were considered untouchables, Guru Amar Das obligated all visitors to dine together in his 'free kitchen' (*langar*) before he would talk to them. The Raja of Haripur as well as Emperor Akbar followed this.

In order to show that a man born among Mohammedans or Sudras could rise to the greatest spiritual heights as much as any high-caste Hindu, Guru Arjun included in his Granth the compositions of Kabir, Farid and Bhikhan, who were Mohammedans by birth, as also Ravidas, Namdev, etc., who were considered 'untouchables.' This was a practical way of securing the highest honour for them, because the Book in which they got a place was considered divine and was held in greatest veneration by Sikhs, even the Guru taking a lower seat than the Book compiled by him.

Mohsin Fani, the author of the *Dabistan-i-Ma* who visited the Punjab in the Sixth and Seventh Gurus' era, writes thus about the Sikhs:

> *The Sikhs of Guru Nanak condemn idolatry and believe that all the Gurus are identical with Nanak. They do not read the Hindu Mantras, nor do they pay any regard to their shrines. They do not believe in the Hindu Avtars and do not study Sanskrit which, according to Hindus, is the language of gods.*
>
> *The Sikhs do not have any faith in the ritual and ceremonies enjoined by the Hindu Shastras, nor do they observe any superstitious restrictions about dining. A learned Hindu named Partap Mal, seeing that a Hindu boy was inclined towards Islam, said to him, "There is no need for you to turn Mohammedan. If you want to get freedom in eating and drinking, you must better join Sikhism."*
>
> *The only restriction they followed was, and still is, about the eating of beef. Like Hindus they would not kill the cow or eat its flesh. They did not, however, worship the cow nor hold it sacred.*

Guru Arjan made the Sikh community well organised and self-contained, having its own scripture and its own temples.

The Sikhs from the very beginning observed no elaborate ceremonials in their temples. "We worship the Name, believe in the Name, which is ever and ever the same and true" (*Sri Rag*), Guru Amar Das declared the Guru's Word to be superior to all the scriptures of the world and the Sikhs were enjoined to use only the Guru's Word in worship (*Anand*). He held that "the same superstitions had created the Smritis and

Shastraswas which were at the bottom of the belief in gods and goddesses" (*Majh*) Guru Nanak was of the opinion that "all the four Vedas talk of phenomenal nature and describe the three conditions, but the fourth, unconditioned state is known from the true Guru" (*Gauri*). Guru Amar Das rejected such a system of Hindus philosophy and declared that the Guru's system was the true manner. 'This system of God is obtained by fortunate ones through the Guru's Word by means of true detachment. The six systems of the Hindus are in vogue nowadays, but the Guru system is profound and unequalled. It provides the way of salvation and the True One comes to reside in one's heart. This system, if adopted with love, can save the whole world (*Asa*). "Guru Arjan said, "Men ponder Over the Vedas and Shastras to secure deliverance, but superior to all the religious ceremonies and observances taught therein is the practice of the Name" (*Asa*). "Nobody can get salvation by reading the Vedas and Western Books, Smritis and Shastras" (*Suhi*). Guru Gobind Singh was more denunciatory: "Those who attach themselves to God give up their belief in the Vedas (*Vichitra Natak*)." He would allow no compromise with Hinduism. He insisted that in Sikh temples nothing but the Guru's Word should be recited or sung. Sujan Rai of Batala writing about Sikhs in 1697, says in his *Khalsa-tul-Tawarikh*: "The only way of worship with them is that they read the hymns composed by their Gurus and sing them sweetly in accompaniment with musical instruments."

There was need of clear definition, especially because the Khalsa was to become self-governing after the Tenth Guru. So far the Sikhs, under guidance of the Gurus, had been able to keep their doctrines distinct from Hindus and Muslims and while liberally benefiting by their association, had taken care to maintain their growth free from the obsessions of either side. But opportunities for the operation of this balanced spirit began to decrease when the Sikhs had to fight against the tyranny which began to tell upon the work of Sikh mission arise among the Muslims, until, with the intense religious persecution started by the later Mughals against Hindus as well as Sikhs, the mass of conversions to Sikhism became confined to the Hindus charged with the contemplation of new moral forces revealed by Sikhism, an imagination saturated with spiritual convictions of the by gone era.

Guru Gobind Singh had to take strong measures to ensure unity and distinctness of the *Sikh Mission*. When the Guru entered upon his mission, he called upon the Sikhs to rally round him. But such was the fear of persecution by the Mughals that many of the Sikhs denied their Sikhism and declared that they had never departed from their old faith. It was so easy for them to slide back into Hinduism. Anybody among them, in a moment of weakness, might say, "My name is Ram Chand. Look at me, Don't I look like a Hindu?" The Guru, astonished at such illusiveness of the so-called Sikhs, said, "Now I shall create such Sikhs who, in spite of fear, will not be able to hide their religion." He ordered that:

The Sikhs should wear long hair and come to me. Once a man becomes a Sikh, he should never shave himself, He should not touch tobacco,

And should receive baptism of the sword

(Suraj Parkash, iii.21)

He insisted that the Sikhs, in spite of their sympathy and love for other communities, should not confuse their ideals with those of others:

The Sikh is to keep his observances distinct from those of other people of all the four Varnas. He should have dealing with everybody, but his belief and programme of life should be different all the same

(Suraj Parkash, Rut iii, Ch.50).

The Khalsa should be distinct from Hindus and Muslims. (Rahatnama of Bhai Chaupa Singh and alsoof Bhai Daya Singh). He created the Khalsa as the crown of Hinduism and Islam. (Gurvilas) Now I shall create an infinitely strong Panth, distinct from Hindus and Muslims. (Panth Prakash)

Previously there used to be only two communities, Hindus and Muslims. Now there shall be three. (Suraj Prakash)

The Guru laid down definite rules of conduct to be followed by Sikhs, which were:

He who keeps alight the unquenchable torch of truth, and never swerves from the thought of one God;

Who has full love and confidence in God; and does not put his faith, even by mistake, in fasting or the graves of Mohammedan saints, Hindu crematoriums, or Jogis' places of sepulcher;

Who recognises only the one God and no pilgrimages, alms, non-destruction of life, penances or austerities;

And in whose heart the light of the Perfect One shines, he is to be recognised as a pure member of the "Khalsa. (Swayyas)

Similar rules are to be found in the Rahatnamas left by certain veteran Sikhs of those days. Some of them may be cited here:

A Sikh should have marriage connections with Sikh families (Chaupa Singh)

A Sikh should have nothing to do with janeu or frontal mark. (ibid)

He should not put on a janeu, or perform marriage, saradh or death ceremonies of the Hindus, but should perform all ceremonies according to the Sikh ritual which consists of prayer. (Bhai Daya Singh)

A Sikh should avoid worshipping Jogis' sepulchers, idols, tiraths, gods and godesses and should have nothing to do with fasts, spells, charms, Pirs, Brahmins and their incantations and Gayatri. (Ibid)

This phase of pure Sikhism, however, lasted for a short time. After passing of the last Guru when most of the veteran Sikhs disciplined by him had been martyred and their descendants forced to live in exile, the rump congregations began to drift back to the old customs and beliefs. Those who came from low castes began to be distinguished from those who came from the so-called high castdes. Some who in the days of persecution could not dare to confess Sikhism openly were allowed to go about without the outward signs of Sikhism. Such men were called Sahjdharis or slow-adopters. In those days, when to wear *keshas* was to invite death, nobody could have the heart to question the disguise adopted by the Sahjdharis, who believed in Sikhism but would not die for it. The Sahjdharis who had adopted this apologetic attitude never pretended to be representative Sikhs. They always looked up to the spirit and form of their brethren in exile whom they helped in every manner.

Such spirit and form were, however, kept intact in the ranks of the Khalsa even if it had been slackened in towns and cities. The Panth Prakash of Rattan Singh (1809) bears ample witness to the fact that in spite of hard times and fighting, Sikhs still conformed to the rules laid down by Guru Gobind Singh. They kept aloof from idolatry, performed the Anand form of marriage, obeyed the Panth as the highest authority, conducted themselves by resolutions passed in their assemblies, did not believe in the sacred thread, incarnations, caste or the pollution of food. And freely reclaimed those who had gone back to Islam. Many notable Sikhs married Muslim women converted to Sikhism. Some converts from Islam were appointed to the holy places of Bhaliani, Phul and so on.

However, when Ranjit Singh came to rule the Punjab, Sikhism received a rude shock even in the ranks of the Khalsa, where it had been preserved more or less in its pristine purity. Hindu influences began to eveep in even in religion, and in court ceremonies strict regard to the spirit and form of Sikhism was not observed.

After Maharaja Ranjit Singh, when kingship became more a matter of jewels and lavish style, Sikhism too, with the higher classes became a mere fashion of the turban and the beard, until a people with sterner ways and better discipline struck the sceptre away from their hands. It was the people who still retained semblance of the old spirit, but they too, with the change coming over their temples along with the shock they had received on the battle field felt paralysed for some time. They declined in numbers too. The English, however, forgot their enmity in admiration for the noble bravery of the Sikhs, and tried to befriend them. Such friendship put heart again into the Sikhs, and they began to enlist in the British army, where they could keep their baptismal forms intact. But in many other ways the Sikhs showed little spirit, religious or national, in them. They worshipped the same way, indulged in the same old superstitious practices from which their Gurus had so heroically worked to extricate them from their baptism and five symbols became a mere anomaly. They were verily Hindus then, and it would have astonished them, if anybody had suggested to them that they were not.

It was then towards end of the nineteenth century that a new movement was started among the Sikhs, objective being to study the original source of Sikhism and restore it to its pristine purity. Those who undertook this task found that much of the true Sikhism had been overlaid with Hinduism, and that the work of restoration would require the rejection of the Hindu excrescences. 'We are not Hindus' is not the creation of present-day reformers, but re-raising of the old slogan.

Principal Tega Singh

(Written in mid-20th century, this is even more is as valid today, as will be described in the subsequent issues: Ed.)

Extract from the forthcoming **'Illustrated History of the Sikh Regiment'**

Fearless on the Frontier

After the Second Anglo-Sikh War in 1849, the road was laid open for the British in their ever expanding ambitions to move the Empire north-westwards, towards the Frontier with Afghanistan and Central Asia. The latter was under increasing Russian influence and the British feared this 'bogey of the bear' beyond rationale or perhaps used it to justify their expansionist policies.

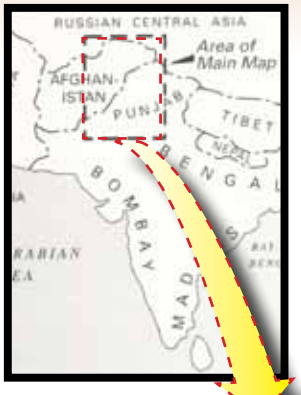
During Maharaja Ranjit Singh's reign, the specially appointed Hari Singh Nalwa had ruled the Frontier, including Hazara district, with an iron fist, while Peshawar was administered by the Italian general, Avitabile and the tribals were kept in check. The British rule of the North-Western Frontier Province (NWFP) however was marked by their mounting of continuous punitive expeditions between 1850 and 1870, some 26 expeditions being organised and in the following 20 years, another six.

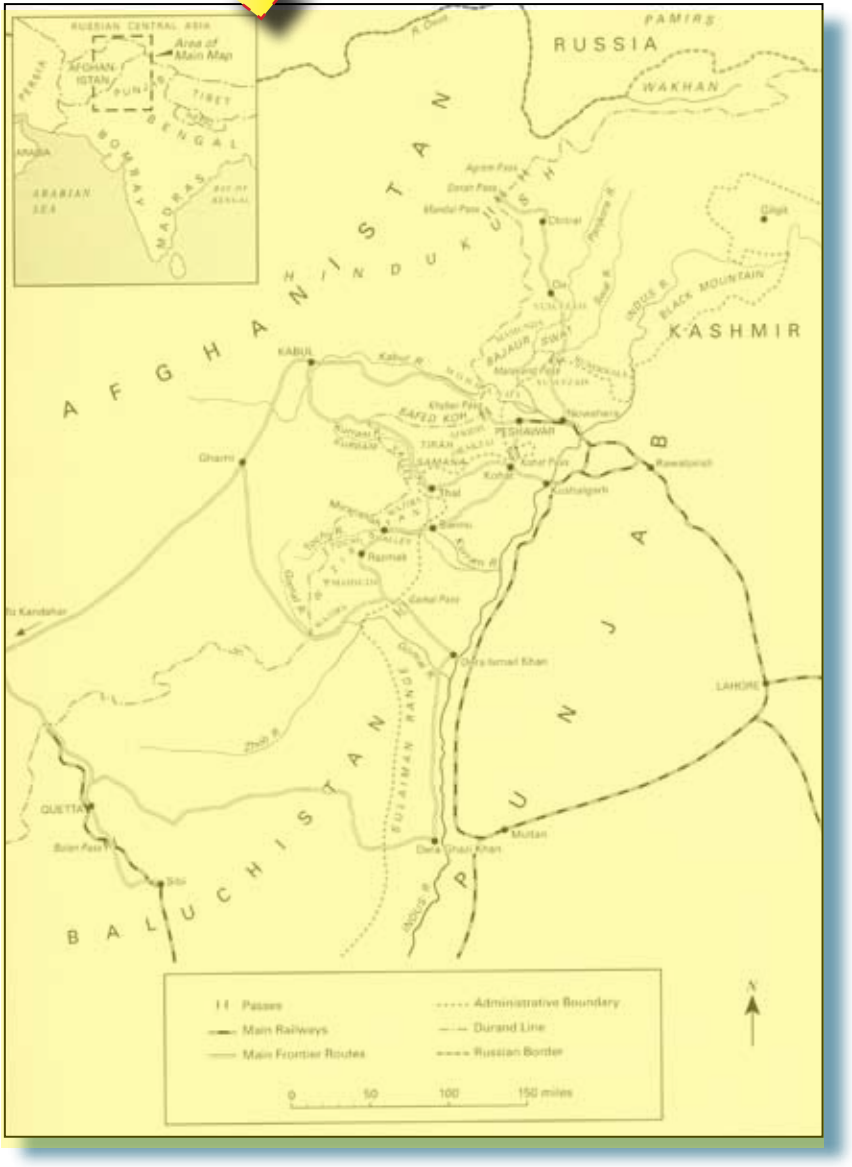
The newly raised Sikh Regiments, many of their men including veterans of Hari Singh Nalwa's Army, took part in most of these expeditions from 1863. The political situation in Afghanistan and the threat perceived from Russia also dictated the number and the size of these missions. The Second Afghan War was a punitive foray into the country during 1878–80.

In 1863, the Ferozepore Sikhs undertook the Ambela Expedition thus setting the stage for some 80 years of involvement in NWFP and Afghanistan.

XIV Sikh, XV Sikh and 45 Sikh fought here and XIV Sikh took part in the operation against the Jowaki Afridis in 1877 when it formed part of the Kabul Field Force during the Second Afghan War, leading the attack on Ali Masjid to capture it. Their losses were heavy, but eight IOMs were awarded for gallantry.

Ambela was the first tactical operation of the Sikh Regiment on the North-West Frontier, under Major Ross who commanded the XIV Sikhs for a record 14 years. The tribesmen of Malka valley had been in rebellion since 1860. A 6,000-strong force under Brigadier General Neville Chamberlain moved out for punitive operations in October 1863, advancing to Malka via the Ambela pass. The intensity of rebellion compelled him to deploy his force on the pass where he awaited reinforcements, with XIV Sikh to provide protection. On 27 October 1863 began the fight which





Painting of the Relief of Chakdara, with the XXXV Sikhs taking a hill commanding the Swat Valley.

came to be known as the battle of Crag Piquet. The battalion occupied the post and was repeatedly attacked, once losing it but recapturing and holding on to it until 18 November when it was relieved by the 101st Fusiliers. The tribesmen, seeing a new unit in location, surprised and routed them but the XIV Sikh, on their own accord, moved back to Crag Piquet and recaptured it. The grateful Fusiliers rejoined and held the piquet against more attacks, the ferocity of which finally petered out by December. The force returned to Peshawar by the end of December when Malka was razed to the ground. Thirteen IOMs were awarded to the XIV Sikhs, a good harvest, begun auspiciously and firmly setting a course for future honours.

The second Afghan campaign saw XIV Sikh forming part of 3rd Brigade under General Appleyard. However when a Divisional attack on Ali Masjid was ordered, only one company of XIV Sikh, two of 27th Punjabis and five of 91st Foot participated in the assault. The Division had frittered away its strength in various detachments and in sending flanking columns which were waylaid by the Pathans. Although the Sikh company reached the objective, the others lagged behind and a considerable number of casualties were suffered. However, the Afghans withdrew, abandoning 24 guns to the Ferozepore Sikhs.

In 1878, the XV Sikhs became part of 1st Brigade of the 1st Division, South Afghanistan Field Force, under General Donald Stewart and took part in the Afghan War which resulted in fall of Kandahar, Kalat, and Ghazni. They were then based at Kandahar, carrying out the difficult task of defending the citadel against the Ghazni. The effectiveness of the Sikhs was incredible, with all attacking Ghazis either being killed or captured. When relieved on 27 March 1880, the unit joined the force operating in the Khusk-Bud valley and participated in the battle of Ahmed Khel, adjoining Ghazni and then returned to Kandahar. On 1 September 1880, the XV repulsed an enemy attack, the Ghazis losing all their guns and equipment. The 'Loodhianas' had virtually become the *force d'frappe* of this war, also opening the Khyber pass to the Kabul Field Force under General Sir Frederick Roberts ('Bobs Bahadur') in September 1879 and advancing to Jalalabad. Clearing Jagdalak pass, they took part in the decisive battle of Charasia in May 1880. Operating as the rearguard for the evacuation from Kabul to Peshawar they played a highly commendable role. XV Sikhs then returned to India, reaching Delhi on 14 October, and from there moved to Lucknow in February the following year.

The unit was awarded a medal with a clasp 'Ahmed Khel 1880', 'Kandahar' Afghanistan 1879-80' and a bronze decoration for the famous march from Kabul. Having had their share of field peace tenures and smaller expeditions like those to Waziristan in 1881 and the Black Mountains in 1888, the XV were to play a vital role in the defence and relief of Chitral in 1894. In the interim, organisational changes continued as the battalions (or regiments) began to have more British officers and the strength of combatants settled at around 700. A system of linked battalions was adopted and generally the idea of Training Depots began to take shape.

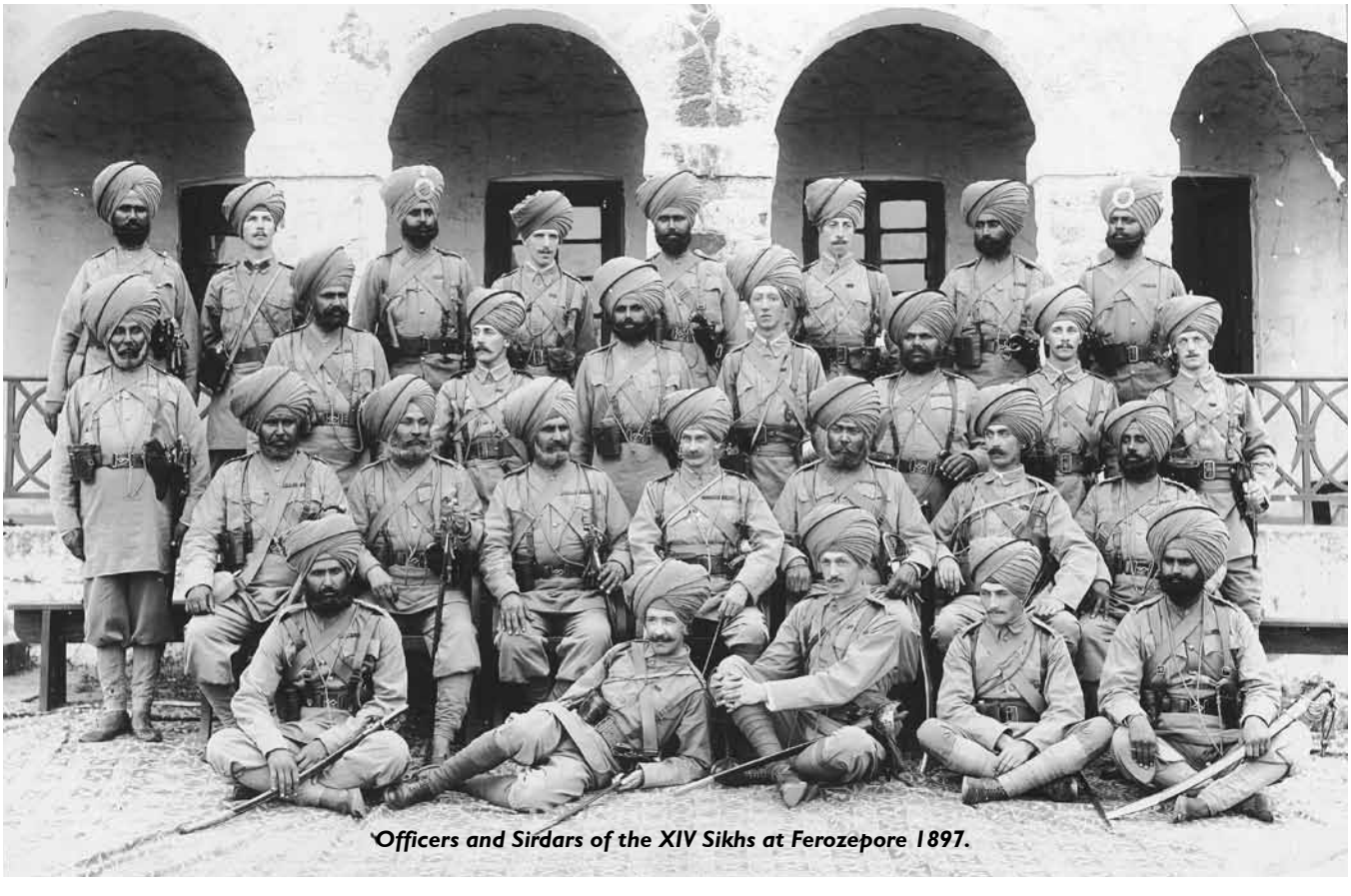
45 Sikh, also forming part of Ist Brigade of the Ist Division, South Afghan Field Force, also took part in operations in Kandahar, Kalat and Ghazni in 1879. It then moved to take part in the battle of Ahmed Khel near Ghazni.

Between the XV Sikh and 45 Sikh, the Regiment had earned the battle honours of 'Ali Masjid', 'Ahmed Khel', 'Kandahar' and 'Afghanistan 1879-80'.

Forts and cantonments were now being built along the Frontier, the Indian Army even terming this as a permanent battlefield training area. As a consequence of the 'Forward Policy', British control gradually spread to the Zao valley and by 1892 it moved up to the Kurram valley. Concurrently, expeditions were sent to Shiranis and Orakzai and an envoy was sent to Chitral. The new Mehtar of Chitral was murdered in 1894 and the British envoy was besieged. The garrison was relieved after heroic defence by the Sikh guards and troop reinforcements were sent by moving an entive Division under General Robert Low over the Malakand.

'Rattrays' Sikhs on the Khyber Pass, during the 2nd Afghan War.

War again broke out in 1897, this time against the Orakzais. General Bindon Blood led the Malakand force against the Mohmands and General Lockhart against the Afridis. The Mohmands capitulated, though the Afridis fought a long, valiant action for a year. There was a turn of events when the Third Afghan War broke out in July 1919 which was, unlike the previous two, started by the Afghans. Emboldened by the political situation in India, especially after the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre, the new Amir Aman-ul-lah, marched to NWFP with a view to rousing the tribals against British rule and to motivate them to severe diplomatic relations with them. He moved into the Tochi valley and was joined by the Mahsuds and Waziris. However, a modernised Indian Army now equipped with long range artillery, an



'Officers and Sirdars of the XIV Sikhs at Ferozepore 1897.

XV (Loodhiana) Sikhs during the Black Mountain Expedition in 1888.

air force and better equipped infantry, forced a swift defeat on the Amir who shortly sued for peace.

The North-West frontier remained 'active' throughout the British period and the Indian Army remained committed there even when every soldier was required to fight the Germans, Italians and Japanese as part of the Allied Armies. The Sikh Regiment's contribution was to remain great and glorious not only in various battle fronts but also on the north west frontier, the 47th Sikhs winning two MCs even as the Second World War broke out and these were technically the first gallantry awards of that war.

Defence and Relief of Chitral

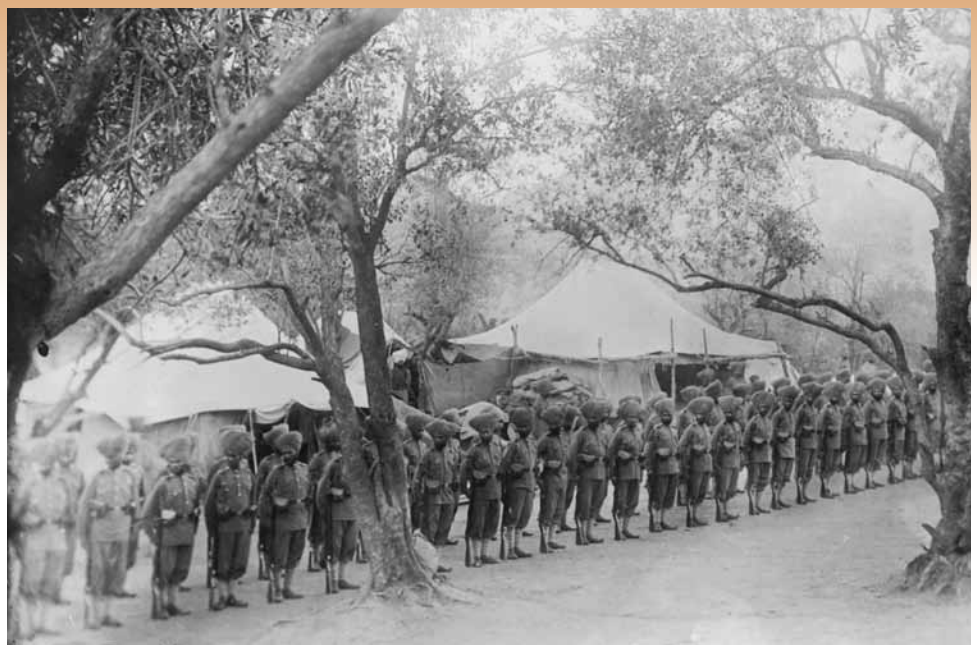
Chitral is located on the north-eastern tip of the NWFP close to the Wakhan strip, an isolated and autonomous area and any attempt by either the Afghan or the British to interfere brought about a sharp reposite. However, it was beyond Chitral's capacity to hold at bay advances of both the Afghans and the British for long.

The Mehtar of Chitral was murdered on 1 January 1894 leading to serious internal infighting for power, for which Sher Afzal became the principal claimant. Its political agent had a small force at Chitral besides the XIV Sikh, a company each of which was based at Gilgit and Mastuj. On advice of the Political Agent,

Chitral Fort, defended by the XIV Sikhs in 1894.

the Sikh company from Mastuj and 300 Kashmir Infantry of the Imperial Service Troops were moved into Chitral Fort. Captain Townshend was commander of the garrison of 500 men and under him were Lt.Campbell and Lt.Harley, with a determined batch of VCOs and men.

Chitral Fort is square in structure located on a bank of the river. The barracks were on the inner side of the walls with the VCOs quarters and mess alongside. The fort afforded little advantage to the defenders as its visibility was hindered by trees and its



XV Sikh forming up at Malakand, 1896.

Signallers of the XV Sikh at Malakand in Chitral, 1896.

water supply was vulnerable. Lt Campbell, who had been sent to counter the assaulting party of Chitralis and the others under Sher Afzal Khan, failed in his mission, as did the relief columns from Mastuj. Then began a 46-day siege of the fort accompanied by several assaults and efforts to starve the garrison into capitulation.

Acts of gallantry and ingenuity kept the fort intact until Colonel Kelly arrived with a relief force from Gilgit and another division under General Robert Low built up from the south. Recognition was immediate, Lt Harley being awarded a DSO, Sub.Gurmukh Singh became a 'Bahadur' with an OBI Second, Jemadar Attar Singh and seven other men were awarded the IOM. The battle honour 'Defence of Chitral' was another well deserved honour, conferred on the Sikh Regiment.

As Captain Townshend wrote: "The Sikhs never murmured; [they] took everything calmly: the overwork, half ration of *atta*, the over-fatigue, practically getting no rest, [and] they slept in accoultrements on their alarm post throughout the siege. The spirit of XIV Sikh was our admiration; the longer the siege lasted the more eager they became to teach the enemy a lesson. These could not be finer soldiers than these men of XIV Sikh and they were our sheet anchor in the siege."

The role of the XV (Loodhiana) Sikhs was highlighted as part of the relief column marching from Nowshera on 28 March. On 8 April it fought an action on the Swat River, arriving at Chakdara by 24 April, being welcomed with open arms by the brave defenders of Chitral in what was, the old records say, the best reunion of 'two brothers'. 'Chitral' or 'Relief of Chitral' too became the battle honour for the XV Sikhs.

General Younghusband added: 'It was the discipline ingrained into these men that saved the garrison. As long as a Sikh was on sentry duty and while the Sikhs were holding the threatened point, Captain Townshend had nothing for fear."

But general restlessness continued to prevail in NWFP which was exaggerated by the Turkish victory over Greece in 1897. A spirit of jehad against the British appeared to infuse the Afghans and Pathans throughout the Frontier. That very year saw operations in Tirah valley against the Afridis and Orakzais. XV Sikh performed creditably in October-November, culminating in the battalion inflicting 293 casualties on the tribals in the Tirah valley. The missions that were launched in 1897-98 were covered under the battle honour 'Punjab Frontier 1897-98'.

In June 1897 a detachment of one British officer and 15 other ranks, all from XIV and XV Sikh, were sent to form part of an expedition to British East Africa. During the operations, the unit lost one officer and one jawan. Four men were awarded IOMs. The detachment returned to India in May 1899 and was based at Nowshera. The rest of the detachment formed part of Tochi Field Force from 1897 to 1898 January and acquitted itself most creditably.

As the twentieth century dawned, XV Sikh was with the Malakand Force, being awarded the battle honours 'Punjab Frontier' and 'Tirah'. The Regiment had a two year stint as the Viceroy's Guard in 1901-03 and the remaining years were spent in a peace station and NWFP.

Chitral continued to be volatile, as, indeed, most of the NWFP was in the 1890s. By July 1897, XXXV Sikh was marching over the Malakand, where 45 Sikh relieved them. The Mohmand Valley operations came next. They were back again to Malakand, assigned to the construction of a fort, by the end of the year had earned the battle honour 'Punjab Frontier 1897' and 'Malakand' 1897. Then, after a brief peace tenure, in 1903 the unit was in Waziristan pursuing the Mahsud Waziris until the Great War broke out.

Action in Sudan

The Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) provided XV Sikh another opportunity to serve abroad and earn laurels. They were at Lucknow in 1885 when there was trouble in Egypt, principally from Osman Sigma's army that opposed any British presence in Egypt. The British forces under Major General John MacNeil had decided to establish a series of strong points, called *zarebas* between the seaport and Tomai. These *zarebas* were to become self-sustaining and capable of defending themselves besides securing their own lines of communication.

Saukin was the first *zareba* on which a large force under Colonel J Hudson began to work on 5 March, but the Egyptians continually harassed them. The plan to construct it was abandoned and instead the column was utilised to suppress the uprising. It was on the *zareba* of Tofrek, then under construction, that Sigma's forces sprung a surprise on 22 March 1885.

While the *zareba* was garrisoned by troops, including the XV Sikhs and Royal Berkshire Regiment, the mobile

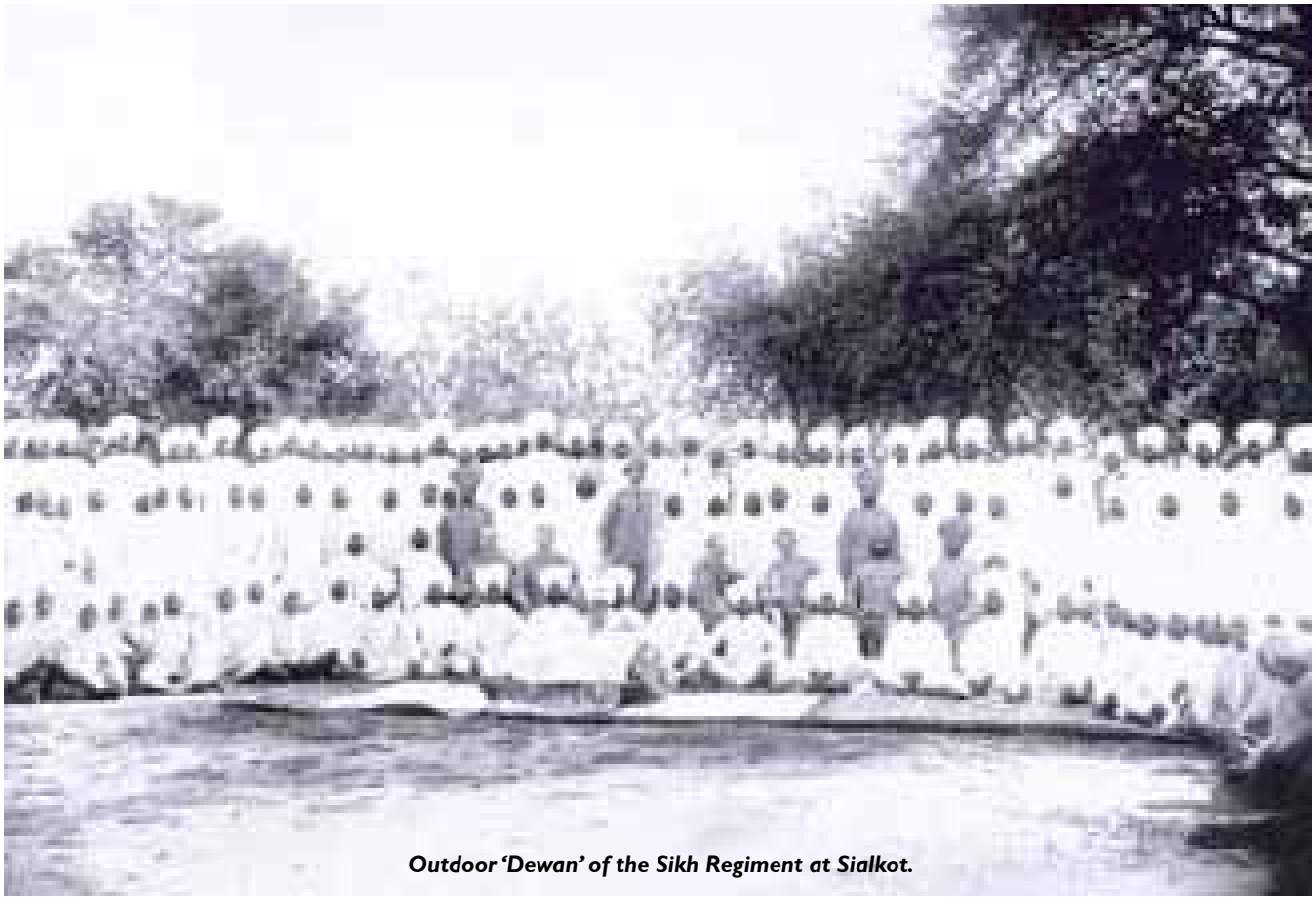
reserve was to be formed under the cavalry. On the day of action, the troops of 5th Lancers were out on an advance scouting mission, while unladen camels and mules were huddled together inside the *zareba*, the Berkshires were out in front, without arms, collecting brushwood. Suddenly they were seen running back followed by the Lancers. Close behind them came Arab spearmen rushing forward, as the XV History records, 'with the most desperate impetuosity'.

As the Lancers entered, the gap was closed with musketry firing by the XV Sikhs, on whom then fell the brunt of battle. The Sikhs fought gallantly, stood like rocks and liberally used their bayonets to keep the enemy out of the *zareba*. Not a single Arab was allowed to pass through the Sikh ranks, though some entered through the other flanks. The British lost 455 men and 176 were wounded.

XV Sikh were fortunate to suffer lighter casualties, with only nine men killed and 19 wounded and this was because they had stood and fought. However, hundreds of valuable transport animals were lost in the melee but the enemy paid dearly for their tactical impudence and lost 2,000 men, mostly to the muskets and bayonets of the XV. The enemy having committed and lost majority of their fighting echelon, were unable to effectively check the further advance of MacNeil's division. The enemy resistence thus smashed, the British force advanced to Toami and burnt it down. The XV Sikhs then returned to Bombay in October. For his gallant action of the *zareba*, Subedar Gurdit Singh was awarded an IOM and 'Saukin', 'Tofrek', became a battle honour.

The Battle of Tofrek had once more demonstrated mettle of the Sikhs, their *esprit de corps*, and their initiative as Tofrek could have been a disaster but for their guts and grit. To honour the occasion, 22 March is celebrated by XV Sikhs as Regimental Day. The Royal Berkshire Regiment also celebrates the occasion and friendship is maintained by the units through the exchange of mutual greetings.

In the meantime XXXV Sikh were on their second mission abroad, the earlier one having been a mixed detachment that served in Nyasaland in 1893-05. After a brief interlude at Jullundur it again set sail, this time to Sudan. It proved to be an eventless tenure least favoured by the men, but the Sudanese were highly impressed with their conduct and discipline.



Outdoor 'Dewan' of the Sikh Regiment at Sialkot.

Darbar Sahib of the 47th Sikhs, at Sialkot, 1901.

Jawans of the 5th Sikhs at the battalion Gurdwara Sahib at Jullunder, 2006.

Top: 47th Sikhs Quarter Guard, January 1903.

Middle-left: Subedar Gurmukh Singh and Jem. Altar Singh in 1895.

Middle-right: 47th Sikhs Quarter Guard, November 2006.

Bottom: XIV Sikhs at Ferozepore, 1897.

Exhibition at the Rubin Museum, New York

The Colour of Devotion

If the Rubin Museum of Art (RMA) has ever produced a sub-par exhibition, I have to see it and I have been frequenting the Museum since it opened two years ago. Housed in the former Barneys department store at the corner of 17th Street and Seventh Avenue, the RMA is one of New York's latest treasures. From its central spiral staircase to its impeccably installed exhibitions and its mandala-inspired logo designed by Milton Glaser, the museum is a gem among gems.

Devoted to Himalayan art from the 12th century onward, the RMA has brought us colourfully lush, culturally rich and scholarly exhibitions such as Holy Madness: Portraits of Tantric Siddhas, Paradise and Plumage: Chinese Connections in Tibetan Arhat Painting and (one of my favourites) Demonic Divine. Now it has mounted the beautiful show,

'I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion'.

Children dressed as Panj Piaras at the Golden Temple parkarma.

A one-floor gathering of approximately 100 artworks from the 16th through the 19th centuries, 'I See No Stranger' is dense, spare and heady. Comprising dozens of illuminated manuscript leaves, silk and cotton embroidered textiles, a pair of wooden sandals, copper water pots and an ornate, Y-shaped brass armrest, the varied exhibition is as luxuriant as a hothouse and as delicate as a morning breeze form.

Not as large or elaborate as some previous exhibitions at the museum 'I See No Stranger', organised by BN Goswamy and Caron Smith, is a concentrated look at the art associated with Sikhism, the world's fifth-largest organised religion. Sikhism was founded in northern Indian at the end of the 15th century by. Though rooted in Indian thought and

history – much of the show's manuscript leaves are in the style of Hindu and Islamic figurative miniatures: Sikhism is a pluralistic, multicultural religion that is distinct from Hinduism and Islam. The radical, fundamental tenets of Sikhism, a religion that was conceived originally as open to everyone, are: 'God is One', 'No one is a Hindu, No one a Muslim' and 'No one is stranger'.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539), as he came to be known, is the mystical ascetic, philosopher and miracle worker who wandered from Mecca to Baghdad to Kabul to Delhi to Dhubri to Sri Lanka accompanied by a musician, spreading Sikhism or what he thought of as 'a light moving across time'. In Sikhism, the 'light' is the spiritual message that 'There is but One God, and by the Guru's grace he is obtained'. Therefore, mankind's divisions – faith, caste, gender, race and station – were all meaningless.

Divided into five sections 'I See No Stranger' centred on the life, teachings, travels and miraculous deeds of Guru Nanak: but his nine successors, or vessels of the 'light' the last of which was Guru Gobind Singh – also figure prominently in the exhibition. Guru Gobind Singh, decreed that no individual would succeed him as Guru. Instead, the *Adi Granth* (Primal Text), a compilation of sacred writings and teachings of the Sikh gurus and poets and known as *Guru Granth Sahib* would be regarded hence as the last and eternal living Guru. The *Guru Granth Sahib*, a text so sacred that to exhibit it in a museum would be sacrilegious, was not on view in the exhibition, although a video screen displays pages from the book. However, an elaborate stack of silken fabrics and cushions, the throne on which the text would rest in a temple, had been reconstructed at the show.

The high points of 'I See No Stranger' are in the small illuminated manuscript leaves, which, painted with opaque watercolour, are often filled with a warm, tender light and in the textiles, which fill the gallery with large abstract swaths of patterned lozenges, diamonds and stylised animals in vibrant pinks, oranges, hot reds and lime greens.

Some of the manuscript illustrations combine illusionist Western space with flat, active, decorative pattern; yet, like the poetry, songs and beliefs of Sikhism itself, most of the images are fluid, airy and open. Subtle and simply stated, they allow for easy entrance and movement. The exhibition also includes, paired with the watercolours, gorgeous workshop line drawings that acted as templates for the fully worked out paintings. Some of these (or, often individual elements – trees, figures, horses) actually outshine the finished works.

A few of the manuscripts illustrate the lineage from Guru to Guru. Others are portraits of Nanak or of his nine successors, spreading the word. Guru Gobind Singh, seen largely as a warrior, is often depicted on an elegant black-and-white horse, whose full, swelling curves gives volume to pattern or to the barren landscape. 'Guru Nanak with a Group of Sadhus (Hindu Holy Men)' (late 18th century), is soft and dreamy. Divided into distinct levels, from river to landscape to figures to trees to sky, the picture shows Nanak seated and teaching the Sardhus, while monkeys, rocks and trees worthy of Henri Rousseau punctuate the landscape. 'Guru Nanak with the Other Nine Gurus' (1882) depicts Nanak, slightly larger than the others, seated on a red field at the top centre of the oval grouping. Here as in most of the other pictures, he is elderly and rotund, seemingly filled with the spirit.

In one beautiful picture from the late 19th century, Guru Nanak is dressed in a robe that is inscribed in Arabic characters with verses from the Koran and with his own teachings. Literally 'wrapped' in holy text from different faiths, Nanak is an amalgam of religions. He is older, wiser and easily recognisable. Sitting on a rung, he is meditating on the 'Formless One'. Nanak is serene. The sacred calligraphy racing across his robe runs into and merges with the pattern on an oblong pillow, which seems to bisect Nanak's body. The pillow, rather than offer support to the Guru, like everything else in the painting, only helps him to ascend. Nanak, floating on spirituality – his hand and foot grasping at the rug for grounding – cannot keep himself from levitating on his own thoughts. Nanak is drifting on his faith: he is taken – as was I by much of the art in 'I See No Stranger' – higher and higher.

Lance Esplund

The Sikh Arts

Indian art is as diverse as India itself, and countless subfields—Kashmiri arts, Pahari arts, South Indian arts, Buddhist arts, and Moghal arts, for example—have emerged on the basis of the artists' regional affiliation, religion, or subject matter. So it is with the **Sikh arts, art created by, for, or about Sikhs**. While Sikhism is over five centuries old, little or no pictorial art was produced during the time of the ten Sikh Gurus (1469–1708). It has only been in the past 300 or so years that outstanding works of Sikh art, including oil and watercolor paintings, lithographs, architecture, textiles, weaponry, jewels, and sculpture, have been produced.

Sikh Art Collections

Important Sikh art collections can be found at the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the Lahore Museum, the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh, and the National Museum of Art in Delhi along with the Victoria and Albert Museum and the British Museum in London, the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. In addition, the Princess Bamba Duleep Singh Collection at Lahore and the private collections of the Maharaja of Patiala and the Maharajah of Kapurthala, the Kapany Collection, and the collections of numerous other individuals attest to the fact that Sikh art is a significant subfield of Indian art. The works of Emily Eden, Prince Aleksandr Mikhailovich Saltuikov, William Carpenter, William Simpson, George Beechey, Richmond, Franz Winterhalter, Fraser, George Landseer, Sobha Singh, Santokh Singh, Arpana Caur, the Singh Twins (Amrita and Rabindra Kaur Singh), and Sukhpreet Singh attest to the breadth of the range of Sikh and non-Sikh artists who have covered Sikh topics.

Sikh Arts Exhibitions

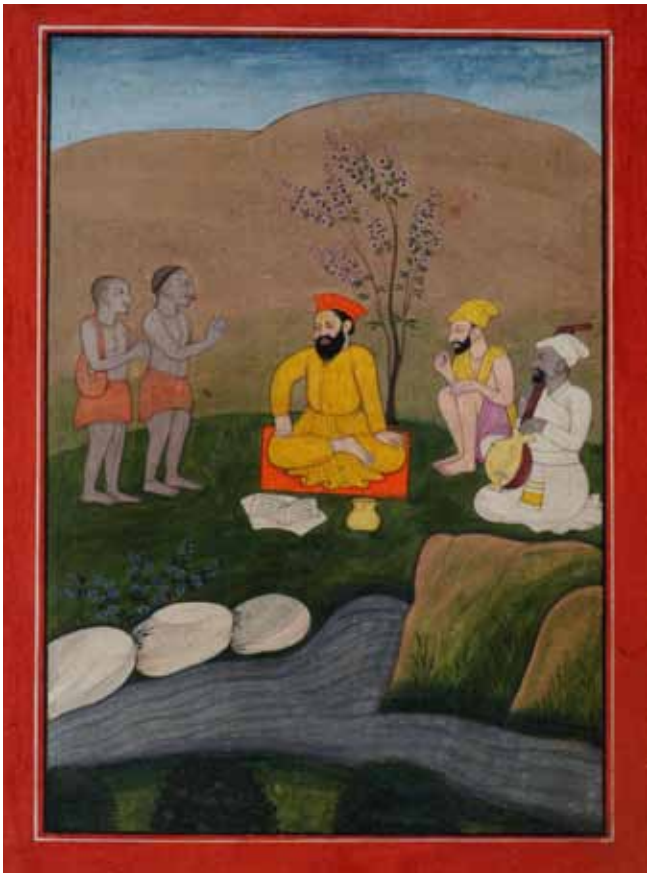
The field has come a long way since the first mention of the "Sikh arts" in print in 1975 in the Sikh Foundation-published journal, *Sikh Sansar*. Exhibitions followed, beginning in 1991 with *Warm and Rich and Fearless* at the Bradford Art Galleries and Museum in the United Kingdom. A joint effort by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the University of California–Berkeley, *Splendors of the Punjab: Art of the Sikhs*, followed in 1992. The year 1999 saw *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* run at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and then move to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco and the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto. In 2004, the Natural History Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC opened the Sikh Heritage Gallery, a long-term exhibit of over 100 pieces, including examples of miniature paintings, depictions of the Darbar Sahib, works devoted to Guru Nanak, and paintings by the Singh Twins and Arpana Caur.

The first major exhibition of Sikh art in New York City ran September 2006 through January 2007 at the Rubin Museum of Art in New York City. *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion* featured artwork made for Sikh patrons between the 16th and 19th centuries. Through these works, the exhibition organizers, Dr BN Goswamy, Professor Emeritus, Punjab University and Dr Caron Smith, Chief Curator and Deputy Director of the Rubin Museum, aim to highlight artistic portrayal of the values of early Sikh humanism and place Sikh art within a larger mosaic of Indian painting. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London has introduced an annual Sikh Arts lecture with events thus far featuring talks by Fakir Sayed Aijazuddin in 2006 and Susan Stronge in 2005. There is an effort underway to request Pakistan to consolidate Sikh art exhibits, including the Princess Bamba Duleep Singh collection, in the main museum in Lahore. Efforts to organize an exhibit of Sikh art in Paris at the Guimet Museum are also underway.

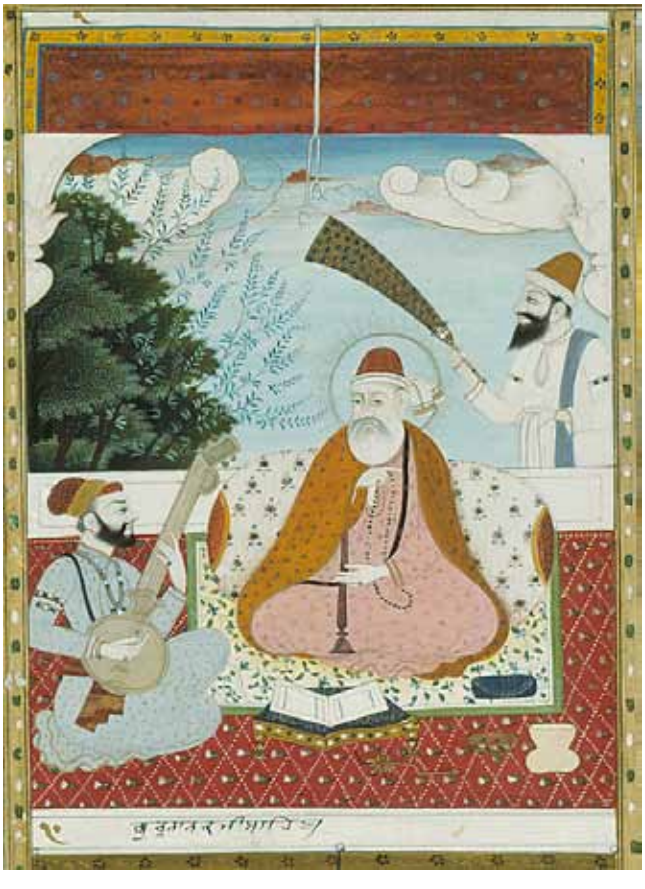
Many Faces of Guru Nanak

Popular subjects in Sikh art include depictions of the ten Gurus, the Golden Temple, and Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the founder of Sikhism, may be the most popular subject of Sikh art, which I define as **art by, for, or about Sikhs**. The first Sikh Guru has been presented wearing a cap, a fez, and, more recently, a turban. Guru Nanak's headgear has changed depending on the artist at work, his or her identities and affinities, and how these are projected onto the subject. Groups in power make subjects in their own image. Finally, today, Sikhs have the power to project their own version of Guru Nanak Dev Ji wearing the turban that was the uniform set out by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji 160 years after Guru Nanak. Other prophets of other religions have met the same treatment. For example, Moses, Buddha, Jesus Christ, and Hindu gods and goddesses have been portrayed differently by various artists of different backgrounds at different times in history.

Early interpretations of Guru Nanak were by Hindu and Muslim artists. It is fascinating to look at the misrepresentations that have occurred when Sikh subjects have been portrayed in art by non-Sikhs. Guru Nanak has been depicted as one among many Hindu gods and deities, an idea that contradicts the Guru's very teachings. Other representations feature Gurus wearing earrings. Excluding such representations from what we call "Sikh art" denies us the opportunity to look critically at an important phenomenon: through art and other means, members of a ruling culture project their norms and values on subjects belonging to other less widely understood cultures. A complete picture of the history of Sikh art, including Sikhs as the subjects of non-Sikh artists, requires the inclusion—and critical discussion—of this type of subject matter.

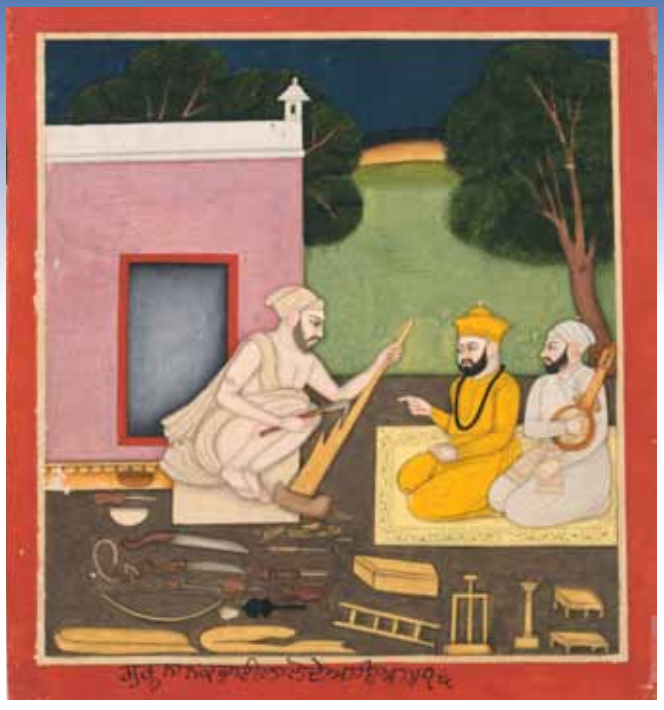


Disciples of the Jogi Balnath approach Guru Nanak. Opaque watercolour on paper. Pahari, from the family workshop of Nainsukh of Guler, c. 1775-1800. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.

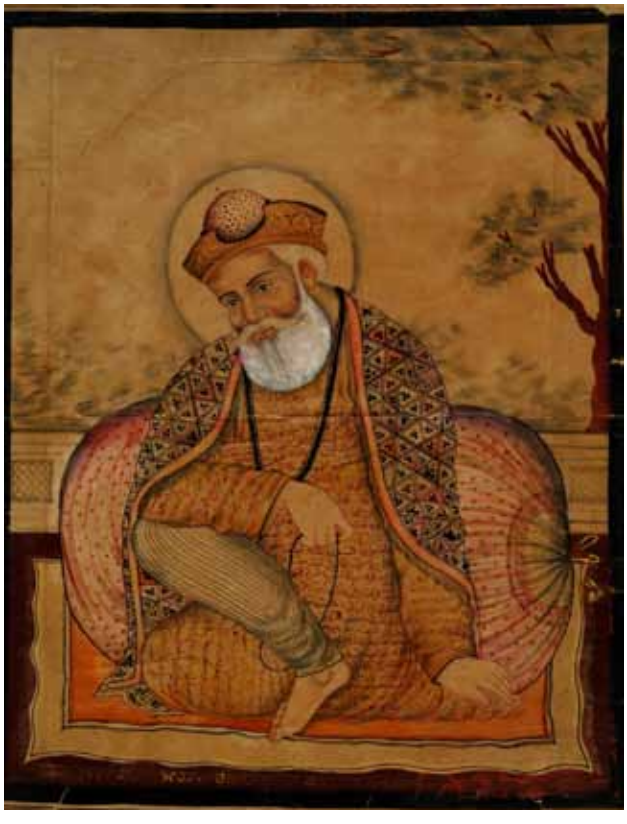


Detail from The Ten Sovereigns. Opaque watercolour on paper. Pahari, from the workshop of Purkhu of Kangra, early 19th century. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

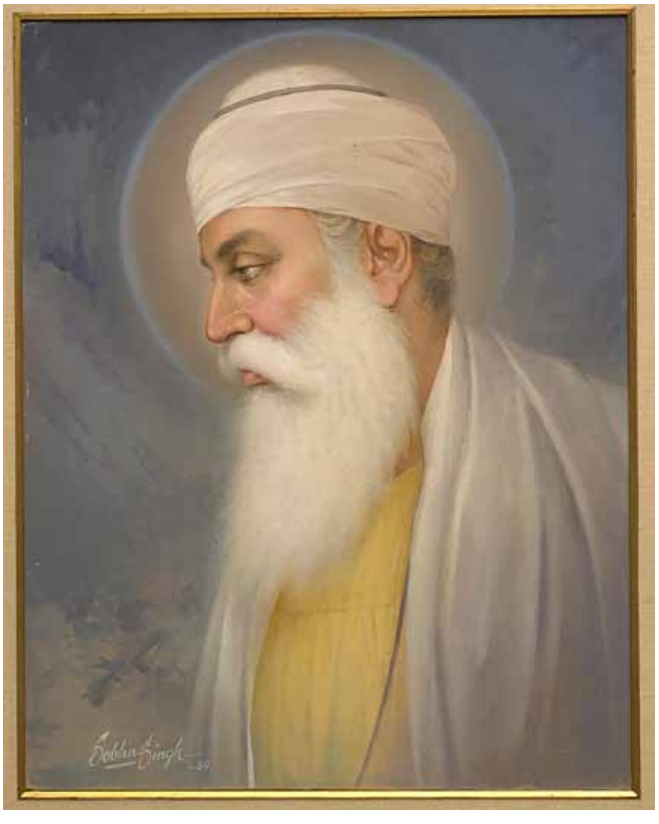
Guru Nanak reading from a text. Folio, possibly from a series of portraits of religious men. Opaque watercolour on paper. From a late Mughal workshop, c. 1775–1800. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.



Guru Nanak at the carpenter Lalo's home. Opaque watercolour on paper. India, probably Murshidabad, West Bengal, c. 1755–1770. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. Gift of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.



Guru Nanak in an inscribed robe. Watercolour on machine-made paper. Punjab, c. 1875–1900. Government Museum and Art Gallery, Chandigarh.



Guru Nanak. Oil on canvas. Sobha Singh, 1970.

Guru Hargobind. Opaque watercolour on paper. Punjab, 1850. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

Guru Har Rai with an attendant. Opaque watercolour on paper. Punjab plains, c. 1750. Asian Art Museum, San Francisco. Gift of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

Guru Tegh Bahadur. Opaque watercolour on paper. Punjab, 1850. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

In recent years, there has been interest in trying to understand the history and theology of Sikhism through publications in the US and other western countries. Some of this interest emerged from the killing of and threats against Sikhs since the advent of 9/11. Sikhs have been confused with Arabs in spite of the fact that Sikhs have been living in the US and Canada for more than 100 years. In describing the origin of Sikhism, some Hindu and Muslim artists have been tempted to portray Guru Nanak wearing a cap. This is particularly unfortunate because, while no one knows his real face, the only fair presentation of Guru Nanak would be the portraits by Sobha Singh and other artists during the 20th century. These portraits show a Guru Nanak with the same appearance as Sikhs living all over the world today, the same Sikhs targeted by post–9/11 violence.

The Ten Sovereigns. Opaque watercolour on paper. Pahari, from the workshop of Purkhu of Kangra, early 19th century. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

Important History Unrepresented

While popular subjects like Guru Nanak Dev Ji have been addressed in Sikh art, other events of Sikh history go completely unnoticed by artists until the 20th century, if even then. If Sikh art were to cover the history of the Sikh Gurus in the way that the works of Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and other Christian artists cover the development of the Christian tradition, imagine how much the world would know about Sikhs and Sikhism!

The following is a list of extremely important subject matter from the lives of the Sikh Gurus appropriate for high-quality artists to cover in their works. These basic elements of the Gurus' lives provide a rich store of subject matter that has thus far only been treated in popular art with posters but never by serious artists. This is a fantastic opportunity for contemporary artists, especially in the present era of appreciation of the Sikh arts.

- The inauguration of the Golden Temple by Guru Arjun Dev Ji, the great design of the building, its unrestricted use by anyone, the beauty of the magnificent poetry, the Langar for all visitors, and the opening ceremony by Mian Mir, a Muslim saint;
- The martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev Ji, the untold atrocities committed by Jahangir's men, the sacred teaching of the Guru under extreme pain, and the role of some traitors;
- The establishment of the concept of miri–piri by Guru Hargobind Sahib, the establishment of two flags, and the inauguration by Guru Hargobind;
- The appeal of the Kashmiri Hindus to Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, the atrocities committed by the Muslim tyrants, the calmness of the Guru, and the presence of young Guru Gobind Singh with advice to the father;
- The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the review by Aurangzeb, the atrocities to the Guru's followers, Aurangzeb's demand to the Guru to perform miracles, and the final execution;
- Delivery of Guru Tegh Bahadur's head to Guru Gobind Singh, the sadness of the young Guru, Guru Gobind Singh's hymn about this father and the sadness of the Sikh followers;
- The selection of the Panj Piyaras by Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the Guru's method of selection, the installation of the Panj Piyaras, their garb, and the delivery of the Amrit;
- Guru Gobind Singh Ji receiving the Amrit from the Panj Piyaras, his humility and deep dedication, and the magnificence of the five chosen ones;
- Guru Gobind Singh's farewell at Nanded, his message to the Sikhs, and his final prayers;
- The beauty of the two young soldier sons of Guru Gobind Singh on their march to war against the tyrant rulers;
- The grandeur of the live entombment of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the aggressive tyrant, and the role of a Hindu informer;
- The trial and martyrdom of great Baba Banda Bahadur.

Future Exhibits on Sikh Arts

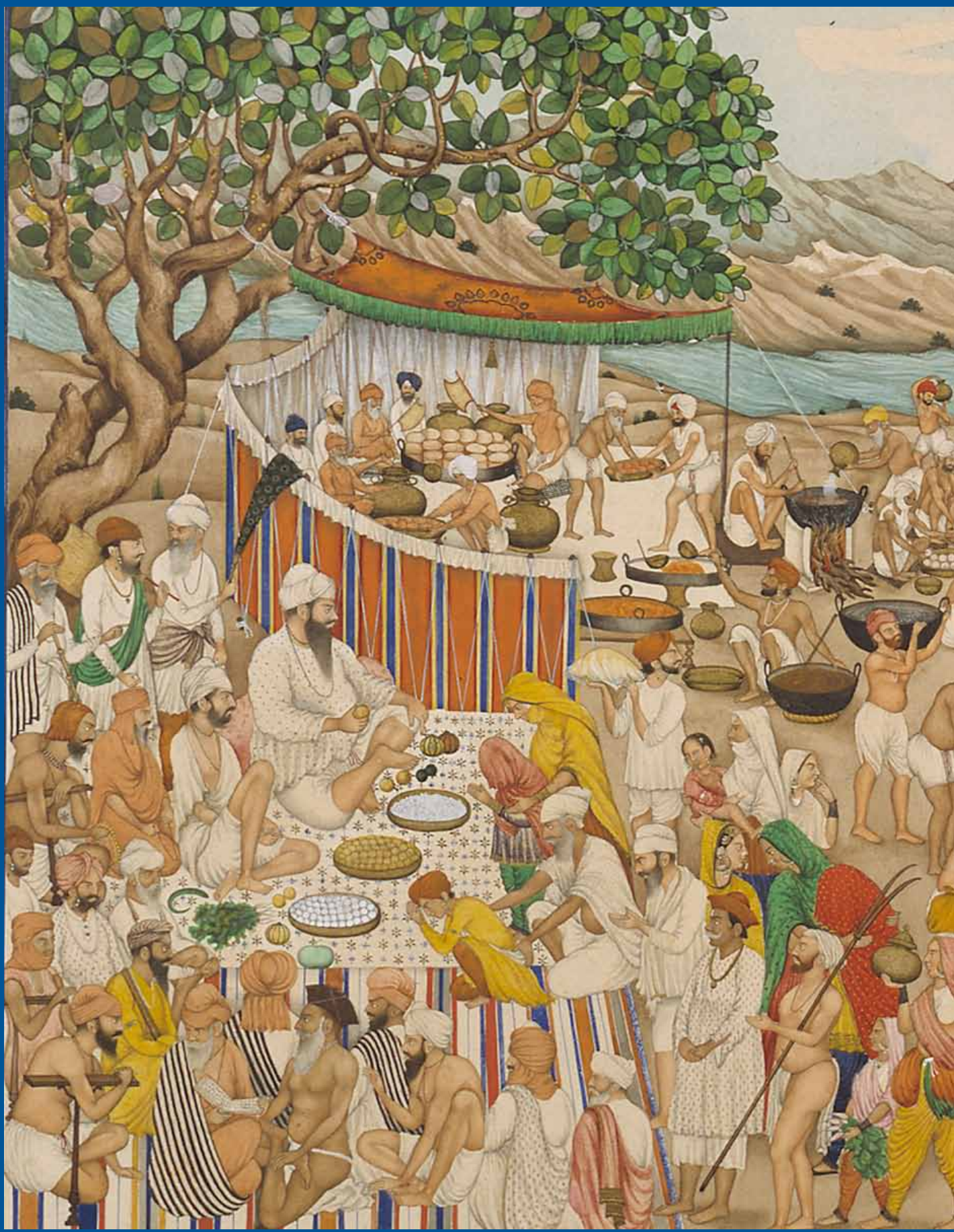
There is considerable interest in India and abroad to set up permanent and temporary exhibits of Sikh Arts, which can be organized under any of a number of themes or concepts. Potential themes for future exhibitions include:

- The origins of Sikhism, emphasizing the teaching of the Sikh Gurus;
- The arts of the Sikh kingdoms, including those of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Maharajas of Patalia, Kapurthala, Nabha, and more;
- Textiles, including *phulkaries*, carpeting, and more;
- Sikh arms and armaments;
- Sikh coinage, awards, and jewelry;
- Sikh art depicting musical instruments, as well as Sikh musical instruments that are themselves works of art;
- Contemporary Sikh arts;
- The role of Sikhs in the military; and
- The presence of Sikhs around the world in the contemporary era.

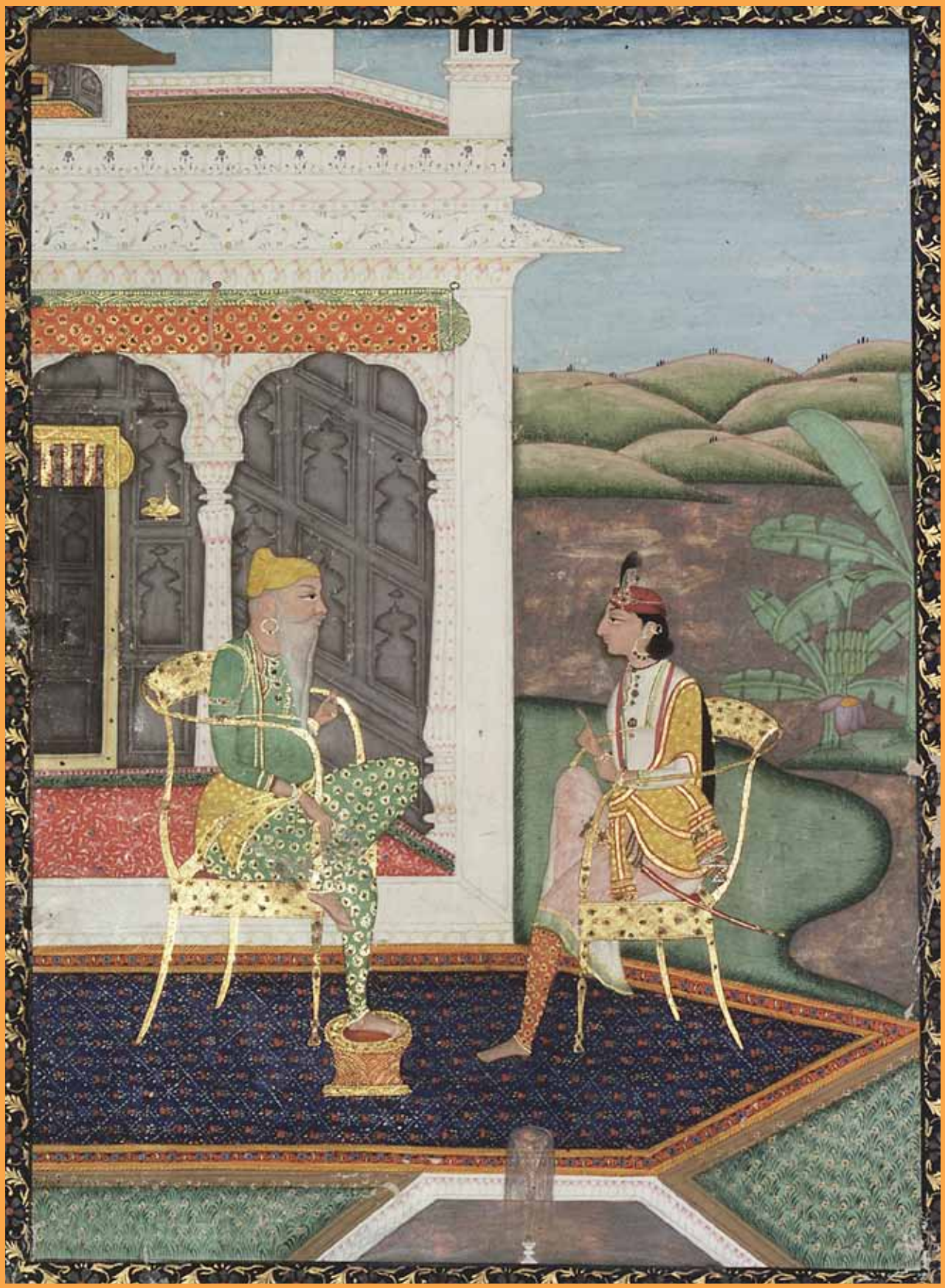
Dr Narinder Singh Kapany

Most of the images presented in this article are from the Kapany Collection. The author is indebted to Pamela Wilson for her assistance in preparation of this article.

Rani Jindan. Oil on canvas. George Richmond. 1863. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.



Bhai Veer Singh, a highly renowned and charitable man. Lahore, 1850. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

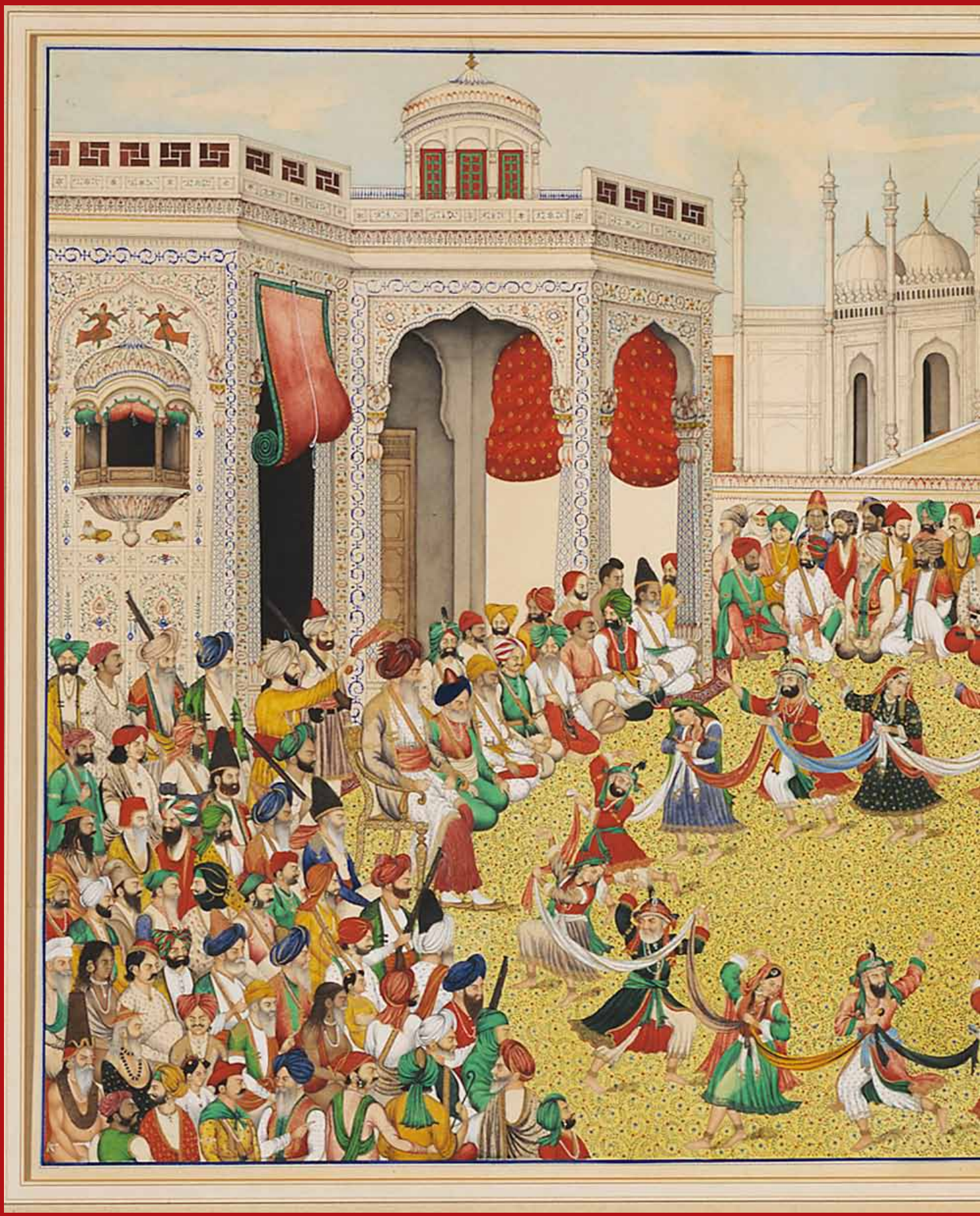


Maharaja Ranjit Singh with Hira Singh. Opaque watercolour on paper. Punjab, 1835. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

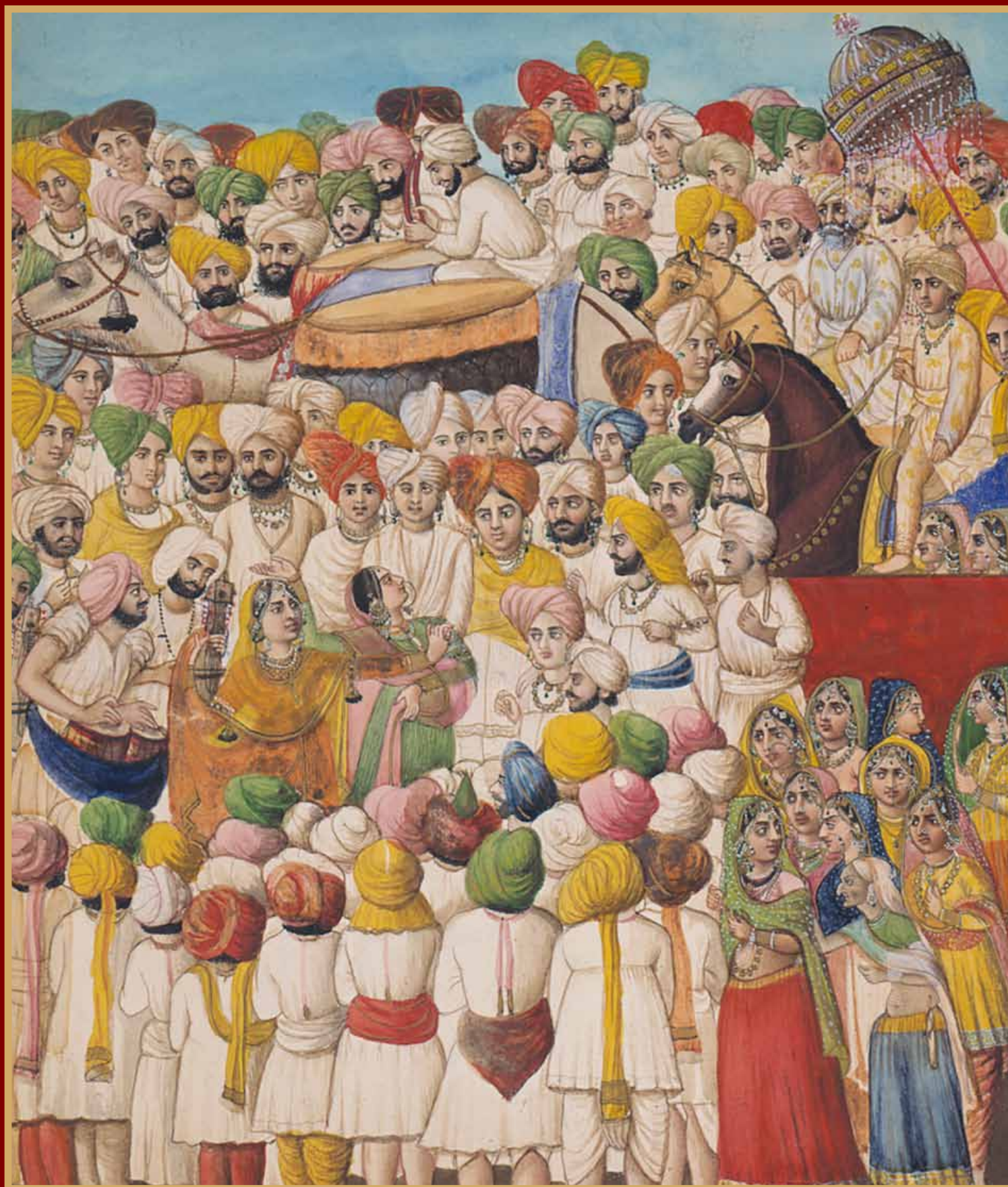
The Golden Temple at Amritsar. Watercolour and gold on paper. Punjab, c. 1840. On loan to the Asian Art Museum, San Francisco, from the collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

Turban helmet. Copper. Punjab, 1820. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

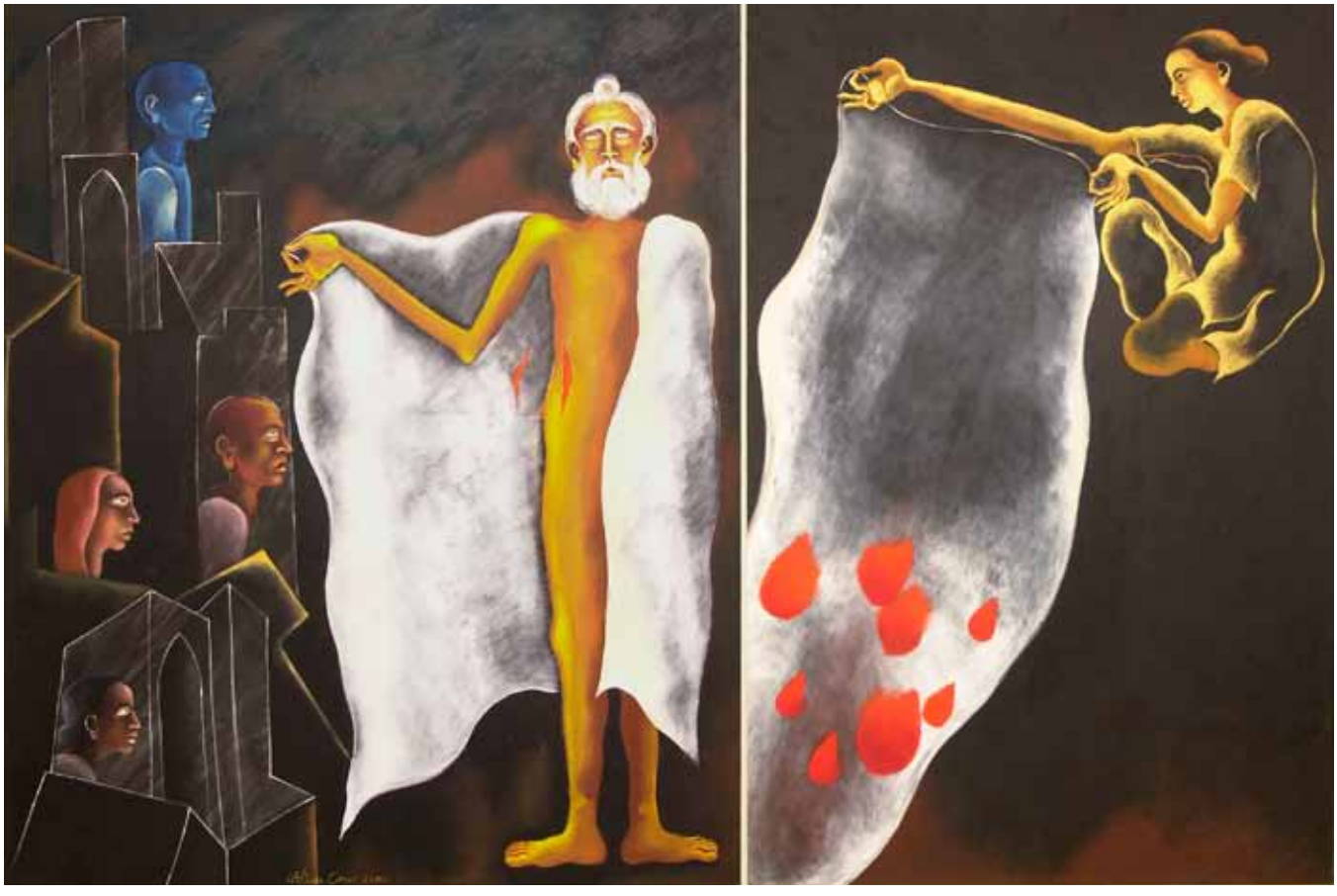
Turban helmet. Steel with gold. Punjab, 1820. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.



Dost Muhammad being received by Sher Singh in Lahore on his way to regain the throne of Kabul. Opaque watercolour on paper. Punjab, 1845. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.



Sikh Marriage Ceremony, Company miniature style. Punjab. 19th century. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.



Diptych. Oil on canvas. Arpana Caur, 2003. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

Ring of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Gold and emerald. Punjab, 1812. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

Boy tying turban. Oil on canvas. Sukhpreet Singh, 2006. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

Circular shield containing images of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, Dhian Singh, Karak Singh, Sham Singh, Nau Nihal Singh, Suchet Singh, Sher Singh and Hira Singh. Metal. Punjab, c. 1835-1848. Collection of Satinder and Narinder Kapany.

Twenty Publications on Sikh Arts

- Archer, W. G. (1956) *The Paintings of the Sikhs.*
- Khan, F. A. (1961) *The Princess Bamba Collection: Antiquities of the Sikh Period.*
- Aijazuddin, F. S. (1979) *Sikh Portraits by European Artists.*
- Anand, Mulk Raj (1981) *Maharaja Ranjit Singh as Patron of Arts.*
- Hans, Surjit (1987) *Janam Sakhi Guru Baba Nanak Paintings.*
- Arshi, Pardeep Singh (1989) *The Golden Temple: History, Art and Architecture.*
- Singh, Khushwant, Poovaya-Smith, Nima and Ponnapa, Kaveri (1991) *Warm and Rich and Fearless: A Brief Survey of Sikh Culture (exhibition catalogue)*
- McLeod, W. H. (1991) *Popular Sikh Art.*
- Madra, Amandeep with Paramjit S. Grewal (1999) *Warrior Saints: Three Centuries of the Sikh Military Tradition.*
- Stronge, Susan (1999) *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms.*
- Brown, Kerry (ed.) (1999) *Sikh Art and Literature.*
- Bharadia, Seema (2000) *The Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms, Canadian Collection.*
- Goswamy, B. N. (2000) *Piety and Splendor: Sikh Heritage in Art.*
- Randhawa, T. S. (2000) *The Sikhs: Images of a Heritage.*
- Singh, Amrit Kaur and Singh, Rabindra K. D. Kaur (1999) *Twin Perspectives.*
- Singh, Khushwant and Rai, Raghu (2001) *The Sikhs.*
- Singh, Mohinder (2003) *Maharaja Ranjit Singh.*
- Daljeet (2004) *The Sikh Heritage: A Search for Totality.*
- Rubin Museum of Art (2006) *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion (exhibition guide)*
- Goswamy, B. N. and Caron Smith (2006) *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion*

Born in India and educated in England, Dr Narinder Singh Kapany has lived in the United States for fifty-two years. A graduate of Agra University in India, he completed advanced studies in optics at the Imperial College of Science and Technology, London, and received his PhD from the University of London in 1955.

Dr Narinder Singh Kapany

His career has spanned science, entrepreneurship and management, academia, publishing, lecturing, and farming. His personal interests include philanthropy, art collecting, and sculpting. As a scientist, Dr Kapany is widely acknowledged as 'the father of fibre-optics', which has changed the world in multifarious ways. His research and inventions have encompassed fibre-optics communications, lasers, biomedical instrumentation, solar energy, and pollution monitoring. He has over one hundred patents and was a member of the National Inventors Council. He has received many awards including 'The Excellence 2000 Award' from the USA Pan-Asian American Chamber of Commerce in 1998. He is a fellow of numerous scientific societies including the British Royal Academy of Engineering, the Optical Society of America, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

As an entrepreneur and business executive, Dr Kapany has specialised in the processes of innovation and the management of technology and technology transfer. In 1960, he founded Optics Technology Inc. and was chairman of the board, president, and director of research for twelve years. In 1967 the Company went public with numerous corporate acquisitions and joint ventures in the United States and abroad. In 1973, Dr Kapany founded Kaptron Inc. and was president and CEO until 1990 when he sold the company to AMP Incorporated. For the next nine years, Dr Kapany was an AMP fellow, heading the Intrapreneur & Technical Expert Programme and serving as chief technologist for Global Communications Business. He recently founded K2 Optronics. He has also served on the boards of various companies. He was a member of the Young Presidents' Organization and is presently a member of the World Presidents' Organization.

As an academic, Dr Kapany has taught and supervised the research activity of postgraduate students. He was a Regents Professor at the University of California, Berkeley and at the University of California, Santa Cruz (UCSC). He was also director of the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurial Development at UCSC for seven years. At Stanford University, he has been a visiting scholar in the Physics Department and consulting professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering. As an author and lecturer, Dr Kapany has published over one hundred scientific papers and four books on opto-electronics and entrepreneurship. He has lectured to various national and international scientific societies.

As a philanthropist, Dr Kapany has been active in education and the arts. He has been the founding chairman and major funder of the Sikh Foundation and its activities for over thirty years. In collaboration with international institutions and publishers, the Foundation runs programmes in publishing, academia, and the arts. In 1998, Dr Kapany endowed a chair of Sikh Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. His gift in 1999 of $500,000 plus one hundred Sikh art objects to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco established a gallery in its building displaying the works he has donated from his collection of Sikh art. In 1999, he endowed a chair of Opto-Electronics at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He has also served as a trustee of Menlo School in Menlo Park, California.

As an art collector, Dr Kapany has specialised in Sikh art. He was the prime mover and provided a major loan of paintings for the internationally acclaimed *Arts of the Sikh Kingdoms* exhibition. The exhibition started in March 1999 at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, proceeded to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco with the Sikh Foundation as its major sponsor, and opened in May 2000 for four months at the Royal Ontario Museum in Canada. The exhibition follows *Splendours of the Punjab: Sikh Art and Literature* organised by Dr Kapany in 1992 in collaboration with the Asian Art Museum and UC Berkeley to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Sikh Foundation. He assisted in a long-term Sikh arts exhibition set up in 2004 at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. and a Sikh arts exhibition called *I See No Stranger: Early Sikh Art and Devotion* at the Rubin Museum of art in New York, which ran from September 2006 through January 2007.

As an artist, Dr Kapany has created forty 'dynoptic' sculptures, which were first displayed in a one-man show at the Exploratorium of the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco in 1972. Since then, the collection has been viewed at museums and art galleries in Chicago, Monterey, Palo Alto, and Stanford.

Dr Kapany lives in the Bay Area with his wife, Satinder. His son, Rajinder, is a hi-tech executive, and his daughter, Kiren, is an attorney and filmmaker.

The Sikh Religious Movement as a Liberating Influence

At the initial stage of our national movement Surendra Nath Banerjee 'presented the Sikh movement' (to quote the words of Bipin Chandra Pal) 'as really a movement of freedom, first against the current ceremonialism and Brahminical domination of the Hindu community; second, against the oppression of the Mughals, who tried to crush a movement of religious and spiritual freedom by the organised brute force of an alien government; and, lastly, against British aggression'.

Guru Nanak, Spiritual Founder of the Sikh Commonwealth

In 1878 Surendra Nath Bannerjee delivered a lecture to young men in Calcutta on the rise of Sikh power in the Punjab, in which he described Guru Nanak as "the spiritual founder of the Sikh Empire". What he sought to imply was that from the comprehensive teachings of the great Founder of the faith, the Sikhs derived those qualities of character and expanse in outlook which enabled them to liberate the Punjab and exercise sovereign political authority for eight years. In its socio-religious aspect Guru Nanak's mission was to liberate man from the tyranny of ceremonialism and the domination of the caste system. *Such liberation was to be the prelude to political liberation without which the social aspirations and spiritual cravings of man cannot have free expression.* The issue remained in the background in the days of Guru Nanak and his immediate successors; it came to the forefront in response to the challenge of what Surendra Nath called "the oppression of the Moguls" as also of the Afghan invasions. *The 'Sikh Empire' was the political expression in an institutional form of that integrated view of life which the Sikh Gurus had inculcated through their teachings over a period of two centuries.*

In the early writings on Guru Nanak the role assigned to him is that of a deliverer or saviour in the field of religion. Guru Arjun wrote:

The egg of superstition hath burst;
the mind is illuminined:
The Guru hat cut the fetters off the feet and
freed the captive.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the fetters which kept man captive were religious as also social. Indeed, the two types of fetters were closely linked; religion reacted upon society, and vice versa. To cut them off – to liberate man from dual bondage – was the great object which the founder of Sikhism set before himself. In pursuing this objective he acted under the compelling sense of divine mission. On this point the testimony of the *Puratan Janak-sakhiand* of Bhai Nand Lal in his Ganjnama represents the accepted Sikh tradition. In this connection we may remember the words of Guru Gobind Singh:

Thus spake God unto me
I have cherished thee as My son.
And ordained three to spread the Faith.
For this mission God sent me into the world
And on the earth I was born as a mortal.

The emergence of Sikhism was a historical necessity. Bhai Gurdas wrote:

Hearing (mankind's) cry the Beneficent Lord sent
Guru Nanak into the world.
Guru Nanak came for the redemption of the Dark Age.

When the great redeemer appeared, wrote Bhai Gurdas, 'darkness was dispelled and light shone forth over the world'.

As when the sun rises the stars are hidden and
darkness flees away;
As at the lion's roar a herd of deer takes instant flight.

The Vars of Bhai Gurdas reflect the spirit of self-confidence which inspired the Sikh community in the years of the seventeenth century. The Sikh religion had already acquired a distinct character, and he claimed for it superiority to other religions:

Where there is on Sikh there is one
Sikh; where there are two Sikhs
there is a company of Sikhs; where
there are five Sikhs there is God.

Guru Nanak's teachings represented a higher moral force which brought out all the virtues of the common people and enabled them not only to survive cruel persecution but also to create a sovereign State in a period of ruthless strife. The

Sikh mind was illumined and its letters were cut off; the natural consequence was the development of its capacity to achieve what was seemingly impossible.

'Where is the path of salvation?'
Guru Nanak asked, it did not lie in
Blind adherence to dogmas and rituals. He said:
There are many spiritual revelations,
Many modes to fetter the mind:
But the saint seeks for release through Truth;
Truth is the higher than all these, and higher
Still is the live lived in Truth.
Truth was not to be found in repetition of sacred texts.
Neither the Vedas nor the Kateb know the mystery.

Nor was the Trust to be found in the diverse, and often contradictory teachings of the traditional philosophical system:

Six the sacred texts
Six the gurus who wrote them
Six the messages they left.

Religion was cut off from its links with pedantic philosophy and looked upon as a matter of spirit rather than of intellect:

A man may read books for months;
he may read them for years.
He may ready them for life; he may
read them while he hath breath
The more one readeth and writeth,
the more is one tormented..
From such torment there was only one escape:
Nanak, only one word, God's name,
would be of account; all else would
be the senseless discussion of pride.

The door to salvation is opened by God's Grace, *nazar*, *kripa*, *parsad*, *dava*. Those who meditate on Him with single-minded devotion receive His Grace. What He gives is given in accordance with His will.

He upon whom the (Lord's) gracious glance rests, he it is who acquires the glory of the True Name.

The most fundamental query of a man's life as stated by Guru Nanak in the *Japji*, is this:

How shall the Truth be known?
How can the veil of false illusion torn?
His answer is simple and direct:
O Nanak, thus runneth the Writ Divine
Abide by His will and make it thine.

Thus Guru Nanak did not allow dogmas, philosophical systems and spiritual revelations to serve as 'modes to fetter the mind'. All fetters were to be cut off; man was to brought into direct relation with his Maker' seeking salvation through his Grace. And salvation was not conceived in terms of heaven and hell where man received reward of punishment as he deserved. The end of man's journey was union with God.

In the words of Guru Nanak.

The atma is dissolved and is absorbed (in God).
The individual's atma becomes one with Paramatma
and inner duality dies within.

To quote Guru Ram Das:

God is pleased with the saints who are pleased with Him.
The Lord of light will blend their light with His,
and both lights shall unite.

It was a sublime goal beyond the reach of men who were slaves of superstitions and prejudices. Conventionalism was the dominant feature of religious life in Guru Nanak's days; it was the greatest barrier to salvation as also to the propagation of Truth. The religious spirit of the people had been directed to wrong channels; formal rituals had acquired overriding importance and the true essence of religion had been lost sight of. Guru Nanak was not tired of repeating that mere external practices were no avail in respect of spiritual progress. 'Hundreds of thousands of penances at sacred places', he said, were useless devices. He demonstrated before a crowd assembled at Hardwar the futility of ceremonial bathing in the Ganges. He said:

To give a feast, make a burnt offering, offer alms, perform penance and worship and endure bodily paid for ever are of no avail.

There is a passage in the *Japji* which seems to imply that he recognised the limited value of penance and pilgrimages:

Pilgrimage, austerity, mercy, almsgiving and charity
Bring merit, be it as little as the mustard seed.

But the soul's hunger for God's Grace could not be quenched by the 'mustard seed'. So Guru Nanak insisted upon the superiority of true inward devotion.

He who hears, believes and cherishes the Word.
An inner pilgrimage in his meed.

We have the same insistence on 'inner pilgrimage' in what he said to a Yogi:

Religion consisteth not in a patched cost, or in a
jogi's staff, or in ashes smeared over the body.
Religion consisteth not in earrings worn, or a
shaven head, or in the blowing of horns.

Conventionalism was no less dominant in Muslim society. Here also Guru Nanak issued his warning: 'One could not be a true Mussalman by merely praying in the mosque, fasting and going to Ka'aba'. He offered the following advice regarding the five prayers prescribed for a Muslim:

First, be truthful
Second, take only what is your due.
Third, give alms in the name of Allah.
Fourth, make your intentions pure,
Fifth, let your voice rise in the praise of God.
Let good acts be your creed.
Then proclaim you are a Muslim.

Ceaseless protest against conventionalism – aiming at the removal of fetters and the liberation of the human mind – was one of Guru Nanak's most remarkable and far-reaching contribution. He began his missionary career with the significant utterance: 'There is no Hindu and no Mussalman'. What he actually meant is not quite clear. Macauliffe says: 'The Sikhs interpret this to mean generally that both Hindus and Mohammedans had forgotten the percepts of their religions'. This interpretation is quite consistent with the general tenor of Guru Nanak's reachings. He was never tired of speaking about the lapses of Hindus and Muslims alike. His attack was directed against rituals conventions and moral lapses. He emphasised the prevailing confusion between means and ends: the people took 'those thing as ends in themselves which were originally intended only as means'. Thus his utterances seems to have a direct reference to the actual socio-religious conditions prevailing in greater Punjab in his days. it would hardly be wrong to take it as a setting for the liberation of human souls which he accepted as the God-given mission.

Another aspect of this process of liberation was Guru Nanak's protest against what McGregor called 'the complicated structure of the Hindu religion, polluted, as it had become, by the worship of images and idols'. The worship of number-less gods and goddesses was to be replaced by the adoration of one God:

The lord of all the worlds is One.
He is nirankar, Formless, without rup
or rekhia.
His is not born
Nor does He die to be born again
He is self-existent.

Devotion is due directly to Him, not to any incarnation (manifestation in human form) or to any image or idol. Guru Nanak's reference to the Rama-Sita creed, which had been popularised in North India by Ramananda, implied a contrast between the 'One Lord of all creation' and an incarnation:

Nanak, God is independent: Ram could not erase his destiny.

Neither gods nor prophets were to be worshipped in person, for there were really suppliants at the Court of the Formless One.

At God's Gate there dwell thousands of prophets,
Thousands of Brahmas, Vishnus and Shivas.

It was a simple and direct creed, shorn of confusions and misconceptions accumulated through many centuries, that Guru Nanak offered to the people. In spiritual as also in social life the ground was prepared for the emergence of a community looking directly at the problems of life, free from the mystical fear of the super-natural which was the basis of priestly domination. God is 'without fear and without hate'. Those who love and worship the Fearless should be fearless too:

He who is imbued with the fear of the Lord becometh fearless,
For one cometh like the one one serveth.

Ancillary to the rejrection of the priestly order was the repudiation of the sanctity of *deva-bhâsâ* ('the language of the gods', i.e. Sanskrit) which had been, from time immemorial the sole medium of communication between the Hindus and their gods. Here Guru Nanak was not required to break new ground, for the track was laid by reformers like Ramananda, Kabir and Namdev who had been anticipated by the early Vaishnavas of South India. this new trend in medieval religious life was really the necessary consequence of the popularisation of religion aimed at by the expounders of the bhakti cult. Guru Nanak continued and extended the practice of using the people's language for developing and propagating a people's religion. His own poetic genius contributed in no small measure to the success of this revolutionary experiment. The loka-bhasa replaced the deva-bhasa and brought religion to the heart of the masses. There was no need any longer for a priest or an interpreter to guide – or misguide and exploit – the illiterate and ill-educated people. Religion ceased to be a mystery behind a linguistic curtain; it became a part of life, a matter of daily experience.

In the sphere of religion Guru Nanak insisted upon 'inner pilgrimage and cleansing'. As religion was very intimately connected with the composition and conventions of society, it was only natural that his teachings should urge outer 'cleansing' – the 'cleansing' of the social structure – as well. He was not a social reformer in the ordinary sense of that term. He did not aim directly and specifically at removal of social injustice and liberation of man from age-old social prejudices. The divine mission entrusted to him was to lay down a track for man's spiritual journey. The only passport needed for an earnest sojourner was a craving for spiritual bliss; he would not need social qualifications, such as high rank in the social hierarchy. Indeed, it would be necessary for him to drop his inherited social prejudices before he progressed in his pilgrimage to God's Court. Thus the spiritual venture prescribed by Guru Nanak became a social revolution.

There could be no social revolution in India without a frontal attack on the caste system which crippled human dignity and formed a dyke against spiritual regeneration through direct approach to God. In Hindu society religion and caste have been inseparable for ages. In south India, where the caste system was exceptionally rigid, some early religious reformers realised that caste had really no role to play in the development of spiritual life. Ramanuja barely touched the fringe of the problem. While insisting on *bhakti* and the partial relegation of rituals to the back ground, he emphasised the importance of some curious culinary rules which were later rejected by Ramananda.

According to Nabhaji, these rules were 'not made for caste purposes, but for the glory of God and purity of worship'. This was the later Vaishnava interpretation of a system the rigidity of which was originally due to caste ideas. Ramananda made the first serious attempt to grapple with the problem of caste. He admitted to his sect disciplines from all castes, even from the Muslim community, and called them 'the liberated'. He relaxed, to a great extent, the culinary and kindred rules observed by the orthodox, Ramanuja Sampradaya. His ideas were popularised in North India, by Kabir and other sants. Moreover, the people of North India particularly the people of the Punjab, had been familiar with a casteless Muslim society for several centuries.

Guru Nanak's sensitive and receptive mind was, thus open to two influences leading in the same direction: an internal process of social reform initiated by the bhagats and an external example operating as a challenge. What he achieved was thus stated by Bhai Gurdas:

> *By the Guru's instruction the four cases were blended in one society of saints.*

If we take this statement in a literal sense it would imply the formation of a casteless society based on removal of traditional restrictions such as prohibition of inter-caste marriage and inter-caste dining. Some statements of Guru Nanak bear such wide interpretation.

> *Castes are folly, names are folly:*
> *All creatures have on shelter, that of God.*
> *What power hath caste? It is the reality that is tested.*

There are other statements in which we find the Guru clearly viewing the problem of caste from the spiritual stand-point:

> *Hereafter neither man's name nor his caste shall be considered.*
> *In the supreme state are seen no castes or caste-marks.*
> *Caste hath no power in the next world: there is a new order of beings.*
> *No one calleth clarified butter or silk impure; such is a saint in regard to caste.*

In the light of such passages in Guru Nanak'c ompositions it would probably be better to take the statement of Bhai Gurdas in a special or restricted sense. By 'blending four castes is one society of saints' he probably means – not the immediate and total removal of the traditional social classification or of external social distinctions for purposes of domestic relations – but the elimination of caste as a factor in spiritual life. According to Ramanuja, the grace of God is not available for the Shudra in this life; but by good conduct he may work his way to birth in a higher caste and then be admitted to the privileged group in social and religious maters. Guru Nanak recognised no such ineligibility based on caste. In his view every man, irrespective of his position in the caste hierarchy, is eligible for union with the Supreme Being; those who take shelter in God are equals. Behind his sayings lies the revolutionary principle that the worth of a man is to be judged solely by the intensity of his devotion to God: the Creator does not look upon case as a test of eligibility for a salvation.

Although the application of this principle would be limited in the first instance to the sphere of religion, it could not but have a powerful impact on society as a whole. That would be the necessary consequence of the radical change of a outlook derived from Guru Nanak's teachings. Complete elimination of a system which had been the basis of Hindu social organisation for many centuries was extremely difficult, if not impossible; but orthodoxy could hardly resist a breach in the citadel. Thus Guru Nanak prepared the ground for a social revolution even though he did not directly and deliberately initiate it. The seed sown by him developed into a plant in the days of Guru Gobind Singh, who said

> *Let me of four castes receive my baptism, each out of one dish, and feel no disguist or contempt for one another.*

Even the Tenth Guru's injunction appears to have been only partly effective, for Forster found towards the close of the 18th century that the Sikhs 'formed matrimonial connections only in their tribes and adhered implicitly to the rules prescribed by the Hindu law, in the choice and preparation of their food' except in the case of Prasad or sacred bread.

Reference has been made above to the attack made by the Bhagats on the caste system. But in the comparison with the attacks initiated by Guru Nanak it was narrow and modest. They sought to soften the rigours of the caste system by accommodating, in their respective sects, men from the lower castes, including the so-called untouchables, and conferring upon them a status in spiritual life which had been beyond their reach for many centuries. *This was social generosity rather than social revolution, for 'the privilege of equally was not extended to men as men, had washed away their untouchability with the love of God'.* Even while praying to God Ravi Das cannot forget his low birth:

> *My caste is low, my lineage low, and low is my birth. A 'dum, a chandal, or a maleech', he says, 'becometh pure by worshipping God'.*

Sikhism takes a much more catholic view. It recognises the equality of men as men; for attaining equality purification through the love of God is not regarded as a condition precedent. This approach to the problem of caste is an appropriate prelude to a real social revolution. Though that revolution proved to be a long and difficult process, that foundations of a casteless society were well and truly laid by Guru Nanak, and his successors continued to build till the structure reached its full height and attained solidarity.

For a rational reorientation of the prevailing social outlook changes other than the relaxation or abolition of

caste were also necessary. Sikhism fostered a new concept of life in three directions. First, it rejected asceticism, a practice hallowed by Hindus and Muslims alike. Guru Nanak killed – by example as also by precept – the old idea that a householders' life was a barrier to spiritual process. He was, of course of full aware of the evil effect of domestic entanglements'.

Entanglements are mother, father, and the whole world;
Entanglements are sons, daughters, and women;
By the entanglements of worldly love and sin man perisheth.

Instead of advocating escape from such 'entanglements' through renunciation of worlds life, Guru Nanak asked man to 'abide pure among the impurities of the world'. Asked by Siddha Charpat how man can cross the ocean called the world, he replied:

As a lotus in the water remaineth dry, as also a water-fowl in the stream,
So by meditating on the Word and repating God's names, shall thou be unaffected by the world.

Thus a direct link was established between the daily life of the humble householder and the spiritual pilgrimage which had hitherto been considered as the special field for ascetics. Domestic life was given a new dignity; a new vigour was brought into society.

It was in conformity with this new orientation of social outlook that Guru Nanak emphasised the importance of honest labour as an ingredient of religious life:

He who eats what he has earned by his own labour and gives some to others – Nanak, he it is who knows the true way

In a few simple words Guru Nanak urged the need for honest labour for livelihood, underlined the value of social cooperation and pointed out the easiest path of salvation for the common man. In the context of social conditions prevailing in his age this was revolutionary concept of the duties of man. It prepared the ground for the development of a community dedicated to work, fully conscious of personal and social responsibilities, and anxious to reconcile service to man with service to God. Many bhagats, including Kabir earned their livelihood by taking up their respective caste professions, but none of them specifically urged respect for a householder's life or declared that it was 'the true way: what Guru Nanak taught he practiced. When the period of his travels came finally to an end he settled at Kartarpur, "put aside all garments of renunciation" (as Bhai Gurdas said) and "found time to attend to agriculture". Even then "the unstruck music (or devotional ecstasy) resounded endlessly".

The degraded position of women among both Hindus and Muslims of Guru Nanak's days weakened family life and sapped the vitality of society as a whole. Gorakhnath is said to have described women as 'tigresses' who are "in continual search of beautiful men whom they eat". Guru Nanak's concept of the position of women in society was fundamentally different. He offered women a new status of high respect and dignity as mothers and partners in life. Indeed, his recognition of the social status of women is a pleasant and meaningful departure from medieval ideas:

Of a woman are we conceived,
Of a woman we are born,
To a woman are we betrothed and married,
It is a woman who is a friend and partner of life,
It is a woman who keeps the race going.

Through woman are established social ties.
Why should we consider woman cursed and condemned
When from woman are born leaders and rulers?
From woman alone is born a woman,
Without woman there can be no human birth.
Without woman, O Nanak, only the True One exits.

This generous tribute to the role of women in the preservation and proper functioning of society is in complete accord with the position assigned to the householder in the Sikh religion. Those who seek salvation need not keep themselves aloof from women and treat their company as a sinful barrier to spiritual efforts. The concept of woman as a man's helpmate became one of the distinctive features of Sikh society. *This was the first step towards the liberation of women from crippling social restraints.*

In several hymns Guru Nanak speaks of God as a husband and of the devotee as a loving wife; spiritual bliss is likened to connubial happiness:

A young wife sitteth at home her Beloved is abroad; she continually thinketh of Him and pineth away.

Apart from the deep meaning of such verses from the spiritual point of view they give us a glimpse into domestic bliss springing from happy partnership between man and woman. Such partnership was the basis on which a meaningful householder's life would rest. The idealisation of connubial happiness and its utilisation as a spiritual imagery could not but soften the rigorous of daily life and show that heaven and earth could meet even in humble homes.

There is no doubt that Sikhism served as a liberating influence in the religious and social spheres. It cut off old fetters which crippled the sour of man. It released new religious and social forces which aimed at creating an integrated and vigorous society.

There were political fetters which urgently needed to be cut off. There were galling restrictions on the personal dress and movement of the Hindus as also on their social ceremonies. In Dera Ghazi Khan, it is said, a Hindu could ride only a donkey. The crippling influence of foreign rule had weakened the moral fibre of t he Hindus. 'When

Bhai Budha asked his father to drive away the invader who was destroying his fields, the latter could only shake his head and confess his inability to do so. Guru Nanak found the demoralised Hindus trying to please their Muslim masters by mimicking their manners, by eating meat prepared in the Muslim fashion, and by adopting Muslim names. Even the Kshatriyas – the fighting caste – had lost their virility.

The Kshatriyas has forsaken their religion and adopted the language of molecchas.

The exclusion of the Hindus from the aristocracy and the bureaucracy – from eminence in court, politics and administration – crippled their capacity for management of practical affairs. It was – to quote pregnant words used by Sir Thomas Munro in 1824 on the question of employment of Indians in the Company's service – a "sentence of degradation on a whole people".

The *bhagats* concentrated their eyes on heaven; the earth was a mere passing illusion and all that it could offer was suffering in various forms, convulsions which were a necessary element in the process of decay. Says Kabir:

Man is born and growth up, and when he hath grown up he dieth;
We see that the world passeth away in this wise.

When 'the world passeth away' why should one take notice of even political strife which had serious repercussions on peace and security? The compositions of the bhagats do not refer to the political vicissitudes which affected the common man's life. These were irrelevant interruptions in the quest for spiritual bliss. "At the last moment", said Kabir, "nothing is thine".

But Guru Nanak was not at all indifferent to the political environment. Under Lodhi rule, he said:

There is no one who receiveth or giveth not bribes.
The king dispenseth justice when his palm is filled.
Greed and sin are ruler and village accountant;
falsehood is master of the mind.
Lust, hisminister, sommoneth and examineth men,
and sitteth in judgment on them.
The qazi sitteth to administer justice; He turneth over his beads and invoketh God
But he takes bribes and doeth injustice.

Unlike the leaders of the bhakti movement and Indian religious teachers in general, the founder of Sikhism was politically conscious in the sense that he recognised the impact of politics on the common man's life. He said: "This age is like a drawn sword, the kings are butchers". For these 'butchers' he had no sympathy:

A kingdom that was a jewel
Was wasted by the dogs,
No one will mourn their passing.

Of Babur's invasion Guru Nanak spoke in piercing words:

With the evil as his best man,
Bringing a crowd of sins as his bridal procession,
Like a bridegroom Babur hath hasted from Kabul,
To seize by force as his bride,
O Lallo,
The wealth of Hindustan

In the flow of blood and tears he saw the worthlessness of the rulers, the cruelty of the invaders, and the helplessness of the people. But never for a moment did he question the justice of the divine order or *hukam* which is beyond the comprehension of mortals:

Just and true is the Lord; just and true is His Judgment.

Thus Guru Nanak's reaction to the greater political storm of his times leads us to the central point of his teachings: submission to the will of God and repetition of His Name. This would prepare the ground for the moral regeneration which would stimulate man's capacity for self-assertion and self-defence. Guru Nanak's immediate purpose was to develop the potentialities of man so that he could qualify himself for succour from God in the crises of life, personal as also general.

He taught man to be fearless. God Himself is 'without fear and without hate' (Mul Mantra). He who adores the Fearless should be fearless too:

He who is imbued with the fear of the Lord becometh fearless, for one becometh like the one serveth.

The only fear which Guru Nanak recommends is the fear of God:

Without the fear of God none can cross to the other shore,
Fear of God preserves man's love of God.
Fear of God burns away lesser fears within the body.

It was on consonance with this teaching that Guru Gobind Singh said:

Take the broom of divine knowledge into thy hand, and sweep away the filth of timidity.

In Guru Nanak's days as also in the days of his three immediate successors, the State was not hostile to the Sikhs; indeed, they even benefited from the liberality of Akbar. There was no direct occasion fro the Gurus to think of political resistance to the State. Nor was the newly formed community morally and spiritually prepared for the terrible sacrifices which war with the Mughals was certain to involve. The emergence of a compact, fearless, community, free from the traditional subservience to miracles, superstitions and meaningless rituals, was an accomplished fact by the end of the 16th century. By that time as Guru Arjun said:

The Guru hath cut the fetters of the feet and freed the captive.

The Fifth Guru spoke of moral and spiritual freedom. The question of political freedom was forced on the

community by Jahangir's crude intolerance leading to the first great martyrdom in Sikh history. The changed policy of the State underlined the need for a change in the Sikh way of life without in any manner deviating from the fundamental principles of the faith. In the 17th century the defence of the faith against the repeated onslaughts of the State demanded resort to arms. By that time moral and spiritual preparations had made considerable progress; under the spiritual and temporal leadership provided by successive Gurus the fear of God had burnt away lesser fears within Sikh hearts. The community felt itself capable of defending its spiritual heritage by responding to Guru Nanak's never-forgotten call for fearlessness.

The liberating influence of Sikhism in the political sphere operated slowly, for in the 17 century the Mughal power was at its zenith. In a well-known *pauri* of Bhai Gurdas we are told that Guru Hargobind was called upon to 'support a burden intolerable to others'. He took the first steps toward militarization; but his purpose was defensive, for the Mughal State was then too powerful, and an offensive was beyond the capacity of the Sikhs. The transition provoked misgivings within the Sikh community, as we find in the pauri of Bhai Gurdas, and Pertab Mal hinted (as Mohsin Fani tells us) that under the guidance of Guru Hargobind the Sikhs were degenerating into buffoons. But the wise patriarch, Bhai Gurdas, knew that the truth within him cannot possibly be concealed'.

The Mughal Empire delivered its second great blow at the struggling community in 1675. Guru Tegh Bahadur 'suffered martyrdom for the sake of freedom of his religion' (as Guru Gobind Singh wrote in his Bachitra Natak):

He gave his head but uttered not a groan.

It was now for the disciples to come forward and prove that their Gurus had not died in vain. It was under the Tenth Guru's leadership that they responded to the call of history. He gave institutional expression to the Sikh community's mounting urge for self-expression in the military-cum-political sphere. He claimed direct divine sanction for his mission. The True Lord told him, he wrote:

I have cherished thee as My Son,
And created thee to extend My religion
Go and spread My religion there,
And restrain the world from senseless acts.

Sikhism was no longer on the defensive; it was now prepared for an offensive role. What Guru Hargobind had kept implicit was made explicit through the creation of the Khalsa. For Guru Gobind Singh, God was the Subduer of countries, the Destroyer of the armies of the wicked. His own role he conceived to be that of 'spreading the faith, saving the saints and extirpating all tyrants'. His predecessors had never spoken in such challenging terms.

There was, however, no real deviation from the essence of Guru Nanak's teachings. In the Tenth Guru's compositions we find 'the same insistence on the worship of the One True Lord, the same idealisation for devotion and surrender, and the same glorification of the Name' as we find in Guru Nanak's hymns. The core of Sikhism remained unaffected by the political turmoil through which its votaries passed under Guru Gobind's leadership. Indeed, the Tenth Guru's call evoked splendid response because the twin foundations of the new system – spiritual fervour and freedom from fear – emanated directly from the founder's teachings. It was with the 'broom of divine knowledge', the Tenth Guru said, that the 'filth of timidity' was to be 'swept away'.

Blest in his life in this world who repeated God's Name with his mouth and meditateth war in his heart.

Again:

He who repeateth night and day the name of Him whose enduring light is unquenchable, who bestoweth not a thought on but the one God; And in whose hearth the light of the perfect one shineth, he is recognised as a pure member of the Khalsa.

Thus war against tyranny was made an integral part of religious life. This was the prelude to the war of liberation in the 18th century, culminating in the establishment of the Sikh State on the ruins of Mughal and Afghan imperialism. The emergence of Banda lay in the logic of Sikh history; the war of liberation was not exotic. It was because of their spiritual fervour that the Sikhs could take every defeat as 'a sword slash through a pond'. For the complete reduction of the Sikh power, the great conqueror Abdali said, it would be necessary to wait until their religious fervour had evaporated. That moment did not arrive in his lifetime or even during the reigns of his successors, Timur Shah and Zaman Shah. The unfriendly Muslim author of the Jangnama paid a well-deserved tribute to the valour and chivalry of the Sikh warriors: *In no case, would they slay a coward or put any obstacle in the way of a fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth and ornaments of a woman'.*

What Ranade said about the Maratha war of independence is no less applicable to the Sikh war of independence: 'Mere freebooters and plunderers never could have obtained success in such a war against such a foe. It was a higher moral force which brought out all the virtues of the best men of the nation'. That 'higher moral force' was drawn from, and sustained by, the teachings of the Sikh Gurus.

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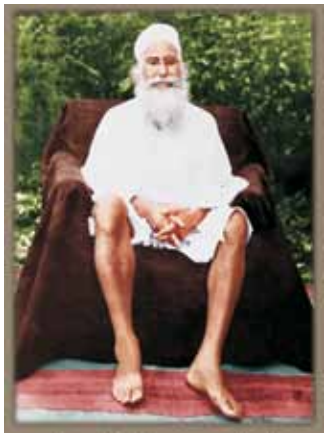
A Great Journey To Peace

100 years of a great Saints vision

Tucked away in a remote corner of Himachal Pradesh, nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, stands an unique institution that has been endeavouring, virtually unknown, but steadily moving towards its dream of showing the world "The way to permanent peace".



Sant Attar Singh ji, Mastuane Wale (1866-1927).

The Kalgidhar Trust, a multi faceted not-for-profit charitable organisation articulates Guru Nanak's ideals and philosophy as a framework for addressing the manifold problems that global society faces in its efforts to realise human security and world peace. The selfless efforts of this small organisation under the guidance and leadership of a Baba Iqbal Singh, the now retired Director for Agriculture in Himachal Pradesh has swollen from a tiny stream into a great river. Building upon its achievements, it is silently, but surely, carrying forward this movement for peace towards reversing the unfortunate direction which leads the world towards destruction.

Some 100 years earlier, a legendary spiritual leader of Mastuane (Punjab), Sant Attar Singh had proclaimed that 'mere scientific education will lead to mass destruction'. Seeking a way out, he conceptualised, in 1906, this mission of *The Kalgidhar Trust* which is "To establish permanent peace in the world through the synthesis of value based scientific education and moral rejuvenation, thus creating good global citizens".

To achieve his objectives, he set off his disciple Professor Teja Singh in 1906 for higher studies at Harvard University, USA. After getting his Masters, from Harvard, Professor Teja Singh spent some years in Canada and even fought for the rights of Indians being deported to the British Honduras. Pitted against the Canadian government, he gradually brought about an immense change in perception of the Canadians over the Indian community settled there, resulting in the government finally acceding to the Indian community's demands. Teja Singh, in turn, with his high education yet down-to-earth personality inspired many a person and numbers of young students thereafter dedicated themselves to the cause. Among the fortunate collegians who, joined were Iqbal Singh, Gurbaksh Singh and Khem Singh who while studying and later pursuing their careers, kept themselves focussed on the mission.

Sant Teja Singh ji, MA, LLB (Pb), AM (Harvard) (1877-1965).

In 1956, Sant Teja Singh sent Iqbal Singh to Himachal Pradesh and bought a 400-acre tract of mountainous land in a place lovingly

A young torch-bearer of the Akal Academy.

called 'Baru' (big) by the locals, where the foundation of this organisation was then laid and later registered in 1982.

As quoted by a modern day philosopher, "If you want days of happiness, grow 'grain', if you want years of happiness grow 'trees', but if you want 100 years of happiness, grow 'people'. "Painstakingly, brick-by-brick, the structure of this organisation started taking shape. Baba Iqbal Singh patiently waited till his retirement as Director, Agriculture in Himachal Pradesh and then engaged himself fully with the challenge of 'creating good global citizens'. The strategy was simple yet effective: 'Move away from urbanisation', 'Provide value based scientific education and spiritual upliftment', 'Reach out to the forgotten with health-care'.

Thus in 1986, the first major step of realising this dream was taken and the now famous Akal Academy established with an initial five students. The unique methodology of imparting modern scientific education along with the inculcation of moral values based on the ancient Gurukul format prompted many intellectuals to acclaim the efforts. TN Kaul (the former Foreign Secretary of India) stated that 'Akal Academy is on similar pattern of Nalanda and Taxila of the past. If India is to prosper, such academies should be 'multiplied'.

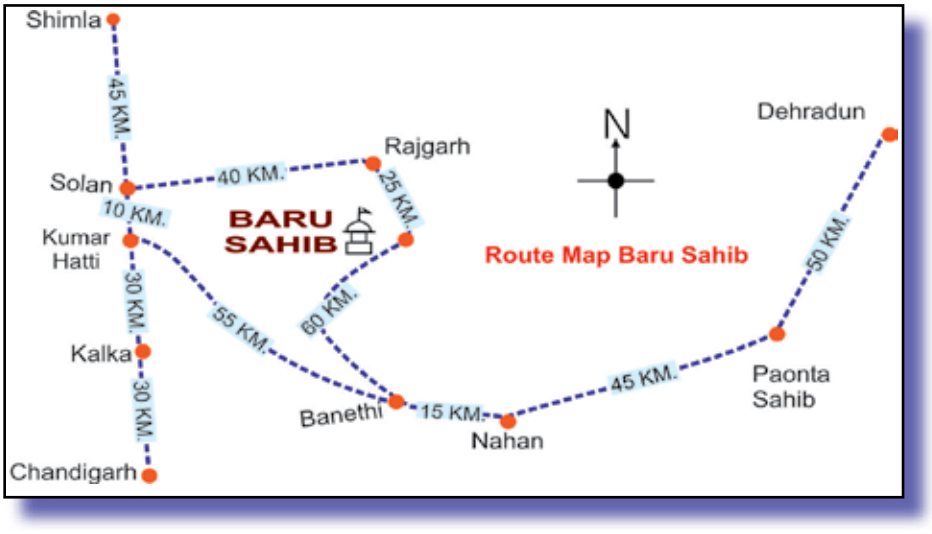
The positive results of this first 'Real Education' school and the growing number of students prompted establishment of the next academy at Muktsar, in the Punjab in 1993. After that, many opportunities have come about and now there are twenty-two CBSE-affiliated secondary schools with a present strength of around 23,000 students.

These 'Real Education' students have been working out real-life marvels in their own small spheres in rural Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Besides giving modern scientific education at its academies, the 'Kalgidhar Trust' lays emphasis on moral upliftment of the child. Such unique system of education inculcates moral values in the child, who soon becomes a model citizen and an asset to society. Having imbibed such virtues these children will become the leaders and torch bearers for others to follow. It is said that one morally enlightened child can influence 25-30 members of society. Lives have been changed for the good, families saved from discord and rural social fabric saved from erosion by these angelic ambassadors of peace, brotherhood and tolerance.

There are numerous real-life examples of 'Real Education' students inspiring not only their peers but elders too in the abandonment of drugs, alcohol and crime. The measure of success of these schools is such that crime and drug addiction rate has declined around a radius of 50 kms wherever these academies function. Every year students graduate with flying colours and get admission into premier higher education institutes such as the IITs, IIMs, and foreign universities. Many also join information technology centres and large International Corporations, this becoming an integral and valued part of the global society.

The statistics are encouraging. The painstaking efforts over the past two decades have touched the lives of about 23,000 students, 1850 teachers, around 100,000 poor patients, 800 orphans, 200 senior citizens, 250 widows or needy women, 1500 drug addicts and their dependants and 9822 earthquake victims.

Uniqueness of *The Kalgidhar Trust* is also its low-cost self-sustaining organisational model with few salaried management, but many more volunteers and consequently low overheads. The total administration expense of the Trust is only 2.75 per cent of its annual expenditure. Generating confidence with this transparent methodology of working, increasing numbers of individual donors are providing ongoing support, with figures showing that 90 per cent of all contributors to the Kalgidhar Trust are annually contributing members.



Early morning prayers in the serene Darbar Hall, Baru Sahib.

Young Baruiites practising Yoga amidst nature.

The twenty-first century has just begun. We must not let war, hatred, intolerance impact on the future for younger generations. Mass urbanisation is taking its toll on rural masses and alarming results show the widening gap between rich and poor, ignorance and illiteracy amongst the under-privileged, erosion of moral values and affliction with vices. Helplessness of the rural poor when they seek to receive quality education and medical care is especially to be taken note of. *The Kalgidhar Trust* has identified root causes and is methodically planning to take up the challenge of providing solace and succour to the under privileged and the deprived.

Having felt the need to expand dimensions of this noble cause, the Trust plans to "reach out to the unreached" through its various educational, health care and social vice-eradication programmes with its future projects. On the anvil is the establishment of an institution of higher learning, "Akal College of Engineering & Technology." This again follows the model of inculcating moral discipline with advanced education. In this manner will be set up India's first privately funded Sikh University under which management, nursing, general education, naturopathy/alternative medicines, divine music-spiritual sciences/medicine and teachers training programmes would follow. Already a unique scheme of nurturing and training young minds is in place and the Trust has decided to send five brilliant children abroad for higher studies also enabling them to become role-models in the western world with their simple, yet refreshing lifestyles.

Developing the scientific eye.

Prayers before the meal.

Rural students singing Shabad Kirtan.

It is thus hoped that a silent but steady socio-economic upliftment will evolve from this grass roots exercise. The footprints of 'eradication of illiteracy and vices' will then keep growing and positively touch the lives and fulfil the needs of the rural classes.

The path as shown by Sant Attar Singh will definitely lead to permanent peace and time will tell the world as much. Destiny takes shape through the message of universality and brotherhood preached by these messages of peace, a perpetual line of good global citizens would well be created, the only answer to reversing the course of destruction that this world seems to be heading towards.

"Give our children wings": the Sikh talent search

In the chaos of cross-cultural city life, the most emotionally ignored part of society is the citizen of tomorrow, our children and our youth. We all know the important and critical role that these young impressionable minds have to play in the future but pitched against hectic life styles, the rat-race to nowhere, we seem at helpless odds to manoeuvre and inculcate basic human values so very essential for their upbringing.

Students honing their equestrian skills.

Proud winners posing with their trophy at the Annual cum Sports Day-2006

A century ago, this great saint of modern India Sant Attar Singh founded *The Kalgidhar Society*. And as a tribute to Sant Attar Singh's vision of finding a "way to permanent peace", the Society plans to launch a series of Delhi-specific programmes to "reach out to the unreached". There is an acute need to inculcate values in children. This is something which has to be done in right earnest at an early age so that it becomes an integral part of the child's personality as he grows up into an adult. One cannot thrust values at a later age. Keeping these basic issues in mind and after getting invaluable inputs from a select group of educationists and professionals, the thrust has narrowed down on providing upliftment to bright children from those marginalised parts of the society which are so easily missed by the fortunate ones.

The Sikh Talent Search Scheme is one of those programmes and entails identifying deserving youngsters from the lower echelons of the social fabric in Delhi and supporting their academic careers ensuring their moral rejuvenation at the same time. They would become role models not only for their peers but elders too. This compelling cause requires the support of all enjoying the life and is an ideal platform for all of us to do our bit to pay back our debt to society. All are welcome to take part!

Polishing their communication skills in a modern language lab.

A glorious future

The educational endeavours of The Kalgidhar Trust has made a significant impact among the Sikh community in the region and beyond. The 23,000 young students living and studying in a righteous way at the Akal Academy, it is hoped will create a ripple effect and in turn, influence and inspire others.

Now that this modest program has started showing signs of reversing the erosion of Sikhism in the rural Punjab, the Trust has decided to march ahead with the dream of starting another 111 schools based on this model in almost all blocks of Punjab and bring home the basic tenets of Sikhism to a greater circle of believers.

To sum up, Baru Sahib is not just a social organization, a chain of excellent schools, but also a growing movement that could bring back the true ethos of Sikhism to the Punjab.

The 200-bed Akal Charitable Hospital, the only facility within a radius of 65kms.

The valley of Divine Peace: Baru Sahib in the foreground.

Professor Darshan Singh Maini

Roopinder Singh writes: With the passing away of Professor Darshan Singh Maini, we lost a noted scholar of literature, poet, writer, columnist and a fine human being.

He was Editorial Director of the *Nishaan* for several years.

Professor Maini was born on 8 January 1919, in Jhelum (now in Pakistan) and breathed his last at Chandigarh on 14 January 2007. His family actively participated in the freedom struggle. After getting his Master's degree in English in 1942, he taught at the Khalsa College, Lyallpur.

After the Partition of India, he shifted to Rohtak and later taught at various institutions including the Khalsa College, Amritsar, Government College, Ludhiana, at the National Defence Academy in Khadakvasla, the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun and Mahindra College at Patiala.

Professor Darshan Singh Maini did his PhD in 1961 from the Punjab University, Chandigarh. He retired as Professor and Head of the English Department, Panjabi University Patiala, in 1979. It was at this time that I first met Professor Maini. He was warm and indulgent in handling often innumerable queries that appeared out of a school student's enquiring mind.

He was a UGC National Lecturer in 1979-80. In 1988-89, Professor Maini also became a visiting faculty in New York University, during which period we met again. He stayed in New York with his daughter, Irma Maini, who is an Associate Professor in English.

A prolific writer, he was a scholar of Henry James and his books include *Henry James: The Indirect Vision* (1973), *The Portrait of a Lady: An Assessment* (1977), *Studies in Punjabi Poetry* (1979), *Walt Whitman and the Sikh Inspiration* (1981)

'Nishaan' Editorial team at Prof Darshan Singh Maini's home in Sector 11, Chandigarh. On his right Bhayee Sikander Singh and Sardar Pushpindar Singh.

Professor Darshan Singh Maini at the 'Walt Whitman House' in Huntington (Long Island) on 4 June 1989.

He was also a poet in his own right and his published volumes include *A Reluctant Flame* (1987), *A House of Dreams* (1995) and *The Aching Vision* (2000). He was the Chief Editor (Punjabi) for the series *Modern Indian Novels in Translation* (Macmillan India).

He once told me that his first article had been carried by *The Tribune* when the paper was still being printed in Ambala. After his retirement, and especially in the 1980s and the 1990s, issues facing the Sikhs received much attention in Professor Maini's writing. His essays, criticism, articles and reviews regularly appeared in various leading journals and newspapers of India.

His mind remained alert as ever, but his health became a matter of concern and he needed care which was selflessly provided by his wife, Tejinder Maini. He is also survived by his daughters, Anita Lal and Irma Maini and his son, Manoranjan Singh Maini. Prominent among those who paid tributes to Professor Darshan Singh Maini on his passing were his former students, who remain his lasting legacy.