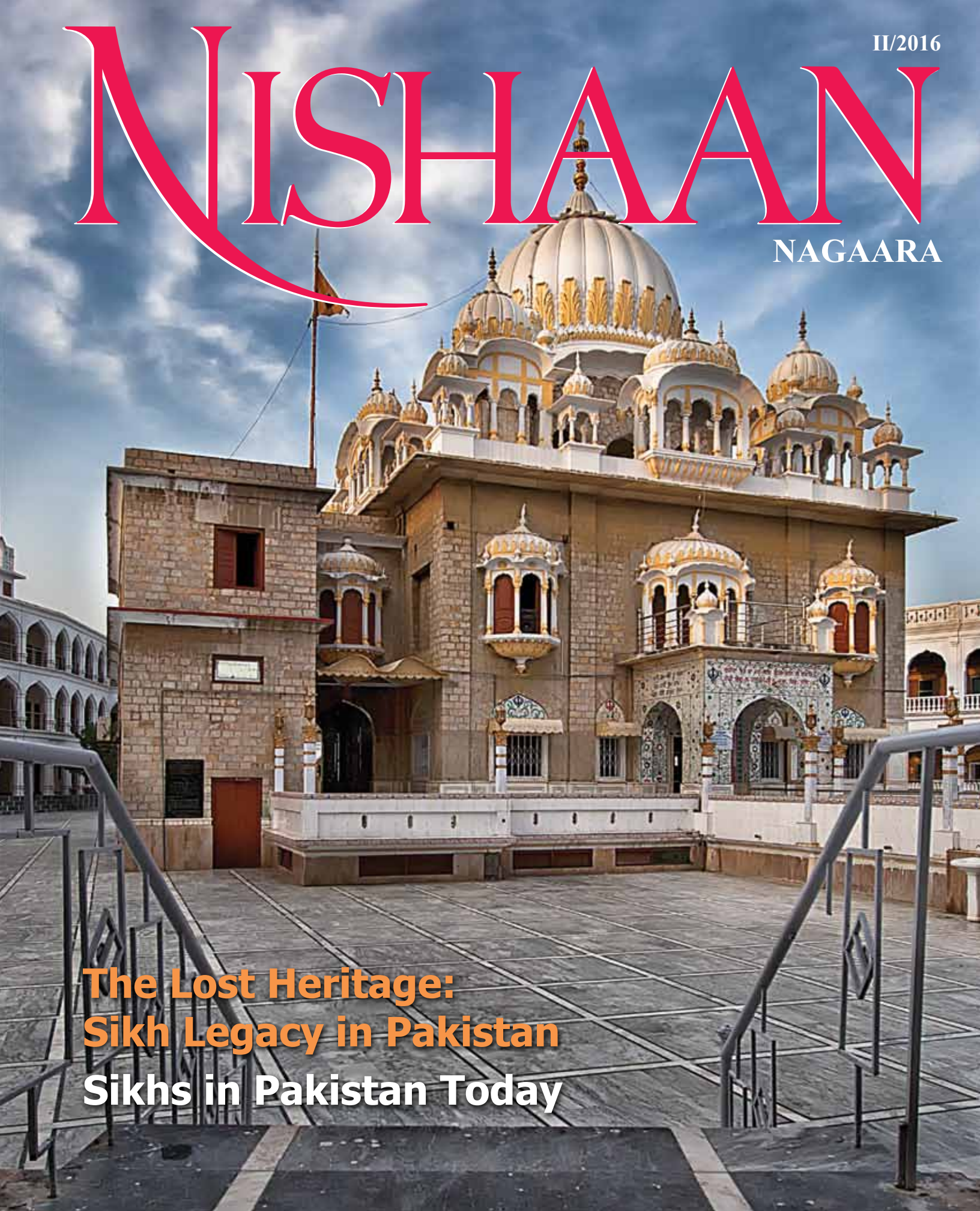
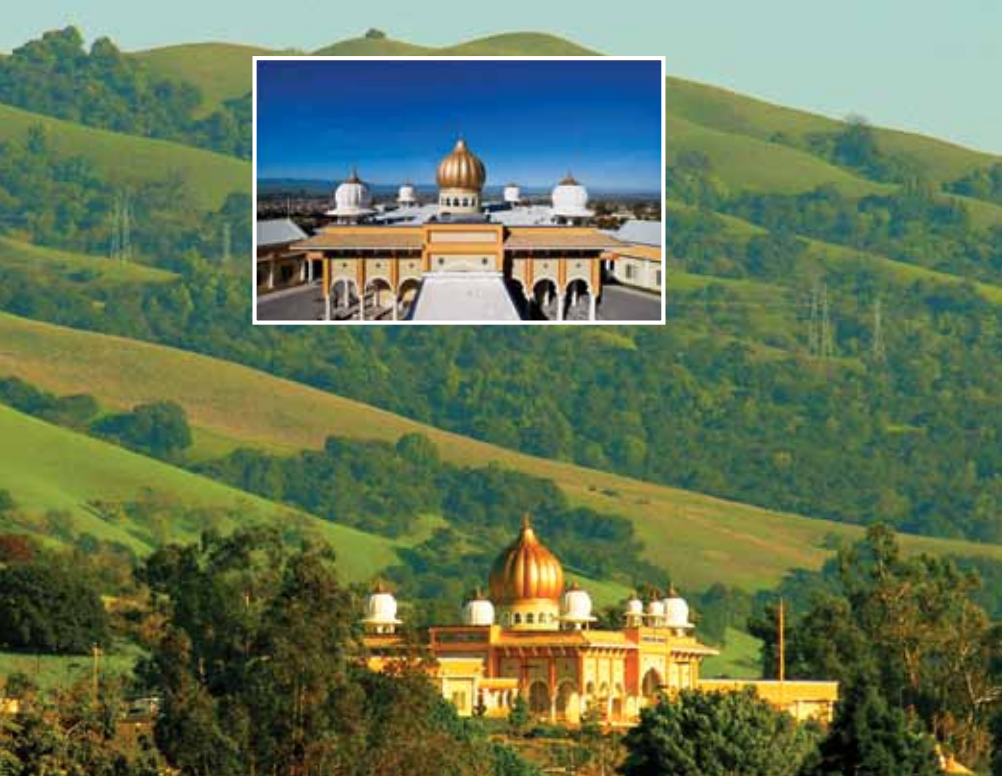


# NISHAAN

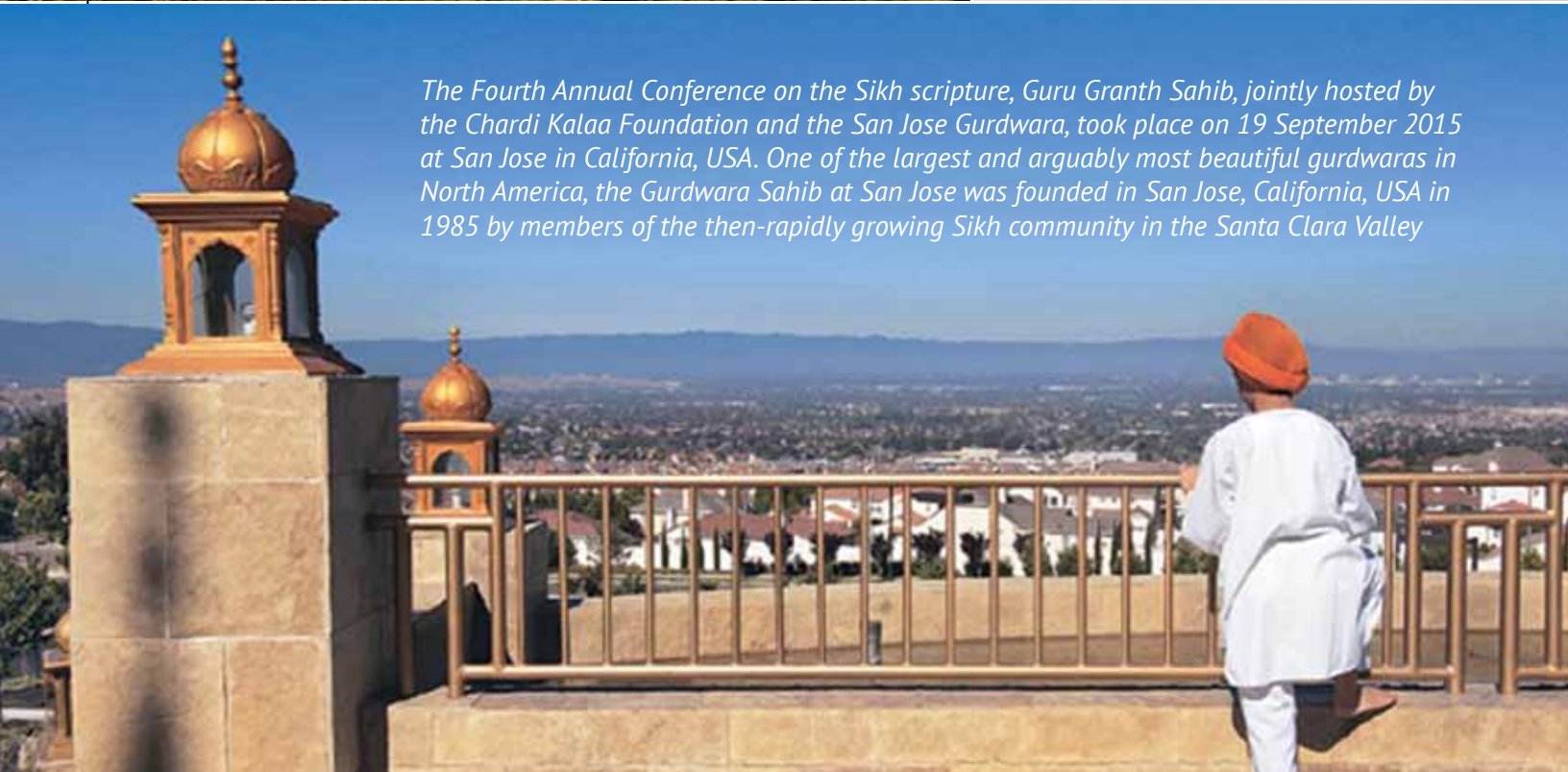
NAGAARA



**The Lost Heritage:  
Sikh Legacy in Pakistan**  
**Sikhs in Pakistan Today**



*The Fourth Annual Conference on the Sikh scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, jointly hosted by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation and the San Jose Gurdwara, took place on 19 September 2015 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley*



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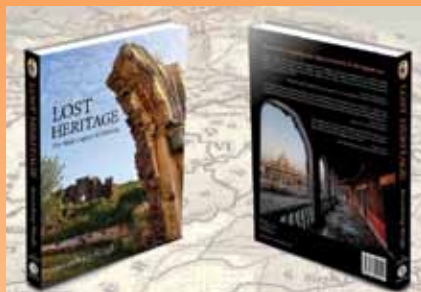
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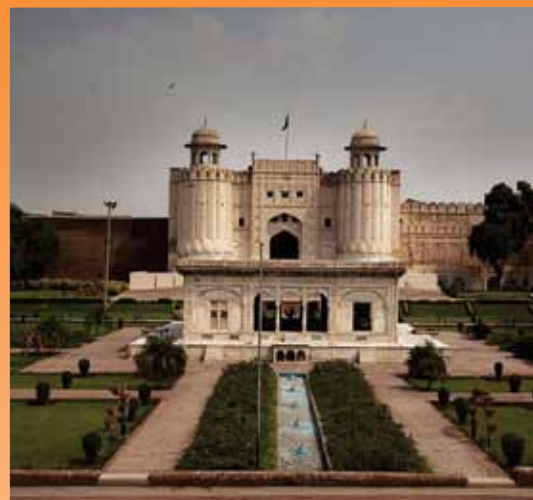
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## “This Land is Mine”

*This land is mine, God gave this land to me  
This brave and ancient land to me  
And when the morning sun reveals her hills and plain  
Then I see a land where children can run free*

Thus was transcribed from the original Hebrew and became theme song of the film ‘Exodus’. The land in reference is the present state of Israel and reflects the angst of the Jewish community which remained bereft of its original lands for millennium till 1948.

There is similar angst closer to home. At about the same time, 1947-48, the Partition of India was taking place, witnessing the world’s greatest migration in opposite directions even as millions died in the process. Partition is central to modern identity in the Indian subcontinent, as the Holocaust is to identity among Jews, branded painfully onto the regional consciousness by memories of almost unimaginable violence. The acclaimed Pakistani historian Ayesha Jalal has called Partition “the central historical event in twentieth century South Asia... A defining moment that is neither beginning nor end, partition continues to influence how the peoples and states of postcolonial South Asia envisage their past, present and future.”

Although Partition impacted the lives and future of millions of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, it was the latter peoples who were not only torn asunder from their hearths and homes, but actually from their holy lands, where their faith was born in the fifteenth century.

The Punjab, the Pentapotamia of the Greek historians has formed the north-western region of the Indian subcontinent and derives its name from two Persian words Panj (five) and ab (water), having reference to the five rivers, which confer upon the country its distinguishing physical features and are feeders of the mighty river Indus, the great barrier on the north-west and which conferred the name India upon the undivided subcontinent.

As Syed Muhammad Latif wrote in his monumental History of the Punjab:

From the remotest ambiguity, an interest has attached to the land of the Five Rivers unequalled by that attached to any other land of this great Peninsula.

Placed as it is, by Nature in a locality which gives it a crowning position and serving as the gateway to India, every invader from the North has, by its possession, sought the road to fame...

In prehistoric times it was, presumably, the Punjab that was first invaded by the Aryans from their camping ground beyond the stupendous Himalayas. Here the holy singers composed their Vedic hymns...the Aryan conquerors were, in their turn subdued by the Scythians of Turkistan, whose hordes, having overrun parts of Asia, found their way into the regions of the Indus. The Scythic, or Northern, form of Buddhism competed with the earlier Buddhism of Asoka.

Alexander made the Punjab the classic ground of his conquest and it was in the Punjab too that, in after times, the armies of Islam after overrunning Western Asia, Northern Africa and Southern Europe obtained their first footing on Indian soil. Mahmud (of Ghazni) sacked and destroyed the Hindu fanes and subjected the land to every conceivable form of misery and degradation... the hordes of the Tartar Changez Khan, inflicted on the Punjab all the horrors which had been experienced in Hungary, Russia and Germany...Tamerlane, who had made Samarkhand the mistress of Asia, made the Punjab the scene of his military adventures...the knightly Babur, the bardy Nadir and the Abdali Ahmad Shah, each in their turn, used the Punjab as the base of warlike operations for conquests beyond its classic rivers.... Delhi, although the ancient capital of Hindustan, now forms an integral part of this province and is treated as a Punjabi city.

The Punjab is the home of Sikhism, which loftily invoked the deity of the one and omnipresent God and appealed alike to the mullah and the pandit. Here the Sikh confederacies rose under warlike leaders resulting in the establishment of the doctrine that the Army and State of the Khalsa were the substantive power of the Punjab. For the first time in History, the Punjab reversed the tide of invasion, its warriors conquering lands westwards through the Khyber Pass to establish hegemony over Afghanistan right upto the River Oxus.

In the late 1840s, the Khalsa Army waged a fierce war against the all-conquering British but were betrayed by those who professed to be their leaders. The Punjab was the last kingdom to be annexed by this World Empire, and remained thus for one hundred years when the British prepared to leave India but schemed also to partition the land of the Five Rivers.

Today, both India and Pakistan remain crippled by the narratives built around memories of the crimes of Partition, as politicians (particularly in India) and the military (particularly in Pakistan) continue to stoke the hatreds of 1947 for their own ends. Another author points out that the rivalry between India and Pakistan "is getting more, rather than less, dangerous: the two countries' nuclear arsenals are growing, militant groups are becoming more capable, and rabid media outlets on both sides are shrinking the scope for moderate voices." Moreover, Pakistan, nuclear-armed and deeply unstable, is not a threat only to India; it is now the world's problem, the epicenter of many of today's most alarming security risks. It was out of madrassas in Pakistan that the Taliban emerged. That regime, which was then the most retrograde in modern Islamic history, provided sanctuary to Al Qaeda's leadership even after 9/11.

It is difficult to disagree with his conclusion: "It is well past time that the heirs to Nehru and Jinnah finally put 1947's furies to rest." But the current picture is not encouraging. In now Delhi, a hard-line right-wing government rejects dialogue with Islamabad. Both countries find themselves more vulnerable than ever to religious extremism. In a sense, 1947 has yet to come to an end.

This issue of the *Nishaan* reviews in detail that 'Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan', in the form of an extraordinarily illustrated book by Amardeep Singh, whose deep-rooted desire to connect with the land of his ancestors, inspired him to visit Pakistan. This book, supported by the *Nagaara Trust*, publishers of the *Nishaan* journal, delves into the Sikh community's roots in that country, savagely uprooted in 1947.

In chapter after chapter, Amardeep Singh witnesses and records his emotional reactions to that "lost heritage", growing up as he did amidst poignant, real life stories, footprints of which have only grown larger. Seventy years later, the sub-continent remains in ferment even as the Sikhs pray in their ardaas:

*O Lord! Grant your devoted Sikhs the gift of serving their historic Nankana Sahib and other shrines from which they have been separated. Grant your Sikhs the glimpse of these holy shrines without any barriers.*

We echo: May the Sikhs' prayer be answered and the divine Lord bestow harmony on the peoples of Punjab on both sides of the Radcliffe Line, thus restoring the faith in humankind!

# Zenith of the Empire



*The Empire of Maharaja Ranjit Singh at its zenith*

At dawn of the nineteenth century, Ranjit Singh created the most powerful empire in northern India, which comprised most of undivided Punjab, also encompassing most of today's North-West Frontier Province (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Jammu & Kashmir in its entirety. The Empire was bulwark against invasion of the Indian sub-continent from the north and west and for the first time in history, an indigenous kingdom ruled over the millions of peoples in the region belonging to various religions and communities. At its zenith, the realm of the Empire extended from the Khyber Pass to the River Sutlej, from the Himalayan foothills to Tibet while endeavours to reach the Arabian Sea via Sindh were thwarted by machinations of the English.

Before his passing in 1839, Ranjit Singh summed up his own achievements in the following words :

"My kingdom is a great kingdom : it was small, it is now large; it was scattered, broken, and divided; it is now consolidated: it must increase in prosperity, and descend undivided to my posterity. The maxims of Taimur have guided me; what he professed and ordered

I have done. By counsel and providence, combined with valour, I have conquered; and by generosity, discipline, and policy, I have regulated and consolidated my government. I have rewarded the bold, and encouraged merit wherever it was to be found: on the field of battle, I exalted the valiant; with my troops I have shared all dangers, all fatigues. Both on the field and in the cabinet I shut partiality from my soul, and closed my eyes to personal comfort; with the robe of empire, I put on the mantle of care; I fed faqirs and holy men, and gained their prayers; the guilty as the innocent I spared; and those whose hands were raised against myself have met my clemency; Sri Purakhji [God} has therefore been merciful to his servant, and increased his power, so that his territory now extends to the borders of China and the limits of the Afghans, with all Multan, and the rich possessions beyond the Sutlej.

The Empire lasted fifty years, 1799-1849, but was unravelled after the Second Anglo-Sikh War of 1848-49.

*(As recorded by Major HML Lawrence in 'Adventures of an Officer in the Punjab')*

# Sunset of the Sikh Empire



*Sher Singh Attariwala leads the Sikh Army*

The First Anglo-Sikh War (1845-46) was inconclusive in the sense that despite “the fate of British India trembling in the balance” after the Battle of Ferozeshah on 21-22 December 1845, even as the British Governor-General prepared to surrender to the Sikh Forces (which perhaps would have marked the end of British colonialism in north western India), the treacherous betrayal of the Dogra brothers, Tej and Lal Singh, meant that the British gained “victory out of defeat”, the Second Anglo-Sikh War ushering that fate. The following is reproduced from Nishaan’s Premiere Issue of April 1999, written by Lt Gen Kirpal Singh Randhawa.

The Second Anglo-Sikh War (1848-49) was inevitable; with British Regiments now in occupation of Lahore, it was obvious the conspirators had succeeded in their aims. The Sikh Army had been disbanded and a convention entered into for the administration of the Government by a Council at Lahore under a British Superintendent during the minority of Dalip Singh, the youngest of Ranjit Singh’s sons. The country between the Beas and Sutlej, comprising the districts of Jullundur, Hoshiarpur and Kangra, was transferred to the British. In an act of the utmost cynicism, the British ‘sold’ the

coveted valley of Kashmir to Raja Gulab Singh Dogra for a paltry five million rupees, which amount he ignominiously stole from the treasury at Lahore!

The disgusted Sikh soldiers whose regiments had been disbanded, realised the extent of their betrayal, and the feeling of revenge mounted. The sense of outrage of the disbanded Sikh troops and patriots was to be the root cause of the Second Anglo-Sikh War. In the climactic battle of Chillianwala the Sikh Army, now under able and upright commanders repaid the debts they owed and this time treachery did not quite work for the British.



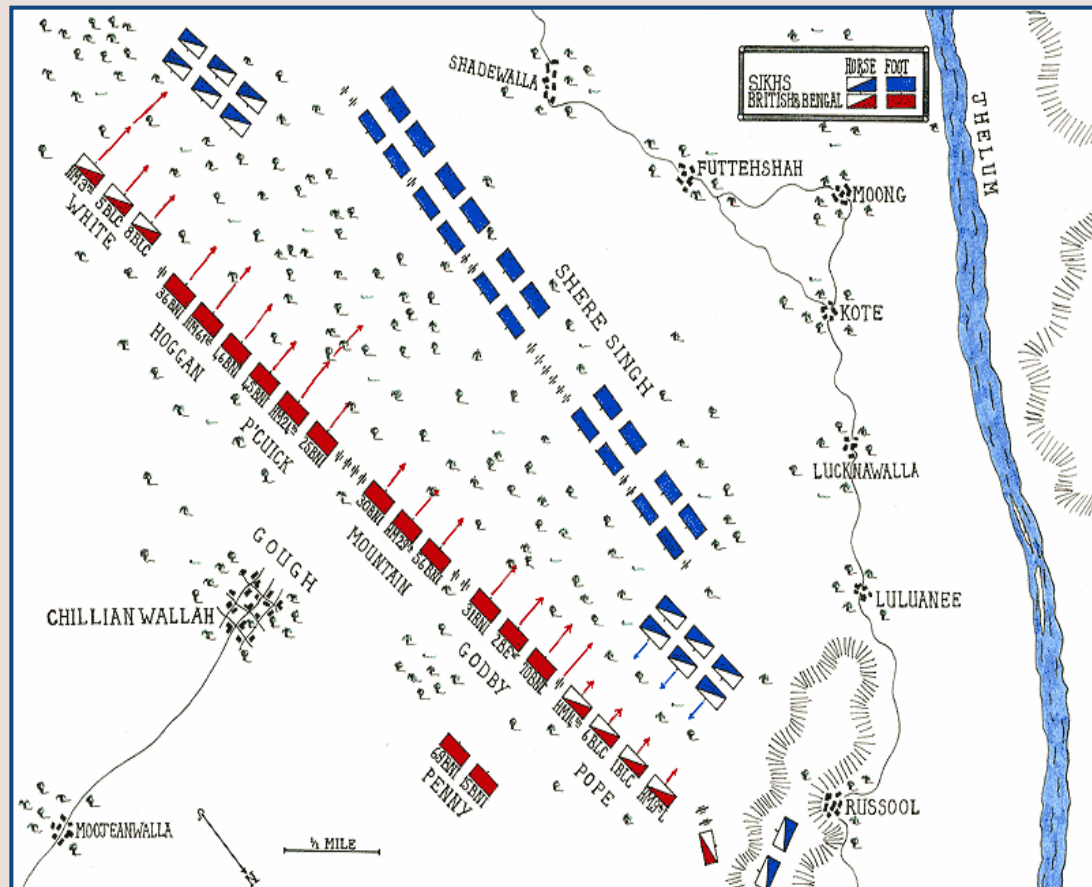
infantry and cavalry carried the day. The Sikhs captured British guns and the colours of a British regiment, this victory at Ramnagar giving a much needed boost to their morale.

Stunned by the defeat, Lord Dalhousie took the initiative in his own hands and directed his General Staff to prepare a blanket attack on the Sikhs before they could strengthen their positions. The main action plan of the British was to prevent

a union of Chattar Singh's army from Attock and that of Sher Singh's. However, in the meantime the British had defeated Mulraj at Multan and felt adequately rejuvenated to face the now united army of Chattar Singh and Sher Singh Attariwala.

After the First Anglo-Sikh War, in the British view there would be no war in the next decade. Lord Hardinge, the British Governor General had ordered a reduction in his army but as subsequent events proved, this belief was premature. The first to challenge British occupation was Diwan Mulraj, the Sikh Durbar's Governor of Multan and Sardar Chattar Singh's son Sher Singh Attariwala, who followed his father's example and also threw his forces against the British.

On hearing of Lord Gough's advance on Lahore, Sher Singh Attariwala, in a tactical move, sent covering troops through the fords towards the river's left bank, for delaying the enemy's advance and sending early warning. To cover this manoeuvre, Sher Singh deployed heavy artillery on the left bank of the River Chenab, a stratagem which was overlooked by Lord Gough as he led the British advance party to attack the Sikh advance guard who were now re-forming on Sher Singh's orders. The British came under fire of the Sikh guns on the right bank and it soon became evident that the British position had become untenable. Under cover of their artillery, the Sikh





## Battle of Chillianwala

It was an amazing coincidence that the battle of Chillianwala was fought in almost the same area where King Porus, with his elephants, chariots, and archers, had fought Alexander the Great's cavalry 2175 years earlier. Sher Singh displayed exceptional skill by judiciously selecting his position which was protected on the left by a low ridge of hills intersected with ravines and the main stream of the River Jhelum, the right being posted in different villages enclosed by thick jungle.

On the fateful day of 13 January 1849, the British launched their attack. Their artillery advanced to an open space in front of the village of Chillianwala and opened fire on the Sikh guns. The Sikhs replied with a vigorous cannonade. As the fire ceased the British drew up in order of battle and charged at the enemy's centre in an attempt to force the Sikhs into the river. The assault was led by Brigadier Pennycuik. For the Sikhs, the conditions were made to order. Scattering into the brushwood jungle they began their hit and run tactics, their snipers taking a heavy toll of the British cavalry and infantry. Those that got through the brushwood and the ravines were easily repulsed in the hand-to-hand fighting with the main body of the Sikh troops.

Leading the Brigade in the front, Brig. Pennycuik fell as did his son Ensign Pennycuik who was mortally injured while trying to protect the body of his father. Four British guns and the colours of three British Regiments fell to the Sikhs and the British registered nearly 3000 dead or wounded in the area around Chillianwala. A testimony left by a British observer says: "The Sikhs fought like devils, fierce and untamed...Such a mass of men I never set eyes on and as plucky as lions: they ran right on the bayonets and struck their assailants when they were transfixed".

But, once again, as at Ferozeshah, the Sikhs failed to drive home their advantage. Having suffered considerable losses themselves they were not aware of the magnitude of the punishment they had inflicted on the British. It then poured incessantly for three days -



*The obelisk on the mound at Chillianwala, near Jhelum in Pakistan today*

which kept the Sikhs separated from their quarry - and on the fourth day as the sun shone again, the British had pulled out and retreated across the Chaj to the banks of the River Chenab.

The Attariwalas sent George Lawrence, who was their prisoner, with terms for a truce, which included the investment of Dalip Singh as Maharaja. This, however, the British did not accept.

Once more, fate and destiny had conspired against a victory for the Sikhs, bringing to mind Shah Mohammad's words:

"We won the Battle but we lost the Fight."



*The Battle of Chillianwala Monument at Royal Hospital Chelsea, London, today.*

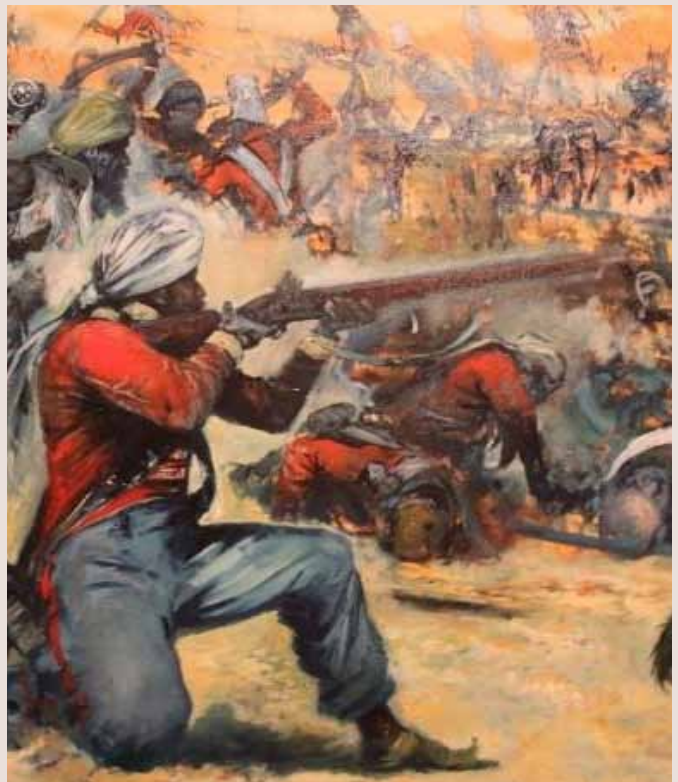
## **The Finale: Battle of Gujarat, 21 February 1849**

The Attariwalas then advanced towards the Chenab and entrenched their forces between Gujarat and the river. However by now they had only 59 guns to the 66 of the British and far less manpower. They repeated their mistake by firing too soon, exposing their positions and exhausting their ammunition. The British launched a cavalry and infantry charge which could not be contained by the Afghan cavalry which had reinforced the Sikhs. Sheer numbers finally decided the issue. The Sikhs gave way and the Attariwalas finally surrendered their army and their swords near Rawalpindi, completing the end of the Sikh Durbar.

In the maze of all the machinations that went into the terms of the surrender, Maharaja Dalip Singh was made to hand over the legendary Kohinoor and step down from his illustrious father's throne, never to sit on it again.

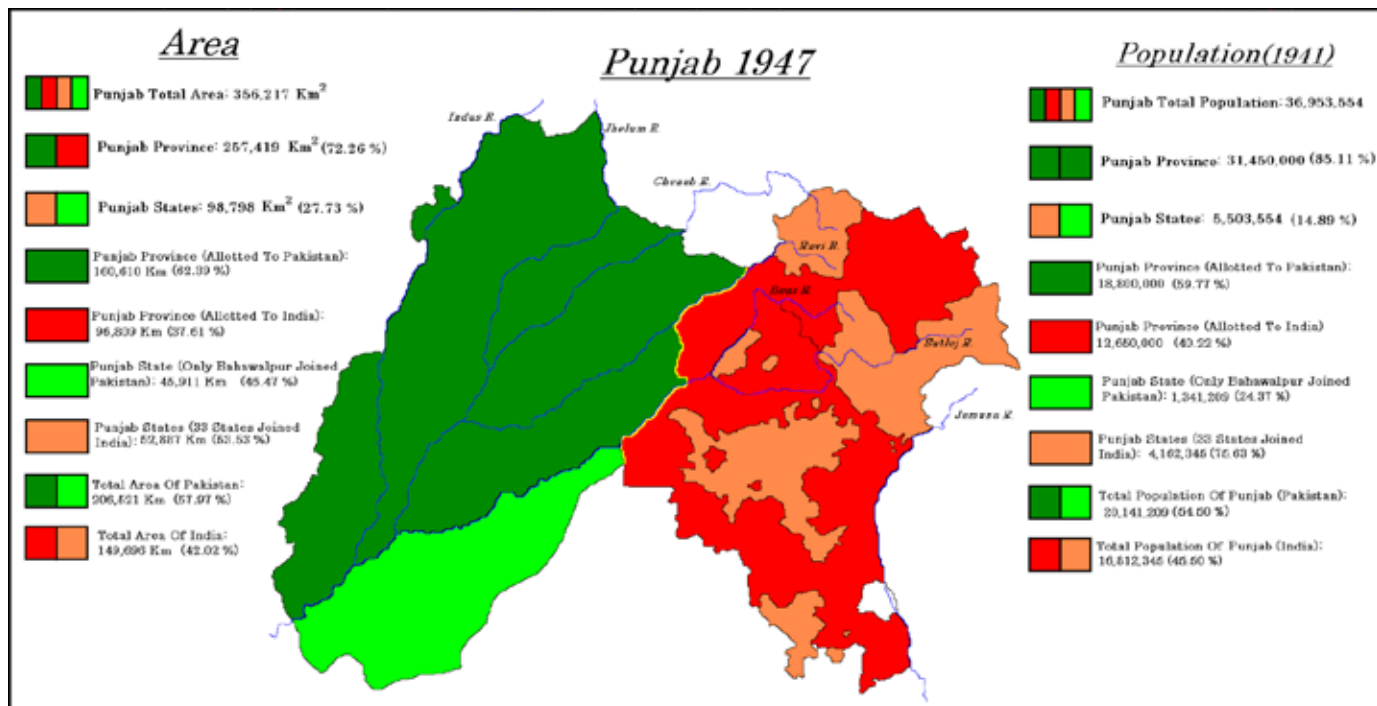
As a veteran summed it up. "Aaj Ranjit Singh mar gaya" (Today Ranjit Singh has died).

Those fields of formidable battle which were hallowed by the blood and spirit of the Sikh Army, are now part of the new country of Pakistan. Ranjit Singh is no more but the spirit of the Khalsa continues to live, not only in these battlefields of valour, but in the ability of their to reach the highest levels of excellence in every endeavor, all over the world.



*The Last Stand*

# Savage Partition



1947 was a cataclysmic year for India but particularly for the two provinces in the West and East which were savagely partitioned by cynical politicians both from Britain and India. While the Bengals had been briefly separated earlier in the century, the Punjab had been an irrevocable single entity for aeons. The artificial partition line between West and East Punjab zig-zagged through farms and open fields and plunged India into its greatest and worst communal crises, raising new barriers of fear, and hostility between the major communities in India, which has tragically persisted ever since.

The following extract is from the book '1947: A Soldier's Story', which was published in 1997, from the records of Maj Gen Mohindar Singh Chopra, Commander 123 Infantry Brigade, charged with the responsibility of securing a (hostile) frontier, protecting millions of refugees fleeing West to East and vice versa, establishing the new border crossing (at Wagah) and rehabilitating victims of the tragedy.

What the Sikhs were utterly opposed to partition of the Punjab is well-recorded history, the Panthic Pratinidhi board fully supporting Sir Khizr Hyat Khan's Unionist Party, which had rallied against the Muslim League's relentless pressures for creating Pakistan. The British Cabinet Mission, which visited India in the spring of 1946 were impressed by the arguments marshalled by the Sikh leaders but could not reconcile these with the extremist stance of the Muslim League and duplicity of the Congress Party. The Sikh leader, Master Tara Singh stated that he was for a united India but if Pakistan was conceded he was for a separate

Sikh state with the right to federate with either India or Pakistan. The Sikh state would comprise the entire Jullundur and Lahore divisions, together with Hissar, Karnal and Simla districts of the Ambala division, as also the districts of Montgomery and Lyallpur, with an approximate boundary along the River Chenab.

On 22 March 1946, the Shiromani Akali Dal passed a resolution stating Sikhistan to be its political objective. It said: "Whereas the Sikhs being attached to the Punjab by intimate bonds of holy shrines, property, language traditions and history claim it as their homeland and holy land, which the British took as a trust from the

last Sikh ruler during his minority and whereas the entity of the Sikhs is being threatened on account of the persistent demand of Pakistan by the Muslims on the one hand and of absorption of the Hindus on the other, the executive committee of the Shiromani Akali Dal demands the preservation and protection of the religious, cultural, economic and political rights of the Sikh population and their important sacred shrines and historical gurdwaras with provision for the transfer and exchange of population and property."



**Master Tara Singh at the Simla Conference**

The British Cabinet Mission had at first presented a tentative plan which envisaged a three-tiered constitution consisting of a Union (empowered to deal with foreign affairs, defence and communication) with groups of Provinces dealing with such subjects as may be delegated to them and if individual provinces, vested with residuary powers. The proposals were cautiously received by the Congress and Muslim League but rejected by the Sikhs who described these as "dexterous manouevring". Master Tara Singh wrote to the Secretary of State for India of the "wave of dejection, resentment and indignation" that had run throughout the Sikh community. He asked: "If the first consideration of the Cabinet Mission's recommendation is to give protection to the Muslims, why should the same consideration not be shown for the Sikhs?"

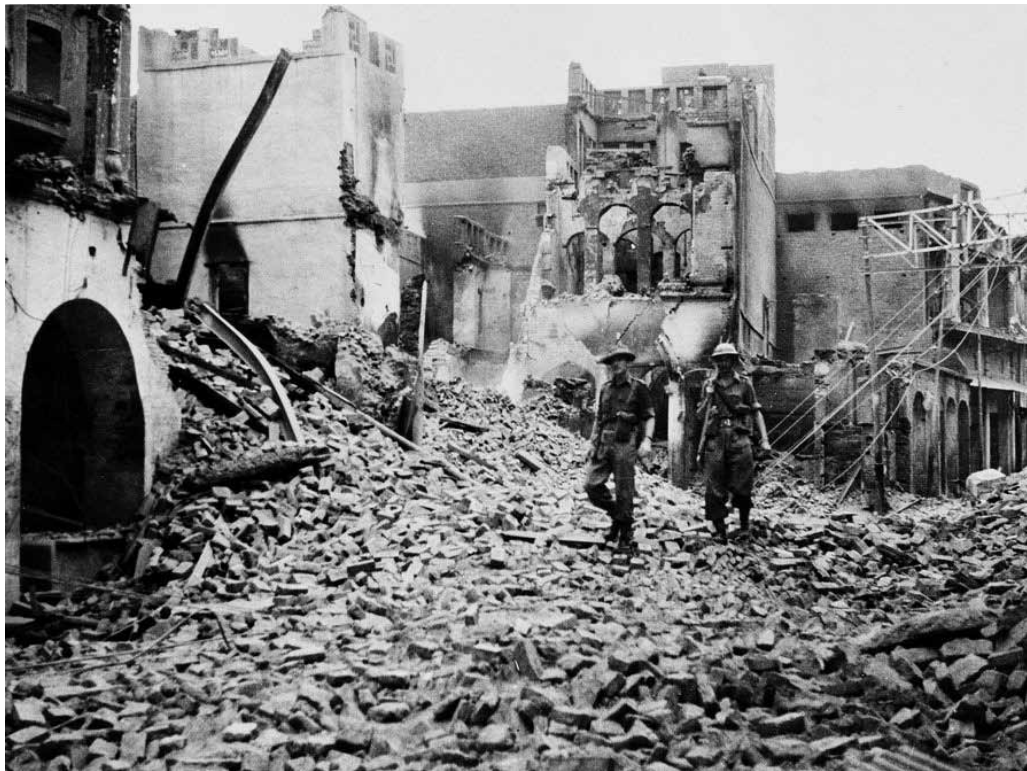
Sir Stafford Cripps made a lengthy statement to the British Parliament on the Cabinet Mission's work

in India. Regarding the Sikhs he said: "It was a matter of great distress to us that the Sikhs should feel they had not received the treatment which they deserved as an important section. The difficulty arises, not from anyone's underestimation of the importance of the Sikh community, but from the inescapable geographical facts of the situation. What the Sikhs demand is some special treatment analogous to that given to the Muslims."

Even as the Congress appeared willing to work on the Cabinet Mission's proposals, the Muslim League rejected the plan in toto and called for "direct action", this being the immediate cause for outbreak of violence in different parts of India. In September 1946, massive Hindu-Muslim riots flared up and six months later, in February 1947, the Attlee Government announced that it would relinquish power in India by June 1948 at the latest. Lord Louis Mountbatten was to replace Lord Wavell as Viceroy and arrange for the speedy transfer of power, the British hoping that a sense of urgency would engender responsibility and compel the rival parties to come to some sort of understanding.

Even while these political games were being played out, the communal violence that had been unleashed in mid-1946 blew up into the proportion of a civil war. The earlier sporadic communal riots had been goonda-dominated and localised affairs but the mass Hindu-Muslim killings of 1946-47 were master-minded by scheming politicians and executed by organised gangs with automatic weapons and explosives. The Sikhs initially tried to remain neutral, often succeeding in providing succor and safety to both Muslims and Hindus as in Calcutta 1946, but being the most prosperous people amongst the Punjab peasantry and having been nurtured in marital traditions, were considered by the Muslims as their main obstacle towards achieving their Pakistan. The Sikhs who owned the best agricultural lands in West Punjab "would have to be dispossessed".

The Muslim League-inspired killings in Noakhali and Tipperah in Eastern Bengal in October 1946 had repercussions in Bihar where the Hindus took their revenge. Inflamed by this, Muslims of Hazara District in the North West Frontier Province, wreaked their vengeance on the comparatively few Sikhs there and such killings soon spread to the districts of Rawalpindi, Cambellpur and Multan in the Punjab. Sikhs became the main victims of the March 1947 riots, being easily identifiable, the Hindu and Muslim less easy to tell apart. Amongst many others similarly affected, the Sikh village of Kahuta in Rawalpindi District (now the centre of Pakistan's Nuclear Weapon programme) was totally destroyed by ravaging Muslims, and Lord Louis



***Destruction in the Punjab, early 1947***



***Maharaja  
Yadhavendra  
Singh of  
Patiala, as  
Honorary  
Colonel of the  
Sikh Regiment***

Mountbatten, who visited it in April 1947 likened “the destruction as thorough as any produced by fire-bomb raids in the war.” The communal bent of the Punjab Police was another important factor in the programme, with nearly 75 per cent of them being Muslim.

The March 1947 riots became a drastic challenge to the Sikhs, whose own semi-organised Akal Fauj or Akal Sena were seen only as paper tigers. The Sikh’s humiliation, especially when their marital prowess was

in question, steeled their hearts and their darkened mood to fight back and save the community from Muslim aggression. On Baisakhi Day (13 April 1947) Master Tara Singh and, 280 jathedars vowed at the Akal Takht (Amritsar) to sacrifice their lives if necessary for the community and only then began to organise self defence jathas in towns and villages, to arm them with swords and spears and some firearms if possible with help from the Sikh princely states. Members of the defunct Indian National Army were recruited to guard the Golden Temple and other historic gurdwaras.

The Muslim League had, however, long begun to build up stocks of weapons and bombs, as early as from December 1946, with a secret fund raised for arms to be obtained mainly from the North West Frontier Province, as also the tribal areas and Bahawalpur.

This secret fund (*sandug*) was also used to purchase jeeps, trucks, rifles, machine guns, ammunition, hand grenades, steel helmets, iron jackets, etc. The Sikhs, on the other hand, tried to get arms from the Princely States of Patiala, Kapurthala and Faridkot, so as to reinforce the jathas traditionally armed with only kirpans and spears and mounted on horses. The jatha's greatest asset however, was their organisation and very soon, an operational system was in place, with designated leaders, mobile headquarters and military-like tactics. It was these Sikh jathas which, in the vacuum of a complete breakdown of law and order, steeled the defence of Sikhs (and Hindus) from murderous assaults of the Muslims.

It was not a question of retaliation but survival even as the Punjab Governor, Sir Evan Jenkins, warned Mountbatten that division of the Punjab on communal lines was disastrous because in every district. Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs were totally mixed up. On 14 June 1947, Lord Mountbatten’s press attache wrote: “We are in the heart of Sikh country here, and the prevailing atmosphere is one of tension and foreboding ... they [the Sikhs] see that the partition of India means substantially

and irrevocably the partition of the Sikhs, and they feel themselves to be sacrificed on the altars of Muslim ambition and Hindu opportunism ... No juggling of the Boundary Commission can prevent their bisection. They react accordingly and their leader's hopelessly outmaneuvered in the political struggle, begin to invoke more primitive methods ... rough weather lies ahead of us ...".

Sir Penderal Moon wrote to Lord Ismay from Bahawalpur on 27 June 1947 thus: "I write with reference to our conversation a few weeks ago regarding the Sikhs. Feroz Khan Noon made, I understand, a direct approach to them, indicating that the Muslims would grant them special concessions if they would throw in their lot with Pakistan, but he met with a rebuff.

This was to be expected. The Sikhs are still smarting from the injuries inflicted on them by the Muslims in the Rawalpindi division. Temporarily they've been thrown-off their balance. But an influential section of them (including Master Tara Singh and Gyani Kartar Singh) know, in their heart of hearts, that they must come to a settlement with the Muslims if the Punjab is to be spared disaster. Hence, though one must not look for any immediate results, there is yet hope that with patience and perservance the Sikhs will be brought to the view that Eastern Punjab - which must in any case be formed - should join Pakistan. If this is achieved, then the civil war, not to mention administrative complications, which must inevitably follow an attempt to draw a frontier between two National States somewhere in the middle of the Lahore Division, will be averted.

Meanwhile what steps are to be taken?

Certain Sikhs, in touch with both Baldev and Tara Singh, are going to formulate, informally and entirely privately, the Sikh conditions for joining Pakistan. If these offer, as I believe they will, a possible basis for negotiation, certain Muslim League leaders will be informally approached. The Sikhs are anxious that it should not leak out that any such negotiations are afoot or contemplated.

It will considerably facilitate matters if it can be arranged that the new Eastern Punjab has the strongest possible Sikh complexion and does not therefore, include Gurgaon, Hissar, Rohtak and Karnal. The Sikhs have already put this demand to Congress who hesitate to accept it. I would suggest that this Sikh demand should be encouraged and conceded. You can doubtless be of assistance in this regard. If the Sikhs are taken out of Hindu clutches-they want to be-put in a more or less independent position on their own, they are much

more likely to gravitate in the end towards their natural alignment with the rest of the Punjab and Pakistan.

The next step would be to indicate that it is optional for this Sikh Eastern Punjab to join either Hindustan or Pakistan and thus there is no presumption that it must join one rather than the other. The Sikhs will probably make this clear themselves, but if they ask for some pronouncements to this effect from HMG, It will probably be available to accede to their request.

Please forgive this unasked for effusion. My excuse is that without a Sikh-Muslim pact there will be chaos in northern India".



***Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Baldev Singh with State officials***

A "just and equitable" division of the Punjab on the basis of number and property was mooted and the continuing dilemma of the Sikhs aroused the sympathy of many British parliamentarians. As stated on 15 July, in the House of Commons: "The British have had the happiest possible relations with the Sikh community and, of all the martial races of the world, the Sikhs



***Refugees in Ambala Cantonment Station***

probably had built up the greatest reputation. The only situation which could mitigate the plight of the Sikhs was that the Boundary Commission should so define the boundary that the maximum portion of the Sikhs should be included within one conglomerate whole”.

However, the partisan attitude of some other Britishers, particularly Sir Francis Mudie, Governor of West Punjab (now Pakistan) was to the contrary and was revealed in his note of 5 September 1947, regarding the desirability of evicting Sikh colonists from Lyallpur: “I am telling everyone that I don’t care how the Sikhs get across the border; the great thing is to get rid of them as soon as possible. There is still little sign of three lakh Sikhs in Lyallpur moving, but in the end they too will have to.”

When on 15 August 1947, India celebrated its independence and Pakistan was born, millions of Punjabis had been displaced, hundreds of thousands were murdered. Horrible atrocities were committed, gaunt and starving foot convoys of refugees were mercilessly attacked, trains stopped and passengers slaughtered. “Never in the history of the world was there a bigger exchange of population, attended with so much bloodshed”.

The final tally: Hindus and Sikhs who had left West Punjab, and the NWFP totalled 4,351,477 against the 4,286,755 Muslims who left East Punjab.

The new Dominions were bewildered and no one knew about the exact nature and extent of the problem, whether the migrations were permanent or whether the refugees were eventually to return to their ancestral homes. However, by the winter of 1947, it had become apparent that the migration was, in reality, a permanent transfer of population, the largest in history.

## **Sir Cyril Radcliffe : the man who divided**

Sir Cyril John Radcliffe, ‘the man who divided the sub-continent by the stroke of a pen’, was appointed Chairman of the Punjab and Bengal Boundary Commissions in June 1947, with instructions to devise, and hand over to Lord Louis Mountbatten, the Viceroy of India, the boundary-maps which would divide 400 million people along religious lines, abruptly breaking the millennia of bonds. “His unpractised cartography would precipitate the greatest movement of populations in human history, a migration stupendous in its scale” : Some 10 million Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs crossed the hypothetical border, west to east while nearly a million lost their lives, most murdered in the savage butchery of partition.

Radcliffe’s last-minute recruitment to this impossible task was yet another instance of the British Government’s profound confusion, escalating throughout the 1940s over what to do with India. Equally, it was symptomatic of the vagueness surrounding the idea of Pakistan, and what exactly it would, in practice, amount to.

Radcliffe’s credentials, for the job of dividing India did not arise from special knowledge of the country: it was precisely lack of this that was seen as an initial guarantee of impartiality”. Cyril Radcliffe had served as Britain’s Director General at the Ministry of Information during the critical War years (1941-45), responsible for Government propaganda and censorship. “So manifest was his commitment to protecting the name and authority of His Majesty’s Government that by 1945 he was acknowledged as the most reliable and formidable doorkeeper of the Establishment”.

Called to the Bar in 1924, Radcliffe had displayed a forensic brilliance and after the War, became Vice Chairman, General Council of Bar from 1946. What clinched his appointment for India in June 1947 was his age: at 48 he was considered the most likely of his peers to be able to function in the heat and dust of an Indian summer. “On 10 June 1947, on representation from the Viceroy of India, the Secretary of State for India, the Earl of Listowel, made enquiry of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Jowitt, who took soundings and learned that Sir Cyril Radcliffe was prepared, subject to the fulfilment of certain conditions to undertake the task”.

As it later transpired, Radcliffe had accepted this appointment under the mistaken impression that he would simply have to adjudicate disputes arising over the definition of boundaries in Bengal and the Punjab. The claims on both sides were extravagant and member-judges of the Punjab and Bengal tribunals were so aligned themselves to politics that they simply undermined the judicial terms. However, on his arrival



**Nehru, Radcliffe, Mountbatten, Jinnah in June 1947**

in India, Radcliffe discovered that the responsibility for actually drawing the borders would be his – on the basis of Muslim and non-Muslim ‘contiguous majority areas’. He was also asked to take into account ‘other factors’, but neither these nor the actual unit to be partitioned were ever specified.

To compound his difficulties, Radcliffe discovered that, although he had been led to believe that he would have at least six months in which to complete his job, in fact he was given exactly 36 days!

Even more stressing for Radcliffe was his having to work “to the rhythms and pressures of Mountbatten”, with whom he possessed ‘reverse virtues’. While Mountbatten “luxuriated in phosphorescent self-publicity”, Radcliffe cultivated reticence and secrecy. Mountbatten was forever in pursuit of the thrill of action; Radcliffe was a fastidious intellectual.

Mountbatten was also a man in a hurry, had his tryst with destiny to keep (later paraphrased by Nehru) : he gave just ten weeks for India to become independent, for India to be carved out and Pakistan created, for India’s finances to be divided between two claimants, for the Indian Army to be dismantled and two new Armies to be created, for the provinces of Punjab and Bengal to be divided. This last issue was the most devastating: a man-made frontier had to be demarcated among the mixed Muslim-Hindu-Sikh population and the delineation had to satisfy both the countries. Clearly impossible, hence the need for a man of Radcliffe’s skills, possessing a legal “ice-cold intelligence”.

Radcliffe got together the maps and volumes of the 1941 Census of India (regarded by most as totally inadequate, prepared as they were during the worst years of World War II, these random maps were even lacking the required scale). He mapped out the boundary at the pace of 50 kilometres (30 miles) a day, to meet Mountbatten’s deadline, and thus created Pakistan with insufficient and incorrect data. Radcliffe submitted his plans for the division of India to Mountbatten on 13 August, 1947 but the Viceroy deliberately kept them under wraps, not just fearing for its consequences but most conscious of ceremonial protocol, not wanting any dispute to mar the grand celebrations he had planned for the 14-15 August. More diabolically, the cynical delay conveniently shifted responsibility for the consequences of partition from the departing Britons to the bewildered, incoming local self-Governments.

Partition came on 15 August 1947; the actual line of the boundary was announced on the 17th. “The Punjab exploded – it was no case of isolated incidents, it was civil war, accompanied by complete breakdown of the civil administration. Armed bands made for the lines of refugees and slaughtered, raped and robbed ...”.

## The Trauma of August 1947

Even as most other parts of the Indian sub-continent marked 15 August 1947 as the coming of Independence and end of the British Raj, the Punjab was plunged into a horrific and terrible situation as it went through the traumatic amputation of its land partition. As Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, first Prime Minister of independent



**Savage Partition:** this iconic image from LIFE magazine captures pathos of the displaced millions



India and himself a key player in the events that brought about such tragedy then said “Nearly the whole of India celebrated the coming of independence but no so the unhappy land of the five rivers. In the Punjab, both in the East and the West, there was disaster and sorrow. There was mass murder and arson and looting in many places .... streams of refugees poured out from one place to another”.

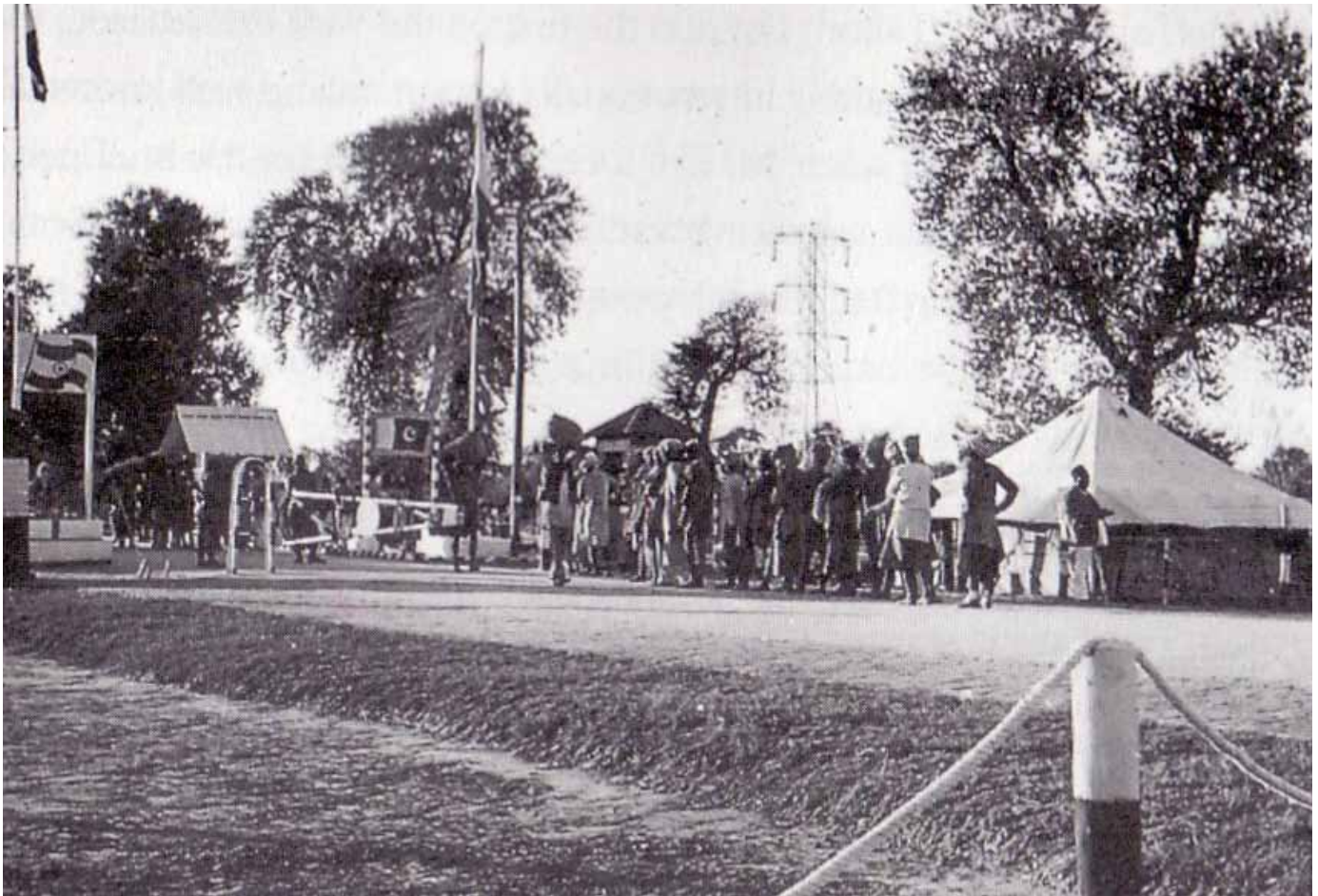


The Government of India, with Mountbatten as the Viceroy, were clearly unable to understand the

passions and fury unleashed by their policies which was to result in the killings of nearly a million, loot, arson and rape and the forced migration of some ten million human beings, almost entirely Punjabis, both Muslim and non-Muslim. But it was not in the Punjab where all this began. The catalyst was in Bengal where, almost exactly a year earlier, on 16 August, 1946, the great Calcutta killings took place, followed by equally horrific communal mass murders and arson in Noakhali which then spread to Bihar. Each disaster produced a reaction in different parts of the country. Spreading north-westwards, for a time Rawalpindi in the Punjab became the worst affected area in the country. And all this, very much during the British Raj, long before the question of partition had been decided. A year was to pass but even as 15 August, 1947 loomed near, there still was uncertainty about the exact line of demarcation which resulted in further deterioration in the situation. The capital of undivided Punjab, Lahore, was to pay a heavy price in the madness with citizens and residents killed in large numbers, entire areas burn down with an almost complete breakdown in civilization. Its twin city of Amritsar, less than 40 miles away on the Grand Trunk Road was to suffer in similar manner.



*Then Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra, commanding 123 Infantry Brigade, escorts the Governor of Punjab and other officials at the Joint Check Post as Wagah/Attari on the GT Road between Amritsar and Lahore*



***The Joint Check Post at Wagah-Attari was established by then Brigadier Mohindar Singh Chopra on 11 October 1947 and was marked by a few painted drums, two flag masts and a rubble of stones astride the ancient Grand Trunk Road. The boundary between India and Pakistan here nominally followed the division between Lahore and Amritsar Districts whose principal twin cities were less than 40 miles (64km) apart***

After 15 August 1947 the situation deteriorated even further and the mass migration, in both directions, began. Millions of men, women and children left their ancestral homes, fleeing for their very lives, from towns and villages first all over the Western Punjab, then the North West Frontier and eventually from Sind. The Just established Central Government of India hardly possessed the means of administrative machinery to tackle the situation, itself under re-organisation, the Armed Forces under division and communications in disarray. There was an ominous absence of news, with virtually no contact with West Punjab and spreading disturbances in East Punjab. Eventually, All India Radio began broadcast messages for refugees and a special news bulletin for East Punjab. Major cities were cut off and even vital centres such as Amritsar and Jullundur had telephone and telegraph lines down. The railways had a preponderance of Muslim drivers who had left for West Pakistan. Restoration of communications in East Punjab was given high priority, important towns linked

with Delhi by telegraph and telephone while 'hot lines' were established between Delhi and Lahore.

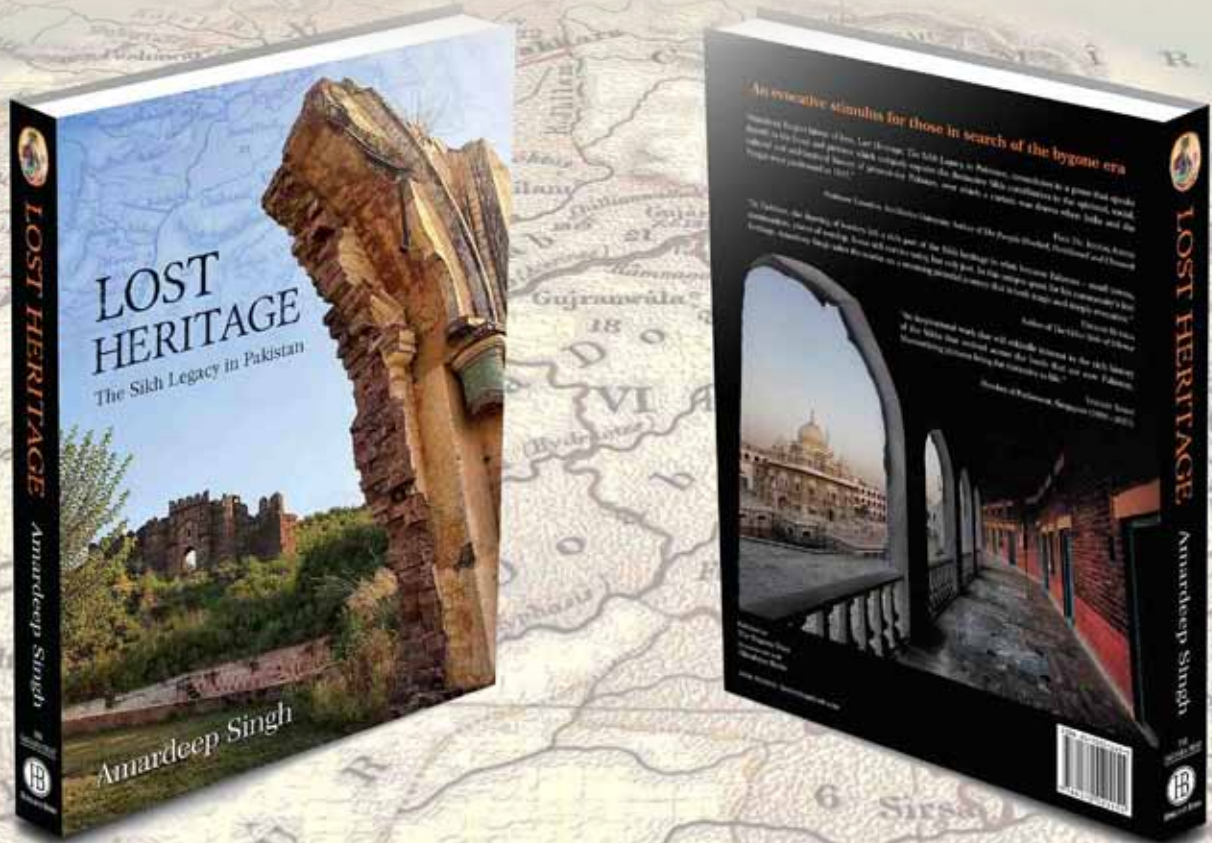
Governments of the two Dominions slowly realised the imperative need to establish direct liaison, the Punjab Boundary Force now having been wound up. The Prime Ministers and other Ministers paid frequent visits to towns of East Punjab, and Lahore, to review the situation at first hand and set the machinery of evacuation into motion.

The Joint Defence Council was established to take over responsibility from the PBF even while arrangements for the evacuation of refugees from West to East and vice versa was being worked out.

On 29 August, the Joint Defence Council meeting at Lahore decided to abolish the Punjab Boundary Force from the midnight of 31 August even as Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan, the Defence Minister of India and a Minister of Pakistan began to tour the disturbed areas in both West and East Punjab.

# Lost Heritage

## The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan



In the Preface to his book *Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*, the author-photographer Amardeep Singh, sees “our generation as the last link between the ones directly impacted by the partition of India in 1947 and the present who have little emotional attachment to that cataclysm. We have grown up hearing firsthand accounts from those who were affected and uprooted, struggling thereafter as refugees in other parts of India and the world in their endeavour to re-start their lives.”

The birth of Sikhism in the Indian sub-continent’s north west in the 15th century for reforming society, evolved over the next two centuries to become the Khalsa or the order of soldier-saints. In the early 18th century,

the movement grew strong in defence of peoples of the sub-continent against tyranny. Successive decades saw the rise of an indigenous kingdom which became a bulwark against foreign invasions from Central Asia, Afghanistan and Persia. By the 19th century, the Sikh kingdom had become custodians of the Punjab and established a strong, just and secular rule. Theirs was such a formidable empire that the ever-expanding East India Company which ruled most of India by the early 19th century, were firmly stopped on banks of the river Sutlej along the frontiers of Punjab with the rest of India. After betrayal and treachery, the sun finally set in 1849, with British occupation of the lands that constituted the Sikh empire. Over the next many decades, as the

British consolidated their empire of India, soldiers of the disbanded Sikh Army were recruited and formed the backbone of the British-Indian Army. They served in far flung areas of the British empire, their martial prowess greatly acclaimed in the First and Second World Wars. However, during the trauma of partition, the Sikh contribution to the British empire was overlooked even as the Punjab was savagely divided between India and Pakistan on the basis of religious demographics.

In the communal mayhem that ensued, Punjab was bloodied, partitioned and wrenched from its secularity. Polarised, the Punjabi Sikhs and Hindus had their umbilical cord severed from the land of their forefathers and forced to migrate eastwards. The division left the refugees stunned and homeless. Still, in the most part, they took it stoically and kept the tragic events to themselves so as not to pass on the bitterness to the succeeding generations.

“However, my parents did not hesitate to share the past with their children,” continues Amardeep Singh. “I grew up with curiosity, searching for our past. In the process I also read many accounts by Europeans who had visited the Sikh kingdom in its days of glory, which helped me conjure a vision of the Punjab as had been experienced by them.”

Seven decades after that searing partition of 1947, the Sikh community remains deprived of its glorious heritage, wrenched from it and now virtually inaccessible to most. For those fortunate few able to visit Pakistan, their pilgrimages are confined to the few functional gurdwaras at Lahore, Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib, Kartarpur Sahib and Eminabad.

However, Amardeep Singh wondered whether the heritage of the land where Sikhism was born and the Sikhs had created an empire have been limited to just these few functional gurdwaras? What about magnificence of the hundreds of gurdwaras that once adorned every village of this land? And then, the scores of impregnable forts and historic battlegrounds that are intrinsic in Sikh history and which existed across the Punjab, North West Frontier and Kashmir? Are there any remains of art and architecture of the Sikh era that could provide insight of the erstwhile society?

“Troubled about the lost heritage, for years I was restless to visit Pakistan and satisfy my yearnings. Over the years, in anticipation, I was subconsciously gaining a deeper understanding of Sikh history. Driven by a passion, but with no clear plan on how to discover the past, I finally travelled to Pakistan in the year 2014.”

Despite some apprehension from all quarters, including his family and friends, Amardeep Singh went to Pakistan,



its Northern and Western geographical boundaries being exactly those of the erstwhile Sikh Empire. As he wrote, “There seemed to be an invisible force supporting me as I went about exploring in Pakistan. This kept connecting me with people, all of whom came together to help in my pursuit. My search, while focused on discovering the state of Sikh legacy, also incorporated Hindu and Muslim aspects that had close links with Sikh history. I visited the Muslim shrines of Baba Farid, Baba Bullah Shah, Sain Mian Mir and Hindu shrines of Prahladpuri, and others. It allowed me to appreciate the pure secularity of the united Punjab. The scope of exploration went beyond Sikh religion, encompassing its cultural, social and martial aspects.”

The canvas was painted, albeit in his mind. On his return to Singapore, “as I was going through the 19th century travelogues of the Europeans who had visited the Punjab then, I wondered, whether I too should document my experiences across Pakistan? Would my illustrated travelogue transpose the reader back in time to the glorious era looking at the abandoned and disappearing heritage? Could this work serve as some sort of a window for future generations to comprehend some aspects of our heritage that we were forced to abandon and would soon cease to exist. With these compelling thought, as I started putting it down, many sensitive people encouraged and supported me to do so.”

*The Nagaara Trust*, publishers of the *Nishaan* illustrated journal of the Sikhs, got associated with Amardeep Singh in this endeavor. The Managing Editor Pushpinder Singh and Editor Monica Arora got intrinsically involved in the project, in close co-ordination with Bhupinder Chaudhri of *Himalayan Books* in New Delhi, as co-publishers. These magnificent efforts culminated in the book’s formal launch at New Delhi on 22 February 2016.

# The Book Launch: “an enthralled audience”

Following months of concentrated work ensuring timely edit and printing of Amardeep Singh’s passionate project *Lost Heritage : The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*, it was time to formally launch the book. Mrs Bubbles Charanjit Singh of the Le Meridien hotel in New Delhi was approached to host the function and she agreed with her characteristic graciousness.

The date was 22 February 2016 when the foliage in Delhi is at its verdant best and the weather, perfect. Mrs Gursharan Kaur, wife of former Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh was Chief Guest for the occasion and Pakistan High Commissioner Abdul Basit, accompanied by Ms. Ayesha Ahsan and other diplomats were special invitees.

A few hours before the function, a posse of NSG personnel from Mrs Gursharan Singh’s security were at the venue, with armed guards and sniffer dog, which set the tone for the grand event to follow. There were some moments of nervousness over security arrangements for these prominent personalities, and ensuring that invitations were received by hundreds of guests. As part of the hosting party were, of course, the author himself, Mr Bhupinder Chaudhari of Himalaya Books, publishers of the book and the *Nishaan* office staff who took care of everything: sorting guest lists; couriering of cards; wrapping the books to be launched on stage,



and so on. The charming Mrs Charanjit Singh and senior executives of Le Meridien ensured that everything was in place.

Mrs Gursharan Kaur (*see above*) arrived at sharp 4 pm, her usual smile in place, accompanied by Mrs Isher Judge Ahluwalia, wife of renowned economist Dr Montek Singh Ahluwalia, followed shortly by Mr Abdul Basit and his colleagues. After the customary presenting of flowers and formal release of the book, it was time for the guests to share their thoughts.





The speakers were introduced by Harleen Kaur, who had specially come from Indore for this function. After his opening remarks, Managing Editor of *Nishaan*, Pushpinder Singh invited Mrs Gursharan Kaur to address the audience. Her husband, Dr Manmohan Singh's roots are in Western Punjab, now in Pakistan, and she spoke very intensely on how the heritage 'left behind' remained such an integral part of our shared legacy. (Her speech has been reproduced hereafter).

Thereafter, Mr Abdul Basit, Pakistan's High Commissioner to India reiterated on how important it was to preserve and care for holy gurdwaras, historic monuments and other heritage sites, perhaps the only physical remains of that lost era.



The author, Amardeep Singh, (*see left*) making a powerful AV presentation, shared his myriad experiences behind the journey to Pakistan and the process of collecting images, which are the crux of this marvelous, lavishly illustrated publication. He left the audience enthralled with the anecdotal retelling of his journey through various parts of Pakistan and its impact on him as an individual, as an author, as a Sikh, whose roots are in the region.



Some interactions with the audience followed, and the first off was Bhai Baldeep Singh (*see left*) extant khalifa of the oldest *gharāna* of classical percussions. He echoed Amardeep's sentiments, as did numerous others in the audience. High-tea followed, even as the author signed copies for those who had bought the book. The overwhelming response to this book from some 400 attendees who attended the launch event is testimonial of its meaningful and haunting theme: *Lost Heritage : The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*.

**Monica Arora**

“Let us hope your prayers will be heard  
and wisdom will prevail, some day”



Mrs. Gursharan Kaur speaking at launch of the book (see above) thanked “the organisers of this function for giving me the privilege of launching this book along with my dear friend, Mrs. Charanjit Singh, whom all of us fondly call Bubbles. I have many happy memories of enjoying the hospitality of Le Meridien, especially the launch of our late friend, S. Khushwant Singh's *Illustrated History of the Sikhs*, in 2006, and *Guru Granth Sahib: the Guru Eternal* by Dr. Mohinder Singh in 2008 also published by Himalayan Books. I think Le Meridien is meeting the aims of Corporate Social Responsibility in a more befitting manner than other corporates for which I thank its Chairperson from the bottom of my heart.

While glancing through the book, *Lost Heritage: The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*, I cannot help but express my joy at the labour of love and dedication of Amardeep Singh. In search of the lost heritage, Amardeep has travelled across the length and breadth of different parts of Pakistan at some personal risk. His painstaking efforts have led to the discovery and photography of many of the lesser known gurdwaras, samadhs and havelis of the Sikh Sardars in Pakistan. I hope this well written and beautifully illustrated book of 492 page, with over 500 photographs taken by the author himself, will go a long way to inspire our younger generation to connect with their lost heritage in Pakistan. The book supplements the pioneering works-*Sikh Shrines in West Pakistan* by Khan

Mohammad Waliullah Khan and *Historical Sikh Shrines in Pakistan* by Iqbal Qaiser. I also felicitate The Nagaara Trust and Himalayan Books for their timely initiative.

It is said that best way to destroy a community is to destroy its heritage. While going through this book I find that apart from some better known gurdwaras – Nankana Sahib, Dera Sahib and Panja Sahib – most of other historic shrines built through the labour of love of the devotees and dedication of legendary Maharaja Ranjit Singh, remain ignored. As a result they are slowly turning into ruins. Unfortunately historicity of the gurdwaras on this side of the border is becoming a casualty as well at the hands of those unaware of the importance of heritage in a community's life. As a humble Sikh may I mention that the stairs leading to the Baoli of Anandgarh fort in Anandpur Sahib where every brick touched by the lotus feet of the Tenth Guru became a sacred object are being replaced by marble. Fixing of marble, however precious and good looking it may be, does not have the sanctity of the original. Same is true of many other historic gurdwaras. While we should have no reason to object to the modern facilities being provided for the increasing number of devotees visiting these gurdwaras but I would like to make an appeal that while doing so, historicity of the original structures should be maintained.

I am happy that the efforts of our young friend, Amardeep Singh have resulted in producing this beautiful work. I feel sad that not much is being done for conserving the rich heritage we have left behind in Pakistan. I do not know whether I am right in suggesting that the leaders of the Sikh community, who are very wise, should prepare a blueprint for conserving our heritage both in India and Pakistan.

Caged as I have been for nearly ten years because of the office that my husband occupied, I am not fortunate like the birds, who can freely cross the borders. An opportunity came our way soon after my husband became the Prime Minister of India in May 2004. General Pervez Musharraf, then President of Pakistan, made a generous offer for us to visit to his ancestral village, what has now become the "famous Village of Gah". I thought during visit to my Sohra Pind it will not be difficult for the Pakistani authorities to arrange our pilgrimage to Panja Sahib, the place we daily remember in our prayers. But that was not to be. From hindsight, I think the statesman in him prevailed over emotions and the visit did not materialise. However, visiting gurdwaras in Pakistan remains high on my wish-list.

I do have memories of various places before we shifted from Nowshera to Amritsar in 1947. As my father was

working with Burmah Shell Company, he used to be posted in different cities from time to time. We lived in Kohat, Chaman and visited Rawalpindi, Panja Sahib, Peshawar, Chakwal and most importantly our native village Dhakam. Once we went to Baba Phula Singhji's Gurdwara which was across a river. It was a large boat, in which we crossed the river. I still remember that visit quite vividly.

I was fortunate to accompany my husband twice during his visits to Bangladesh, once in 2005 and then in 2011, and paying obeisance at Gurdwara Nanakshahi in Dhaka University campus. May I suggest that apart from visiting Nankana Shaib on the eve of Guru Nanak's birthday every year, community leaders should take the initiative of organising yearly pilgrimage to Nanakshahi and other gurdwaras in Bangladesh.

Away from the eye of the electronic and print media my husband made serious efforts to improve relations with Pakistan. He had a dream that those interested in visiting Pakistan, could have their breakfast in Delhi, lunch in Amritsar and dinner in Lahore. But all dreams do not come true. One thing, which is still possible and is to fulfil the cherished dreams of the Sikh community to provide a corridor from Dera Baba Nanak in India to Kartarpur in Pakistan, where Guru Nanak spent the last phase of his life. It is a distance of just about 4 kilometres from the Indo-Pak international border. It is this historic place which is associated with the popular story of Hindus and Muslims, staking their claims about the last rites of the Guru who came to be popularly known as:

*Nanak Shah Fakir, Hindu Ka Guru, Musalman Ka Pir.*

I can only describe the pain of partition and the Sikh community's separation from their heritage in what is now Pakistan in the words of famous Pakistani poet, Ustaad Daaman, who was invited as a special guest at a Mushaira in New Delhi.

When he recited the poem, tears rolled down from every eye including that of Jawaharlal Nehru.

ਭਾਵੇਂ ਮੂੰਹੋਂ ਨਾ ਕਹੀਏ, ਪਰ ਵਿਚੋਂ ਵਿਚੀ,  
ਖੋਏ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਵੀ ਓ, ਖੋਏ ਅਸੀਂ ਵੀ ਆਂ।

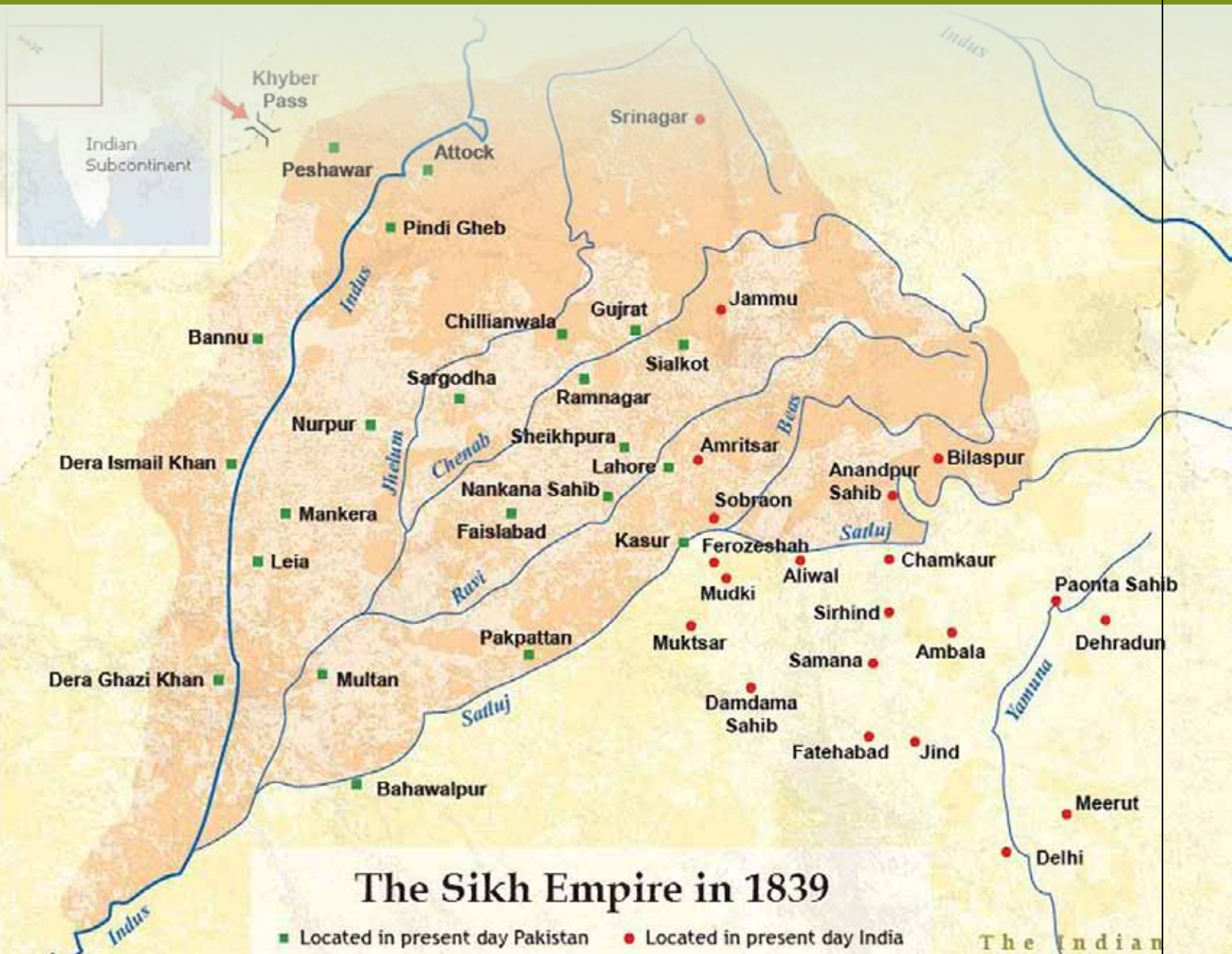
.....

ਲਾਲੀ ਅੱਖੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਪਈ ਦੱਸਦੀ ਏ,  
ਰੋਏ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਵੀ ਓ, ਰੋਏ ਅਸੀਂ ਵੀ ਆਂ।

Let us hope our prayers will be heard and wisdom will prevail, some day.



# The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan



The Sikh Empire in 1839

■ Located in present day Pakistan    ● Located in present day India

Amardeep Singh began his quest for “discovering” the Sikh legacy in Pakistan after crossing the ‘Radcliffe Line’ at the only land threshold created in the wake of Partition in October 1947 (see earlier chapter). [Nishaan is privileged to excerpt portions of Amardeep Singh's book for its many readers.] Along the legendary Grand Trunk Road from Amritsar to Lahore, the border village of Wagah is in Pakistan, which is reached after leaving Attari on the Indian side of Punjab, some 30 kilometres from Amritsar (India) and 22 kilometres from Lahore (Pakistan).



## Crossing into Pakistan

The village of Attari is birthplace of Sham Singh Attariwala (1790 – 1846), one of the famous generals of the Sikh army of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. He had participated in the great battles of Attock, Multan, Peshawar and Kashmir and, later, during the First Anglo-Sikh War, led the Sikh forces against the British in the fateful Battle of Sobraon in 1846.

Under Ranjit Singh, the Punjabis had created a formidable empire that the British both feared and coveted and it was only after his passing that they began macinations to take over the territory. As part of their designs, the British had established links with the Dogras, Dhyansingh, Gulab Singh and Suchet Singh. In the Fourth battle of the First Anglo-Sikh War, at Sobraon, the Dogra brothers treacherously allied with the British, snapping supply of ammunition and food to the Sikh forces. In exchange, Gulab Singh Dogra was offered the coveted territory of Kashmir for a pittance and that too after he pillaged the treasury at Lahore.

As Amardeep Singh writes, "Stepping into Pakistan, the land that beheld a glorious era of Sikh history, my first reflex was to bow in respect to the soil of our ancestors.

At Lahore, I headed for Dr. Mimpal Singh's residence, who is the first qualified Sikh doctor of Pakistan. He serves as a child specialist at the prestigious Mayo Hospital and also runs a private child health clinic. Before leaving Singapore, I had called to seek his guidance and he had insisted that while in Lahore, I should stay with him. I gladly accepted his offer.

Arriving in Lahore, the families of Dr. Mimpal Singh and his brothers, Santokh and Surjan Singh made me feel as if I was one of them. They are Pashtun Sikhs from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. While Punjabi Sikhs were uprooted from their lands during the partition of 1947, Pashtun Sikhs of the north-western frontier had stayed on and for this, one must recall the role of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, who had ensured that minorities were not targeted. Over time, following economic opportunities and fear of Talibanisation across the frontier, Pashtun Sikhs have been migrating into western Punjab."

## Lahore the Lion's Burj

Shah Zaman, Ahmad Shah Abdali's grandson, who had invaded India nine times, followed his grandfather's footsteps and reached the Punjab in 1797. He made three attempts to conquer Lahore pushing back the Sikh *misls* towards Amritsar, where they were forced to adopt a defensive strategy. Zaman, on reaching Amritsar, engaged in a reckless battle on 12 January 1797, leading to loss of some 20,000 of his soldiers against a force of 15,000 Sikhs and he then retreated to Lahore.

In 1798, Ranjit Singh rode to Lahore, climbed the *burj* of the fort and challenged Shah Zaman. "O grandson of Abdali, come down and measure swords with grandson of Chattar Singh." It was Ranjit Singh's grandfather Chattar Singh, who had earlier wreaked havoc upon the retreating soldiers of Ahmad Shah Abdali. Ranjit Singh was now victorious!

Ranjit Singh constructed a barricade outside the fort and soon ousted the Afghans. The Punjabis of Lahore - Hindu, Muslims and Sikhs - collectively mandated that Ranjit Singh be given charge of the city as he had demonstrated exemplary valour against Shah Zaman. After taking over in 1799, Ranjit Singh first visited the Badshahi mosque to pay his respects, clearly demonstrating his secular intentions. Inside the Lahore Fort is the gurdwara, built by Ranjit Singh, but which now remains locked.



Entrance to the Lahore fort



***Gurdwara inside the Lahore fort, built by Ranjit Singh***

Ranjit Singh had taken a vow to not sit in the premises of the previous foreign invaders but instead built an *Athdara* to conduct his daily affairs, where he would humbly sit on the floor. Only on special occasions would he sit on the ornamental Peacock throne, which was the manner of proclaiming his humility.



***Athdara built by Ranjit Singh***

The courtyard in front of the *Athdara* witnessed many royal gatherings during the Sikh era, which European artists have depicted through their paintings. On the roof of the *Athdara*, stands a domed tower, which was Ranjit Singh's personal gurdwara overlooking Lahore.



***Domed tower built by Ranjit Singh***

"I paused for a moment as my mind went back to events during the year 1631. I was reminded of Bakht Mal and Tara Chand, two Sikhs from Kabul, who had visited Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru, bringing two pedigree horses as gifts. Enamoured with the horses, Jehangir's soldiers forcefully confiscated and kept them in the official stable. When the Sikhs shared their experience with Guru Hargobind, Bhai Bidhi Chand was infuriated. Determined to bring back the horses, he entered the fort in disguise and freed one of them. Riding through the courtyard, he jumped with the horse over the wall into the river Ravi. A few days later, he repeated the act, rescuing the second horse. Standing in the courtyard, I bowed in respect to his valour."



***The wall from where Bhai Bidhi Chand jumped with his horse into the River Ravi***

Close by is a building where Duleep Singh, the last Maharaja of the Sikh Empire was born on 6 December 1838. After annexing the Punjab, the British took him away at the tender age of 11 years and appointed a tutor to raise him as a Christian. Four years later, he was exiled to Britain. He grew up as a Christian but at the age of 48, re-embraced Sikhism.

In the room where Duleep Singh was born, the British had painted Christian murals depicting Jesus Christ and Mother Mary. Today these weathered remains can be seen faintly.



**Duleep Singh's birth place in the Lahore fort**

Maharani Jindan, Duleep Singh's mother was the Regent of Lahore *darbar* for three years. During this period she had a *haveli* constructed for herself inside the fort, which now houses the Sikh Gallery and Princess Bamba Collection. Princess Bamba, the daughter of Duleep Singh spent her last years in Lahore.



**Rani Jindan's haveli in Lahore fort**

Around the pathway, connecting the fort to the Badshahi mosque lies the court garden named as Hazoori Bagh, which was where Ranjit Singh had built a *baradari* in marble with artistic engravings to honour state guests. William Moorcroft, the British adventurer who travelled through Lahore during May 1820, has written in his 'Travels in the Himalayan Provinces of Punjab & Hindustan',

*Ranjit Singh has cleared way of some rubbish, and has repaired the ruined buildings of Jehangir and Shahjehan.*



**Baradari built by Ranjit Singh in Hazoori Bagh**

## At Mozang

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru, & visiting Lahore in 1619 had stayed at Mozang and to commemorate this, his Sikhs built the gurdwara here. In his book entitled 'Punjab: Bloodied, Partitioned and Cleansed,' the author Ishtiaq Ahmed, has interviewed survivors of the partition, both from India and Pakistan, which he conducted between 1997 and 2011. In his interview with Mujahid Taj Din, a participant in the attack on the Mozang Gurdwara they he records:

*"The attack on the Sikh Gurdwara, Chevein Patshahi, was masterminded by thanedar Malik Maqsood of Mozang Police station. He trained some of us for four days. We were to take possession of important Hindu and Sikh places when partition was to be announced. He told us that if we died fighting against non-Muslims, we would be Shaheeds and if we survived we would be Ghazis. He told us that our Muslim brothers and sisters were being killed in India and the main objective of the training was to protect Muslims and to take revenge. When we attacked, there were not more than 20 to 30 Sikh men and women in the temple. All of them perished in the inferno.*



### **Mozang Gurdwara**

It happens quite so often that I pray to God to give me *mafi* for the murder of Sikhs and Hindus. I have a feeling that Allah understands me and has forgiven me. We were misguided and used by our politicians."

This non-functional gurdwara today has just some shops in its premises, the rental revenue of which goes to the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB).

Entering the Temple Street in Mozang, I recollected Mujahid Taj Din's testimony on how religious sentiments can be easily used to achieve nefarious objectives by political leaders and also the guilt such actions can create for a lifetime.

The gurdwara building is of modern architecture and historical records reveal that it was first constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh and later renovated in 1926.

Guru Hargobind, in whose memory the Mozang Gurdwara stands, spread the message, "freedom of faith is the birthright of all people. When persecuted by tyrannical rule, people of honour must not hesitate to rise rather than live dishonourably."

When Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru was tortured to death on 30 May 1606, Guru Hargobind was only 11 years of age. Anguished cries arose with such intensity that the Sikhs were willing to sacrifice everything to protect society. For the first time in centuries long subjugation of the masses, there arose a cry of resistance.

Guru Hargobind adorned two swords, *Miri* and *Piri* signifying the temporal and spiritual aspects of governance. Respectively such symbolism energised the spirit of the Sikhs, who rose against tyranny, refusing to accept their cruelty. In establishing sovereignty and freedom of the people, Guru Hargobind stemmed the onslaught of the powerful Mughal imperial forces.

At a short distance from the Mozang Gurdwara, in the

Gulberg area stands the *Shan-e-Islam* mosque. It was here that Gurdwara Mangat stood till the mid-1970s, in memory of Guru Hargobind's stay. During the partition of 1947, this gurdwara also suffered major destruction, remained in ruins for many years and was eventually replaced by a mosque. Gurdwara Mangat is just one example of the many Sikh monuments that have simply ceased to exist in western Punjab.

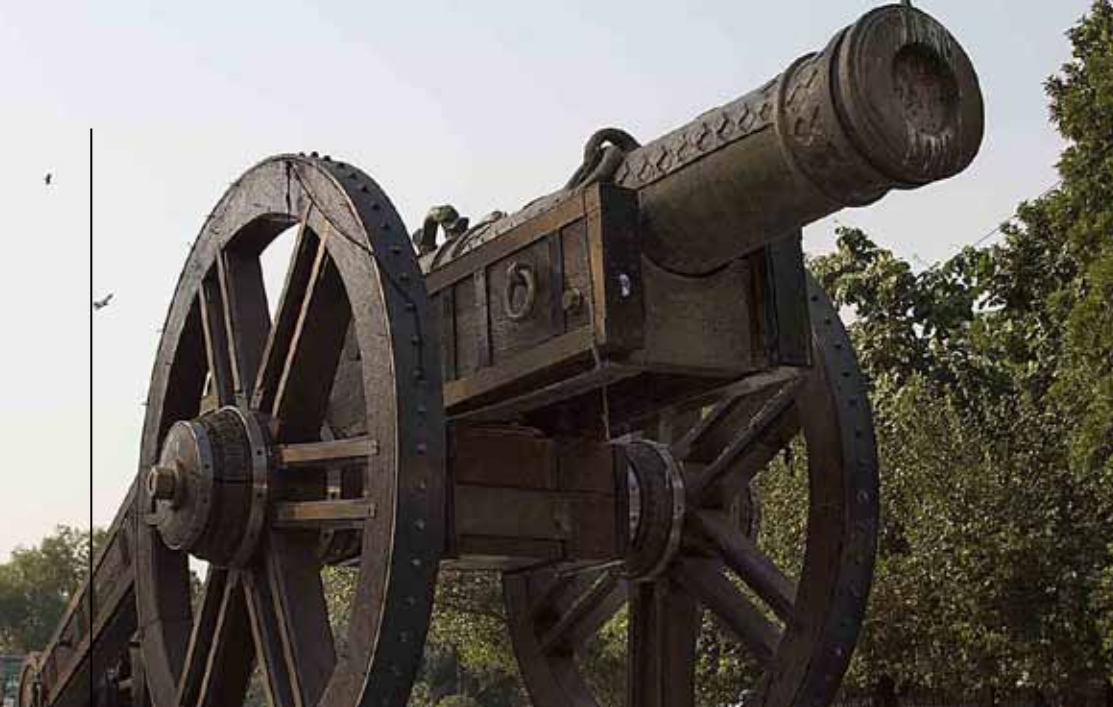
### **Multan - The melting pot**

Multan, the city of Sufi saints, is where the five rivers of Punjab merge into the Indus. It is probably for this reason that Sufi saints believe that in Multan one can lose one's ego, anomalous to the loss of individual identity of the rivers of Punjab. The Hindu *Purana* texts carry a legend about Prahlad, son of Hirnyakaship, the king of Multan, who had been blessed that he could not be killed by man or animal, during day or night or even inside or outside any building. Prahlad was saved from dangers when the Almighty himself appeared in the form of Narasimha, the half-man, half-lion, and killed Hirnyakaship in the middle of a doorway, at exactly noon, meeting all conditions that defied his blessing of immortality. In remembrance of this event, Hindus celebrate *Holi*, the festival of colours which has its origins in Multan. In Multan, the ancient temple of Prahladpuri once stood as testimony to the Puranic tale of Holika and Prahlad.



### **Mausoleum of Hazrat Shah Shams Tabrez**

Multan has long been target of numerous foreign invasions, the most well known being its conquest by Alexander of Greece in 326 BC. Later, when Alexander moved further into the Punjab and reached Jhelum, an ethnic Punjabi, King Porus stoutly defended the land. Over 2000 years later, in the 18th century, Ranjit Singh, the Lion of Punjab, was equally formidable and created a great empire.



***The Zamzama cannon displayed on the famous Mall Road of Lahore***

From time immemorial The city of Multan had been surrounded by a wall, 16 metres high and five metres wide. The fort of Multan was within the wall on a high mound, but today, there remains no trace of that fort.

In 1530, when Guru Nanak visited Multan, the Sufis collectively sent a bowl of milk, signifying that the city was brimming over with spiritual teachers. Nanak placed a jasmine flower on top, symbolising that just like a flower floats without spilling the milk, all could live in harmony. Nanak thereafter stayed at the mausoleum of Hazrat Shah Shams Tabrez. It is believed that prior to partition of 1947, an imprint trace of Guru Nank's foot was at the shrine of Hazrat Shah Shams Tabrez.

In 1802, Maharaja Ranjit Singh had turned his attention towards southern Punjab to recover this land back from the Afghans. During the fourth battle in 1810, the great Sikh general Hari Singh Nalwa accompanied Ranjit Singh to Multan, leading from the front and was seriously injured. In 1818, Multan was captured after its fort had also been bombarded with the famous cannon Zamzama (*Bhangia di tope*).

Ranjit Singh made Diwan Mulraj Chopra Governor of this southern Punjab city. In time, Multan was to become flashpoint for the Second

Anglo-Sikh war, eventually leading to British annexation of the Punjab. In November 1848, the British had besieged Multan with 32,000 troops, which completely outnumbered those inside the fort. Multan finally fell to British on 22 January 1849.

The Second Anglo-Sikh war then commenced, followed by three successive battles fought at Ramnagar, Chillianwala and Gujarat. The Sikh empire was thereafter annexed by the British.

## Universal brotherhood

From Multan Amardeep Singh drove to Lahore on the eve of Guruprab, birthday of Guru Ramdas, the fourth Sikh Guru's. He attended the celebrations at Chuna Mandi, a market within the walled city of Lahore, which is criss-crossed by narrow lanes, and easily accessible during the early morning hours. By mid-day, this market is hustling with activity.



***Gurdwara Ramdas***

The gate of the gurdwara, but for its recent whitewash, could easily have been mistaken for a locked shop. In 1801, this gurdwara had been renovated by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, but a century later, during the violence that erupted at the time of partition, 18 Sikhs were burnt alive inside this gurdwara. Thereafter, the compound came under control of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) and congregational services has not taken place for years.

In 2005, Baba Jagtar Singh from India sought permission from the Pakistan Government to repair the building. A group of Sikhs from India, with support from local Pashtun Sikhs restored the gurdwara to its functional state.

Guru Ramdas's contribution to the Sikh spiritual scripture, Guru Granth Sahib is very significant, with some 679 hymns composed by him, pulsating with the emotion of love for humanity. Guru Ramdas later founded the holy city of Amritsar.

Amardeep writes of "a group of police officers at the gurdwara's entrance carrying out security checks. Male Sikhs donning turbans were able to pass without much probing, but non-turbaned men and women were permitted only after asserting that they were non-Muslims. The Muslims, who could once freely enter any gurdwara are now unfortunately restricted

because of security reasons in Pakistan. The few Muslims who had gained entry were the descendants of Bhai Mardana, the Muslim bard who had accompanied Guru Nanak, in his travels worldwide."



**Sindhis performing kirtan, whilst a Sikh reads from the Guru Granth Sahib and a Muslim devotee holds the Chaur Sahib**

At the *langar* hall he was greeted by a Sindhi Hindu and a Muslim descendant of Bhai Mardana, who were having tea together. At the kitchen, two Sindhi Hindu boys were washing vegetables in preparation for the *langar*. Many Sindhi Hindus are ardent followers of Sikh Gurus and boundaries across Hindu and Sikh faith are

not distinct in Sindh. The Sikhs consider Sindhi Hindus as *Sehajdhari* Sikhs and the Sindhi Hindus closely follow the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib.

At the sanctum sanctorum, a turbaned Sikh presided over the Guru Granth Sahib. "I noted the distinct Pashtun features of the turban-wearing Sikhs in the congregation and the absence of Punjabi Sikhs."

The devotional *Gurbani* singing was being rendered by a Sindhi Hindu *jatha*. At the Guru Ramdas Gurdwara, I was gladdened at manifestation of universal brotherhood resonating through the presence of Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims, all united in their common faith. It is such universal brotherhood that Guru Ramdas's poetry of love extolls.



**Sindhis performing seva at the gurdwara**



*A Pashtun Sikh inside the Panja Sahib Gurdwara*



*Panja Sahib Gurdwara at first glance*

## Panja Sahib

Panja Sahib Gurdwara is well within the town of Hassan Abdal, and is approached via a winding road. Heavily barricaded, a narrow path leading to the entrance is visible and the police maintain a close scrutiny on all entries.

Around 120 Pashtun Sikh families reside in this town, all having migrated in recent years from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa owing to increasing instability in that frontier region. Exodus has further increased with several target killings of Sikhs in Peshawar during 2014.

The shops in the periphery of the gurdwara are under the control of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB), which collects all rentals that accrue.

“First view of the Panja Sahib Gurdwara evoked an innate sense of peace within me,” wrote Amardeep.

Hari Singh Nalwa, the legendary general of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, during his time as Governor of the north-west frontier, had built the gurdwara at Hasan Abdal. In the 1920s, the Sikh community from across the Punjab funded the construction of a far larger building for the gurdwara. The *sarovar* that surrounds the gurdwara has fresh water which is continuously replenished by the spring that emerged from Guru Nanak’s blessings and harbours multitudes of fish.





*Panja Sahib Gurdwara as seen from the residential block*



*Imprint of palm on the rock*

Visitors reverently touch the palm impression on the rock, and then splash water across their face and drink from the sarovar, with faith that this indeed is holy water.

The Pakistani Pashtun Sikh community cherish their cultural values. Passionately even though Gurmukhi is not used in their everyday lives, they are able to read and



*A visitor drinking water near the hand impression*



**Pashtun Sikhs gathering for the Rehras Sahib, evening prayers**

understand the spiritual writings of Guru Granth Sahib. The community conducts regular language classes for their children and it is pleasing to see every child well-versed with the Sikh spiritual scriptures.

“Hearing the children sing the *Aarti*, I joined them at the sanctum sanctorum, alongside the local community that had started converging within the main hall. Three boys were sitting on a raised platform and performing *kirtan*. Encompassed by the dazzling reflection of intricate glasswork on the walls, which created such divine aura that pristine image is firmly imprinted in my mind.” Trended Amardeep Singh.

## ‘Rape of Rawalpindi’

Rawalpindi, the northern Punjab city from where the main road carries onto Kashmir, was once inhabited by the Ghakkar tribe, who converted to Islam during the Mughal period. Ahmed Shah Abdali, after the third Battle of Panipat in 1761, annexed this as a territory of Afghanistan. In 1765, Milka Singh, a Sikh adventurer encouraged traders to settle here, resulting in an exponential growth of Rawalpindi. When Maharaja Ranjit Singh defeated the Afghans in 1818, he made this area as his base for the Sikh empire’s expansion towards the north west and frontiers of Afghanistan.

In the months leading to partition, Sikh families of village Thoha Khalsa in Kahuta district of Rawalpindi came under vicious attack by Muslim mobs on 6 March 1947. This was extremely horrific considering the previous harmonious relationship between various communities. This was to be the first tragedy of partition-related violence whose flames quickly spread across the Punjab. So grave were the repercussions of this tragedy that Lord Louis Mountbatten and Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru immediately visited Rawalpindi to assess the situation.

In an interview with Muhammad Aslam, who witnessed the tragedy at Thoha Khalsa in 1947, he recalls,

“I am originally from Thoha Khalsa in Rawalpindi. I was 16 years old in 1947. We were living peacefully in the village. On the evening of 6 March, Muslim mobs from the surrounding villages entered Thoha Khalsa and issued an ultimatum to the Sikhs to convert to Islam. The Sikhs resisted the tribals for three days but when dishonour was imminent, the Sikh men started killing their own women to protect their honour. I witnessed deaths of almost 25 women. Some of the women, holding children in their arms, sobbed desperately as they jumped into the village well. It was a terrible scene. They were determined to die rather than sacrifice their honour. In one week, all the remaining Sikhs were compelled to leave their native place.”

Rawalpindi’s skyline is still marked by structures and domes of derelict gurdwaras and temples, which reflect its pre-partition secularity. Walking through the old city, buildings with architecture dating from the Sikh era can be seen but most are in dilapidated state owing to lack of maintenance and care.

“I visited Bagh Sardaran, named after the Sikhs in pre-partition Rawalpindi. It was owned by an affluent Sikh, Rai Bahadur Sardar Soojan Singh of Rawalpindi. The high boundary walls, recently constructed around the garden have made it inaccessible and it is now occupied by Pakistan’s intelligence agency.”



**Bagh Sardaran with surveillance cameras along its boundary wall**

At the Purana Qilla Chowk, a large sign board with ‘Sardar G Saree Lehnga House’, caught Amardeep’s attention. Sarbeel Singh, its Pashtun Sikh proprietor greeted us with a loud, ‘*Sat Sri Akal!*’ In order to provide a safer environment for his family, he had moved from Peshawar to Rawalpindi about five years earlier. The

city which had once vibrated with Sikhs is now seeing fresh immigration of turban-wearing Pashtuns, although their numbers remain insignificant. Majority of them are practitioners of *Hikmat*, a branch of Unani medicine.



**Inside the 'Sardar G Saree Lehnga House'**

Passing through the congested lanes of Bhabra Bazar, we reached the ruins of Rai Bahadur Soojan Singh's *haveli*.

Rai Bahadur Soojan Singh's lavish four-story *haveli* has been illegally occupied by Kashmiri *Mohajirs* causing immense damage to the structure. During the rule of General Zia-ul-Haq the *haveli* was vacated and allotted to AQ Khan, the notorious nuclear scientist, to build a 'Science College for Girls'. With no progress made, the *haveli* continued to deteriorate. Some years later, a plan was devised to convert it into the 'Fatima Jinnah Women's University', which also did not materialise either. The building has since lost most of its original structure and is almost beyond retrieval.



**Arched doorway inside the *haveli***

Witnessing the state of this *haveli*, "My heart ached to witness such last remains of Rawalpindi's glorious and secular past."

## The North West Frontier

"Pashtun Sikhs at Hassan Abdal had strongly advised me not to visit the north western frontier, because of persistent dangers. I expressed that my trip to Pakistan would be incomplete if I did not visit Peshawar. So we did, leaving Rawalpindi at dusk and entered the city of Peshawar at 9:30 pm, heading directly to Namak Mandi, where we tugged our luggage through the narrow alleys of Jogan Shah Mohalla and arrived at Bhai Joga Singh Gurdwara," wrote Amardeep Singh.

Sikhs have an association with the north western frontier of the sub-continent from the times of Guru Nanak in the 16th century, when he travelled through the region on his way to Baghdad. Many citizens of Afghanistan and Peshawar had become Sikhs. In 1818, Maharaja Ranjit Singh's army captured this frontier region, and for the first time in 800 years of Indian history, actually reversed the invaders' tide, moving the country's frontiers westwards.



**Pashtun Sikhs of Peshawar**

During the terrible violence preceding the partition in 1947, Sikhs migrated enmasse eastwards towards the new borders of India but some also, incredibly, westwards, to the north west frontier, where the secular policy of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan protected them. At Peshawar, the Bhai Joga Singh Gurdwara, which was amongst the most prominent gurdwaras of the area, came under control of Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) having become non-functional. It was only in the late 1970s, when Sikhs from the frontier region started moving back into Peshawar that permission was granted to reopen this historic gurdwara.

"A Pashtun Sikh, who manages the gurdwara's community kitchen was visibly elated to see me as Sikhs from abroad seldom visit. Unable to communicate in any other language but Pashto, he assumed I was from Canada and I found it hard to explain that actually I was from Singapore."



**Interior of Bhai Joga Singh Gurdwara**

“Motivated by reaching Peshawar without trouble, my aspirations had risen. I now wanted to visit the Jamrud fort at Khyber, the extreme north western frontier of the Sikh empire, close to the Khyber Pass. This was also known as Fatehgarh, and is some 20 kilometres west of Peshawar. The importance of this fort is gauged from the fact that it guards the approach to the strategic Khyber Pass, from where invaders have entered India for millennium.”

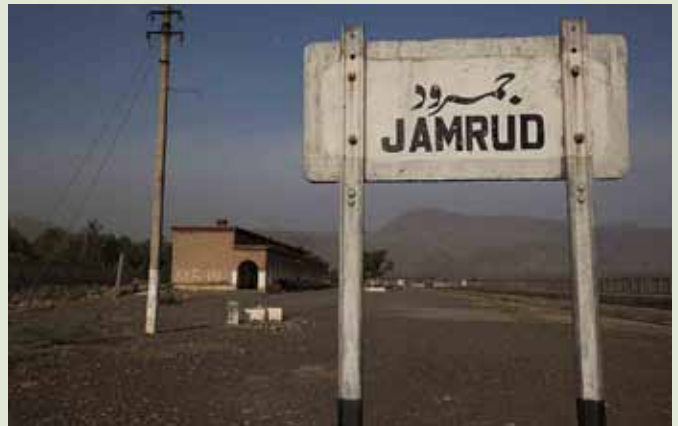
“I was informed that some Sikhs from Peshawar travelled daily to Jamrud to run their shops. Desirous to visit Jamrud, I saw this as an opportunity to travel with one of them. When I proposed this idea, my excitement was subdued when there were consistent refusals. No one wanted to take the risk of my going to Jamrud.”

However, Amardeep and Shaid persisted and at dawn, were speeding towards Jamrud and just 30 minutes later, crossed the Khyber gate.



**The Khyber Gate at Jamrud**

In the background, the hills leading to the formidable Khyber Pass were visible... it was through these very hills that foreign invaders had entered India for a millenium.



**Jamrud station with Khyber hills in the background**

Jamrud fort is now occupied by the Pakistan Army and is out of bounds for outsiders, but “I was satisfied to have at least touched its wall.”

Jamrud fort was built by Hari Singh Nalwa in 1836. In 1837, when the Afghan forces, led by Dost Mohammed attacked Jamrud, Hari Singh Nalwa stoutly defended the fort, was severely wounded and passed away during battle. However, there is controversy on how this occurred: “Gulab Singh, the Dogra minister in Ranjit Singh’s army allegedly had one of his men shoot Hari Singh Nalwa from the back.” This was one of the many betrayals by the Dogra family, which over time led to the fall of the Sikh kingdom.

In memory of Nalwa, a gurdwara was built in 1892 along the outer wall of Jamrud fort. This building, which is prominently visible in the photograph from the British era, has not survived after the partition of 1947.



**As seen in this early era photo of 20th century, there was a gurdwara along the fort’s outer wall.**



**Jamrud fort, surrounded by a newer outer wall**

“On return to Peshawar, we went to meet Pashtun Sikh shopkeepers at the market. Most dealt in general merchandise, cosmetics and garments. It was interesting to see these shops were predominantly stacked with Indian-origin goods.”



**A cosmetic shop owned by a Sikh shopkeeper at Jamrud**



**Langar with Pashtun Sikhs at Peshawar**

According to a Sikh veterinary doctor from Swat, who was performing *sewa* at the gurdwara, we learnt that Swat remained an autonomous region when Pakistan was created and had a relatively substantial Sikh population.

Most of them have now migrated but interestingly, there remain many Hindu families there, who have become Sikhs.

Amardeep Singh also visited the Bala Hissar fort, which was built by Babur and destroyed many times by invading Afghans and later by Nadir Shah of Persia. During the battle of Naushehra in 1823, as Sikhs advanced to the western frontier, they also battled the Afghans here. Hari Singh Nalwa had the fort rebuilt in 1834, renaming it as Sumairgarh. This fort marks the many battles the Sikhs fought against the foreign invaders. Bala Hissar fort is a highly restricted army area, so at best he could view it by driving along its periphery.



**Bala Hissar fort as seen from the road**

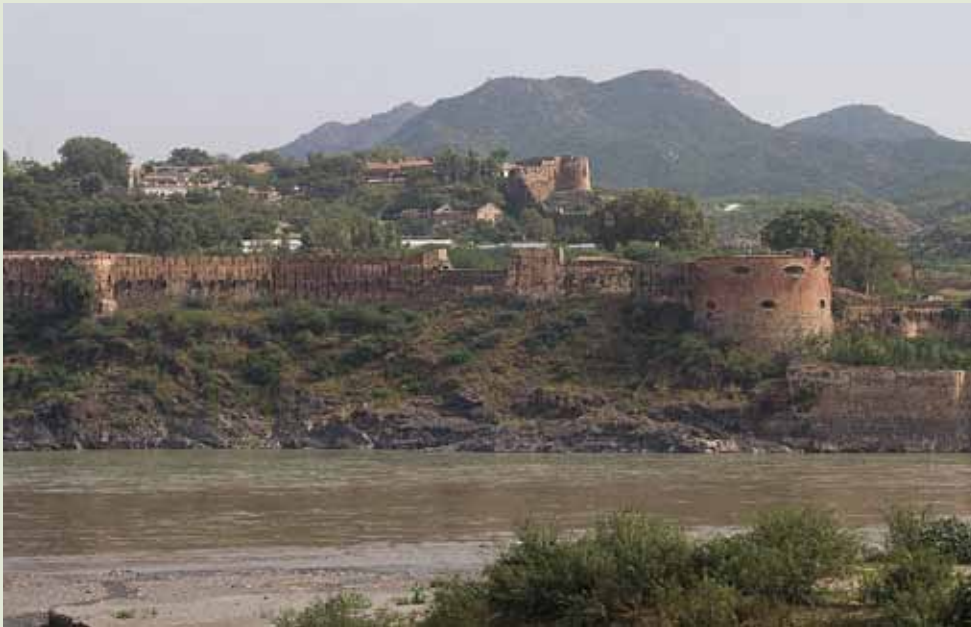
A few steps away, a large gate housing several rooms in its upper quarters were used by General Avitabile as his residence. After Hari Singh Nalwa's death at Jamrud, Ranjit Singh had appointed General Avitabile as the Governor of Peshawar, who governed the region during 1838-1842. He was an Italian who having served in Napoleon's army, travelled to the Punjab along with 41 other European officers and offered service to Maharaja Ranjit Singh.



**The once residence of General Avitabile**



*A pre-partition house. Its palanquin style windows indicate its past Sikh ownership*



*The fort at Attock, on the Indus*

At Peshawar there were two other shrines built in the memory of Guru Nanak's sons, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Chand, but no trace of these could be discovered. An additional Sikh heritage site, Gurdwara Bhai Biba Singh has been lying in dilapidated condition since the partition and the court has recently ordered its re-opening. However, as Amardeep Singh was walking around the city he spotted many old houses with palanquin style windows, which had obviously belonged to Sikhs, prior to their leaving Peshawar in 1947.

Amardeep's next destination was the city of Haripur

in Hazara that was founded by Hari Singh Nalwa.

## **Abbotabad**

Abbotabad, the hill station in the Hazara district has recently become infamous as it was Osama Bin Laden's final hideout and where this international terrorist was killed by US Navy Seals in May 2011.

As it was near sunset, Amardeep first went to see the remains of the Abbotabad Gurdwara. "I was surprised that in this town, where no Sikhs have been living after the partition of 1947, the lane leading to the gurdwara is still known as 'Gurdwara Gali'". A section of the Abbotabad Gurdwara has been converted into a Government Primary School. Around ten shops along its facade belonging to the gurdwara are now run by locals. Through the windows in its upper section, I could observe a bricked partitioning of the hall that was being used as a godown."

The courtyard of the gurdwara is an open bazaar with shops dealing in toys, utensils and cosmetics. However, the Gurmukhi inscription on its entrance still reads *Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha*.

"With the shopkeepers giving us stern and cold looks, the



*Appealing mosaic on the spiral staircase of the Abbotabad Gurdwara*

warmth and hospitality that I had experienced in the Punjab was completely missing here. After 1947, Sikhs visiting Pakistan have seldom ventured as far as Abbotabad and my presence was raising some suspicion. The past grandeur of this dilapidated building could be ascertained from the remains of the fine mosaic work on the steps of its spiral staircase.

Looking through waterproof sheets set up to protect the shops, I saw a cemented *khanda* symbol on top of the gurdwara building. The dates inscribed under it are 1919-1945, which I interpreted as the starting and ending dates of its construction."

### 'Jihad'

'Jihad' is perhaps the most misunderstood and misused of terms. As per tenets of Islam, this refers to a personal battle undertaken for one's spiritual growth. Those engaged in jihad are known as the *mujahideen*. In the contemporary context, the word *mujahideen* has become synonymous with fundamentalists or extremists who have formed groups in the name of a holy war.

Early conquests of India by invaders from the north west were purely for economic gains, but by the 12th century, focus had shifted to political establishment and spread of Islam. Because of its geography, Punjab was at the forefront and continued to face brutal foreign onslaughts. It was the Sikhs who made it their moral responsibility to fight for the rights to freedom of worship and life for all



Gurdwara at Manshera



Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Manshera



*Manshera Gurdwara, now converted into the Municipal Library*

humankind. This clarion call was to culminate in the establishment of a secular kingdom that succeeded in moving the boundary of the Punjab north westwards to the frontiers of Afghanistan. By the early 19th century, the sub-continent essentially ruled by two powers, the British occupying the territory east of the river Sutlej, while the Sikhs were reigning in the west, right up till Afghanistan.



*Frescos at Manshera Gurdwara*

Mansehra, some 24 kilometres away was Amardeep's next destination. The city is named after Man Singh, its Governor during the time of Ranjit Singh. Only few boulders lying around a police station are all that remains of a large fort that he had built here. The most prominent Sikh heritage site at Mansehra is the gurdwara built there in 1935.



*Looking at Manshera from the Gurdwara*



During the partition of 1947, Mansehra faced a pogrom against the Sikhs as tribals from the north west frontier had concentrated here before moving towards Muzaffarabad for their invasion of Kashmir. Murdering the town's Sikhs and Hindus, they ravaged their properties, whilst encouraging the locals to join them in destroying the gurdwara. Thereafter, Mansehra Gurdwara remained locked for years and in recent years, it has been converted into a municipal library. Whilst conducting repair and restoration, its frescos have been recreated, close to their original design.

Some of these frescos, depicting Hindu mythical characters, indicate co-existence of various communities here. "The librarian, a thorough gentleman took a keen interest in deciphering Gurmukhi inscriptions and was actively making notes as I explained some of these. He went out of his way to show me the entire premises, pointing to minute details. Following him, I stepped onto the roof of the building from where a view of the clustered Manshera town on this gloomy and cloudy day generated a feeling of immense sadness within me. A town whose foundation and the name is credited to the Sikhs, today lies ignorout of its founders."

## The road to Jhelum

From Mansehra, Amardeep drove to the hill station of Murree, and then towards Jhelum via Kallar Syedan, Saagri and Mankiala Stupa. From Jhelum he visited Katas Raj and Rohtas.

During the partition of 1947, the village of Kallar Syedan escaped unscathed because over 3,000 Sikh and Hindu residents had taken refuge in the large fortress-like haveli of the Bedis, before being safely evacuated to India.

Entry into the Kallar Syedan village is through a narrow alley, housing a clutter of shops that makes it impossible for a car to drive through. The haveli of the Bedis is at one end of the town.



**The Bedi haveli**

Baba Khem Singh Bedi (1830–1905) was a philanthropic human being, having founded at least 50 schools across the Punjab. He had this compound at Kallar Syedan constructed in the 1860s with special mortar comprising of *jaggery*, horse bean and jute mixed with lime, which made it strong enough to remain standing in all its majesty.



**Baba Khem Singh Bedi (1902 photo by La Fayette Studio London)**

"Upon entering the haveli, one is awed by the craftsmanship of intricate designs on its wooden doors and windows, which however, now are in a dilapidated condition."



**Finely crafted doors and windows of the Bedi haveli**



**Guest room at the entrance of the Bedi haveli**



**Frescos in the courtyard of the Bedi haveli**

On left side of the main entrance is a large visitor's room, where Baba Khem Singh Bedi would receive guests.

Upon entering through the main door, there is a courtyard containing weathered frescos with *Gurmukhi* inscriptions, also depicting Hindu Gods and men of valour from all faiths, whose intricacy and detailing are most impressive.

"After an overview of Kallar Syedan village from roof of the haveli, we went towards the open field, where the *Nishaan Sahib* and *khanda*, have remained intact for 67 years. At the base of the *Nishaan Sahib* is a platform with

*Gurmukhi* inscriptions from the Guru Granth Sahib. A new layer has been constructed on this platform, carrying inscriptions from the Quran, which now gives an impression that it is a Muslim grave.

From the Bedi *haveli*, we headed to the Saagri village, where we were told about a Khalsa School that now functions by the name *Government Boys Higher Secondary School*. It was built to provide cross community education in the village. The Sikh community that had created quality educational institutions throughout the Punjab before partition has not been able to regain similar teaching standards across their educational institutions in India. This is another painful aspect about the impact of partition. Over the next few days, while travelling across Punjab, I observed many Khalsa institutions with similar architecture, with the main hall as the central section and classroom wings flanking the sides."

"Exiting Saagri, towards the main road onward to Jhelum and at a distance of five kilometres, we stopped at Top Mankiala, where a large Buddhist stupa built during the reign of Kanishka (128-151 AD), still exists. This stupa's relics, which are now in the British Museum, were extracted by Jean-Baptiste Ventura in 1830, an Italian of Napoleon's army who later became a high ranking officer in Ranjit Singh's army."



**Classroom wing of the Khalsa School at Saagri village**

## The Gaudis of Punjab

In 1520 Guru Nanak visited Saidpur village, now renamed as Eminabad in Pakistan. Here he spent a night on a heap of *rori* (broken stones), where today stands the magnificent Rori Sahib Gurdwara.



**Rori Sahib Gurdwara at Eminabad**

“In the early morning light, we were awestruck with the magnificent architecture of the gurdwara. In words of the noted Pakistani architect, Kamil Khan Mumtaz,

*It is an architectural fantasy showing an amazing dexterity with which brickwork has been used to produce a plastic and almost sensuous quality. The production of these daring forms, which are based on traditional precedent, has extended the possibility of the bricks to a hitherto unknown limit. Whoever designed this building, were he a trained architect, most certainly was impressed by Gaudi, the famous Spanish architect of the early 20th century; if not, then he had an admirably original and innovative mind, which was coupled with a boldness that came from a mastery of traditional architecture.*

Bricks have been used in most unusual designs to create the gateway around the small gurdwara where the Guru Granth Sahib is placed. The uniqueness of the Rori Sahib Gurdwara's architecture are the freestanding arches and Gurmukhi characters created with brickwork.



**The gate to Rori Sahib Gurdwara**

While the architect Kamil Khan Mumtaz draws an apt analogy of Rori Sahib's architecture with that of the inimitable Gaudi's work, those Sikhs who had conceptualised the gurdwara had actually never come in contact with the Spanish architect. They were the innovative Gaudis of Punjab, who had created an eye-catching structure as a manifestation of their devotion towards their Guru. Undivided Punjab's largest annual Vaisakhi fair would be held in the grounds of the Rori Sahib Gurdwara and the place would be vibrant with masses of people thronging its premises.



**A view of Rori Sahib Gurdwara**



**The well of Bhai Lalo at Eminabad**

Certainly, Sikhs had a grand plan to keep enhancing the unique design of the gurdwara but with their traumatic and sudden departure in the fateful year of 1947, all construction stopped and the gurdwara was abandoned. In 1993, following the plea by the Sikh diaspora, Rori Sahib Gurdwara was resurrected and opened once again for religious services.

Amardeep Singh also went to an adjacent village to visit several more gurdwaras of Eminabad. Legend has it that after spending a night on the rocks, Bhai Lalo, a resident of Saidpur (now Eminabad) had invited Guru Nanak to stay at his home. Bhai Lalo's home was later converted to a gurdwara during the reign of Ranjit Singh.

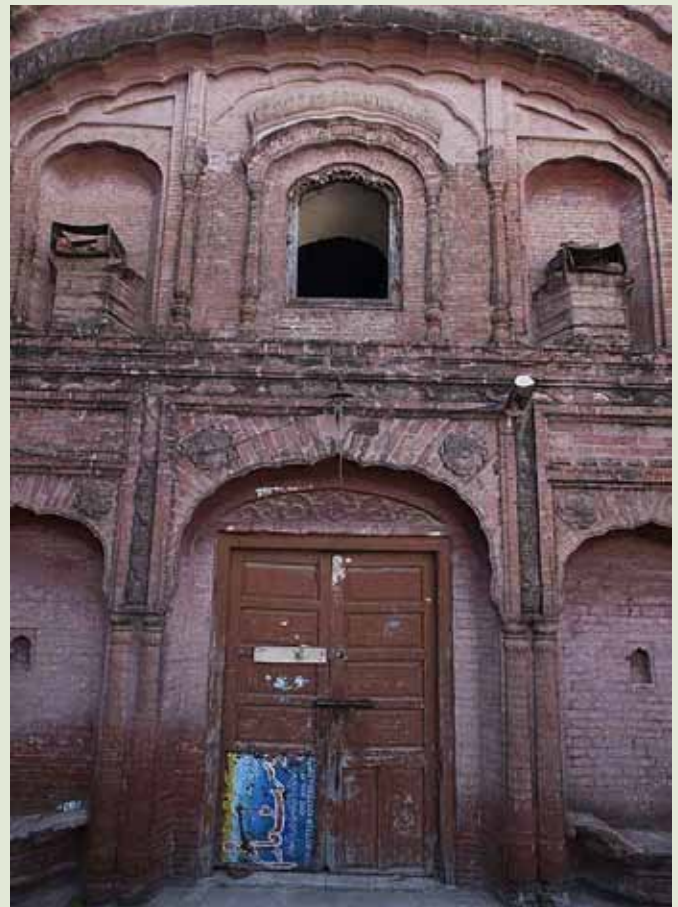
Post partition, the gurdwara of Bhai Lalo was occupied by Mohajirs. In 1993, when the Pakistan Government decided to maintain some of the prominent historic gurdwaras, they evacuated the Mohajirs and entombed the salvaged well. The Nishaan Sahib hoisted next to the well is symbolic of the gurdwara and its past glory.

Within precincts of the Mohajir colony is situated the Chakki Sahib Gurdwara. In 1520, Babur invaded India from Central Asia, massacring populations as he progressed further into the country. Guru Nanak was at Saidpur when Babur's forces rampaged through this village, also imprisoning Nanak in a cellar where the Chakki Sahib Gurdwara now stands. It was here that he was made to grind grain in a *chakki*, the hand-driven, wheat grinder.

Witnessing the plight of innocent people, Nanak expressed his feelings about social and political injustice in a philosophical composition titled *Babur Bani*, which is on pages 722 - 723 of the Guru Granth Sahib. During the restoration work which began in 1993, a small section of the erstwhile gurdwara was resurrected with a Nishaan Sahib standing tall in the compound, a lone reminder of the past when the Sikh community were resplendent in Eminabad.

### **Gujranwala: the glory that once was**

From Eminabad, Amardeep Singh journeyed to Gujranwala, then Kartarpur and finally back to Lahore. It was at Gujranwala, the glorious city that it once was,



**Entrance to the haveli of Mahan Singh**

that foundations of the Sikh empire were laid but this city in Pakistan today is bereft of care for its erstwhile heritage.

In the mid-18th century, even as the sub-continent remained vulnerable to invasion by foreigners, Sikh *misls* (twelve sovereign states of the Sikh Confederacy that rose during the 18th century) came into being as defence against invaders and to harass them as they retreated. Charat Singh, leader of the Sukerchakia *misal*, was from the area of today's Gujranwala. After his stout battles against the marauding Afghans, many local Muslim chiefs, including Muhammad Yar joined Charat Singh in his mission, which soon evolved into becoming a secular defence force.

Many Gujjar tribes joined Charat Singh, who in 1756 built a defensive wall around his territory, naming the area as Gujraoli. In 1774 the responsibility to protect Gujraoli passed on to his son Mahan Singh, who was Ranjit Singh's father. Inheriting the legacy, 'Lion of the Punjab' Ranjit Singh's empire was to expand west and north westwards towards the frontiers of the sub-continent.

Amardeep's destination was the haveli of Mahan Singh at Purani Mandi, where Maharaja Ranjit Singh was born. "Accessible only by foot, we moved through an alley via a fish market, arriving at a dead end where four shops were blocking access to the haveli."

Some shopkeepers helped to open the haveli's gate and then, Amardeep was at the birthplace where the 'Lion of Punjab' was born!

The once majestic *haveli* is now entrapped within a parasitic growth of homes, encroaching upon its walls. The white-washed walls of the entrance hall had obliterated any frescos which would have once adorned these interiors. An insensitive act to say the very least! During British rule in the Punjab the administration had placed a plaque outside the room to mark the place where Ranjit Singh was born, on 2 November 1780.

Amardeep then went to the haveli where Hari Singh Nalwa, the legendary Sikh General was born. Nalwa's reputation was such that hearing his name, Afghani mothers would say to their crying child:

*Chup sha! Hari Singh raghle!*

Keep quiet, Hari Singh is coming!

The birthplace of Hari Singh Nalwa is now a mosque and a mazaar. After the partition of 1947, Maulvi Mahmood Yasin who moved here from Ludhiana had occupied the haveli and converted it into a mosque. Upon his death, he was buried within the haveli itself thus, rendering it as his mazaar.



**Plaque indicating the room where Ranjit Singh was born in the haveli of Mahan Singh**



**Mahan Singh's haveli, with homes adjoining its walls**

The only indication that this haveli had ever belonged to the great Punjabi General is a plaque embedded by the British on one of its walls which clearly proclaims this as the residence of 'Sirdar Hari Singh Nalwa, 1791-1837'.



**A plaque embedded in the wall of Hari Singh Nalwa's haveli**

Amardeep Singh then went on to the 'Post Graduate Islamia College' of Gujranwala, which in the pre-partition era was known as the 'Guru Nanak Khalsa



**The former 'Guru Nanak Khalsa College'**

College', Gujranwala. The Sikh community had set up reputable institutions across the Punjab to meet educational needs of society, but post partition, all these have been converted into Islamia institutions.

Still, the standard design of the Khalsa institutions, with the main hall as the central section and classroom wings flanking the sides, was distinctively visible here as well. "From the plaque, we learnt that the foundation stone of the Guru Nanak Khalsa College was laid by S. Attar Singh on 30 March 1918."



**Foundation plaque of Guru Nanak Khalsa College**



**The khanda and Ik Ongkar symbols at the entrance Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara**

In the portico, a marble plaque hidden under a peeling poster offered a clue of some Gurmukhi inscriptions underneath. "We soon met a teacher, Mr Baig, who told us that Kalyan Singh, a Sikh from Nankana Sahib was currently a Professor of Shahmukhi in the same college,

being the first Sikh in this position amongst all government-run academic institutions in Pakistan.

Amardeep headed to Gurdwara Guru Singh Sabha, crossing two localities that still bear their pre-partition names and are known as Mohalla Guru Nanak Pura and Gobind Garh market.

The Sri Guru Singh Sabha Gurdwara building was easily identifiable from its grand sized palanquin windows. The cemented Gurmukhi characters along with the Khanda and Ik Ongkar created on top of the entrance gate were eye catching.

After the partition of 1947, this gurdwara was converted into a school and has not been maintained since then. The main hall, where regular congregational services would have been held, has a gaping hole in the roof and is on the verge of collapse. The hall is now being used as a two-wheeler parking lot.



**Restored baradari of Maharaja Ranjit Singh**

Expanding their exploration of Gujranwala, Amardeep headed to Sheranwala Bagh along GT Road, where is located the crumbling samadh of Mahan Singh, which was built by his son, Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Very sadly, the area around the samadh reeked of human excrement



**Gurdwara Damdama Sahib as viewed from the GT Road**

and also served as a garbage dumping ground. The structure on the upper floor is in a deplorable condition and its collapse is imminent.

The frescos inside are neglected, such careless attitude towards the illustrious history of the first (and only) indigenous Kingdom of the Punjab is insensitive to say the

least. A short distance away from the samadh of Mahan Singh is the baradari built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh, once the centre of attraction of Sheranwala Bagh but after partition, which has rapidly deteriorated. However, the Gujranwala administration but has recently got interested in bringing back the glory of this baradari and an attempt to restore it, has resulted in a badly plastered structure.

Amardeep's next stop were the remains of Gurdwara Damdama Sahib. Constructed in 1928, in the memory of Baba Sahib Singh Bedi, the un-plastered facade reveals the name of the gurdwara clearly and is distinctively visible from the GT Road.

Damdama Sahib Gurdwara premises are now occupied by many Mohajir families. The tile work on the floor reflects the richness of its past. One can only imagine the beauty of this gurdwara when it was at its glory. Many plaques with Gurmukhi were still embedded in the walls. The large central courtyard is now divided into many rooms made by the Mohajirs to house their families.

“At the gate of the sanctum sanctorum, I saw faint strains of a cracked fresco of Guru Nanak with his Muslim and Hindu companions, Bhai Mardana and Bhai Bala. The cracks in the fresco that represents interfaith unity, are symbolic of western Punjab today, fragmented on religious grounds. The room containing the Thara Sahib is now an abandoned store room.

After the drastic demographic change that followed partition, the new residents of Gujranwala are clearly unaware of its rich Sikh past. Tragically, whatever remains of the Sikh heritage is destined to soon be obliterated from memory and thereafter, Gujranwala's

glorious past would be forever lost.”

## Sher Singh's Baradari

Amardeep then visited the baradari of Sher Singh at Kot Khawajah Saeed locality, which till recently was being used as a waste disposal yard. A photograph taken in 2011 shows its deplorable state in those days.

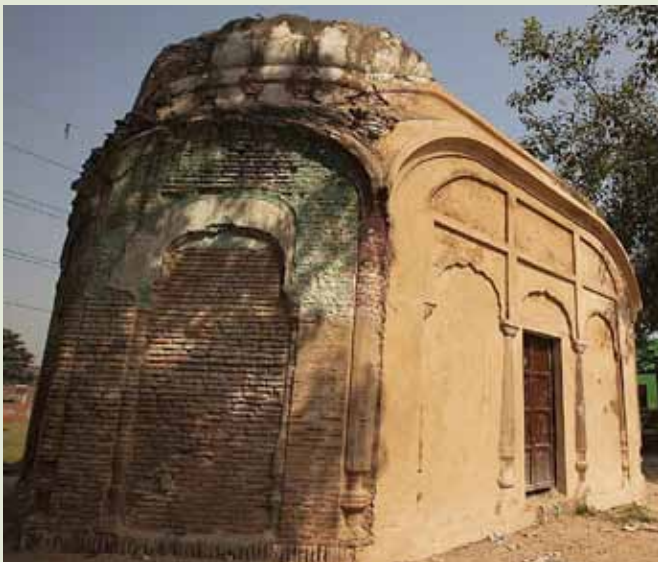


**Baradari of Sher Singh (Source: Project Lahore)**

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's son Sher Singh had ruled the Punjab from 1841 to 1843. A handsome and well-built man, he was a popular leader of the army. From 1831 to 1834 he acted as the Governor of Kashmir and was also a key commander in the 1834 expedition to Peshawar.



**Remains of Sher Singh's samadh in 1992 (Source: Project Lahore)**



**Partially renovated samadh of Sher Singh**

Timely protests by Lahore's intelligentsia eventually drew the government's attention to such abominable apathy and during Amardeep's visit, the monument was undergoing renovation. A section of the waste disposal area along Sher Singh road continues to exist though it has been cordoned off.



**Restored baradari of Sher Singh**

Sher Singh road has been transformed into becoming Sher Shah Suri road! Most residents of Lahore prefer the name of Sher Shah Suri, the Afghan invader of Punjab perhaps because of his Islamic background rather than Sher Singh, the indigenous Sikh Maharaja of Punjab. Such are the innate biases ingrained in the psyche of the people. With 'Sher' being common amongst the two names, any reference to the road's Sikh lineage is slowly getting erased, literally and metaphorically!

Going back to 1841, as an able military leader, Sher Singh had mobilised support of the army and arriving in Lahore, recaptured the fort from the Dogras, but not before Gulab Singh had emptied the State treasury and escaped towards Jammu. The stolen treasure from the Lahore *toshakhana* eventually enabled the perfidious Gulab Singh to "buy" the state of Jammu & Kashmir from the British.

Still, during Sher Singh's reign, a Sikh expedition under General Zorawar Singh embarked on a mission from Kashmir towards Ladakh and beyond, venturing deep into Tibet, incorporating this large territory into the Sikh Empire. A century later, this remains part of the Indian Union - and not China.

In September 1842, there was carnage in Lahore as the Sandhavalias assassinated Sher Singh and his young son Pratap Singh, thus eliminating two generations following Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Close to Sher Singh's *baradari*, three samadhs were built, but in 6 December 1992, these and the *baradari* were vandalised by miscreants, and today only a wall survives.



A patchwork of modern frescos has been attempted by students from an art school but is a far cry from the intrinsic craftsmanship of the past.

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru of the Sikhs, had stayed at Padhana while travelling to Amritsar. Initially a small gurdwara, this was later expanded by Attar Singh, the



*Renovated frescos in the baradari of Sher Singh lack originality*

## “Sava Lakh”

Some 37 kilometres from Lahore, along the Indo-Pakistan border is the village of Padhana. The Englishman Radcliffe, who had arrived in India on 8 July 1947 was given just five weeks to work out a partition to divide the Punjab. He drew lines on a large-scale map, but the new boundaries between the newly emerged Pakistan and an independent were actually only announced on 17 August 1947, formally partitioning the Punjab. Because of this cavalier and insensitive division, many Sikh villages, including that of Padhana along the current border, came under Pakistan.

“The last few kilometres to Padhana were along a dirt track. We first headed to the gurdwara, which has been occupied by a *mohajir* family, who came from Mewat, a district in Haryana, India. Chowdhry Noor Ahmed, the grandfather of the residing family had moved here on partition.”



*Padhana Gurdwara occupied by a migrant family from Mewat*

Chief of Padhana village and acquired much grandeur. On two sides of the door, marble slabs with names of donors inscribed on them in Gurmukhi still remain in good shape.



**Mortar art work on the ceiling of Padhana Gurdwara**

“Noticing the missing Thara Sahib, I enquired whether one ever existed. Interestingly, he said that during the 1965 Indo-Pak war, when the Indian Army occupied Padhana, Sikhs from eastern Punjab came to offer obeisance at this former gurdwara. Some amongst them then dismantled the Thara Sahib and took it eastwards back to their part of Punjab.”

“Standing on the roof, as I looked towards the border only a short distance away, skyline of the Indian Punjab was strikingly adorned with the marble-clad domes of functioning gurdwaras. Ironically, even as the gurdwaras in Pakistan are crumbling, they are mushrooming in India. We were so near - yet so far!”

A resident, who had seen us heading towards the haveli, and followed us, said that his grandfather, Harcharan Singh, and three brothers were Sikhs before the partition of 1947. The brothers had moved to India, settling close to Amritsar and had continued to maintain their Sikh lifestyles, whilst Harcharan Singh with his wife Dharam Kaur had stayed back. Adopting Islam, he renamed himself as Sardar Nasrullah.

One of his ancestors, Jawala Singh was married to the elder sister of Jindan Kaur, the youngest queen of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and was a wazir in the court of

Ranjit Singh. “Jawala Singh had *sava lakh* soldiers, *sava lakh* horses and *sava lakh* swords under his command. Impressed, I asked if he was aware that in Sikh tradition, it is proclaimed that every Sikh in the battlefield is equal to *sava lakh*!”

*Sava Lakh Se Ek Laraun  
Tahbi Gobind Singh Naam Kahaun*

When I make one fight a hundred thousand that I am called Gobind Singh



**Mohammad Anwar at the haveli in village Padhana**



***Bird's eye view of the Padhana haveli***

I suspect the metaphoric belief of *sava lakh* has been transmitted through generations. Mohammad Anwar having grown up in a non-Sikh tradition, had obviously accepted it literally."

Heading towards Lahore, Amardeep Singh came across a small dilapidated roadside gurdwara at Pind Koria.

"Had I not been on the left side of the car, we would have missed this broken building that clearly announced its Sikh lineage. A curious crowd soon assembled and



***Remains of a dilapidated gurdwara at Pind Koria***



***Front view of the Pind Koria Gurdwara***

told us that the building had remained abandoned since partition and had collapsed in 2012, owing to heavy rains. Its frescos, depicting Sikh Gurus were a visual treat, having survived seven decades since partition without any maintenance. Delighted, but yet dejected with this discovery, we headed back towards Lahore."

## The Crumbling Fort at Shekhupura

It was about 58 kilometres from Lahore that Amardeep Singh stopped at Shekhupura to observe what remained of its crumbling fort.



**The desolate Shekhupura Fort**

This fort dates back to the Mughal times but inside it, is constructed an impressive haveli from the Sikh era.

“We went up the elevated path from where I had a first glimpse of the abandoned haveli, with its palanquin-style windows signifying of its Sikh origins from the times of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.”



**Entrance to the Shekhupura Fort**

This haveli was once occupied by Maharani Datar Kaur, daughter of Sardar Ran Singh Nakai, leader of the Nakai misl. She was the second wife of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and their son Kharak Singh had ruled over the Punjab after his father's demise. Datar Kaur had a considerable role in rehabilitation of this small and not as strategically important citadel at Shekhupura, where she had a haveli constructed.

Another royal occupant of this haveli was Rani Jindan Kaur.



**Windows of the haveli inside Shekhupura Fort that were bricked by mohajirs**

In 1847, when the British occupied the Punjab, they imprisoned Jindan at the Lahore Fort but soon thereafter, shifted her to this haveli inside the Shekhupura Fort. The bitterest blow to the Maharani was the separation from her young son, Maharaja Duleep Singh, whom she did not get to see again for nearly 14 years. After one year's stay at Shekhupura Fort, she was taken to Chunar Fort, some 45 kilometres away from Varanasi, from where she eventually escaped, and sought asylum in the neighbouring kingdom of Nepal.

After partition in August 1947, mohajirs from India occupied this haveli and it was only 20 years later, in 1967, the Department of Archaeology managed to retrieve it but by then much damage had been done. The precious doors and windows had been taken away and arches and windows bricked by occupants to create rooms for themselves. Amid the ruins, some of the colourful and thematic frescos are still faintly visible.



**Remains of frescos inside the haveli in Shekhupura Fort**

## And finally, peace at Nankana Sahib

Earlier known as Rai-Bhoi-di-Talwandi, the city was renamed as Nankana Sahib after Guru Nanak, who was born here in 1469 to Mehta Kalu and Mata Tripta. Several gurdwaras adorn Nankana Sahib, the most important of these being the Janam Asthan, birthplace of Guru Nanak, which was earlier known as Kalu's Kotha.

"I headed straight to Janam Asthan Gurdwara, where security was tight in preparation for Gurburab, celebrations of Guru Nanak's birth. The frontage of the gurdwara was under repair, the work being undertaken by a Sikh organisation from India, who by virtue of devotion, have done commendable work



*A view of the Janam Asthan Gurdwara as one enters from the gate*



*Janam Asthan Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib*

in its restoration, but the quality could have been better, particularly in recreating intrinsic details of the original structure."

As one enters the large marbled area, the visage of the Gurdwara Sahib is dominant. The sanctum sanctorum is flanked by other buildings, which have rooms for visiting pilgrims.

The Guru Granth Sahib is normally kept in the Darbar Hall but owing to repairs in progress, it had been temporarily moved to the adjacent open hall.

A large gold palanquin, through anonymous donations made via the *Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee*, was gifted to Janam Asthan Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib in 2005 and is enclosed within a glass structure.

"Witnessing Pashtun Sikh children perform kirtan, I was impressed that as a minority, the community is continuing to earnestly impart the traditions to their progeny. After prayers I headed to the langar hall. Pashtun Sikhs do not partake langar on a daily basis, restricting their participation only to special events so enabling *langar* to be served to other visitors."



*The Darbar Hallat Janam Asthan Gurdwara where the Guru Granth Sahib is housed*



*The golden palanquin in the Janam Asthan Gurdwara*



*Pashtun Sikh children performing kirtan at Janam Asthan Gurdwara*



*Guru Granth Sahib recitation at Janam Asthan Gurdwara*

“At the ambrosial hour in the *Janam Asthan*, I was impressed to see a group of Pashtun Sikh children undergoing a class on recitation of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and was enthralled by the definitive effort being made by the community in exposing their children to traditional values.”

“An elderly Pashtun Sikh told me that after partition, the *Janam Asthan Gurdwara* was left abandoned. Thereafter the *Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandak Committee* (SGPC) sought permission to send a Sikh every six months to manage the gurdwara, an arrangement that continued till the 1965 Indo-Pak war. With tensions spiraling, when *Giani Partap Singh*, who was posted here at that time



*An elderly Pashtun Sikh at Janam Asthan Gurdwara*



*The majestic building of the erstwhile Khalsa School at Nankana Sahib*

heard that permission to send a replacement would not be renewed, he tore up his Indian Passport and stayed back, never to return. As a single Sikh at Nankana Sahib, he managed the gurdwara till the first batch of Pashtun Sikhs arrived in 1972. Giani Partap Singh, the guiding force of Nankana Sahib, passed away in 1984.”

affirmation of having abandoned the Sikh faith. Under an incubation period, the family was confined in their home for three months to acquaint them with Islamic religious practices. A year later, they escaped from the village to reach Nankana Sahib, becoming one of the

Before partition, some 17,000 acres of land were attached to Janam Asthan, all of which eventually went under control of the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB).

“I was fortunate to meet Bibi Taran Kaur, a senior member of the Pashtun families, who had migrated to Nankana Sahib in the year 1972. She had been married for ten years and was residing in the Tirah valley of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan, close to the Afghanistan border. Theirs was the only Sikh family of three brothers that stayed in this village. During the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, a large number of Muslim Pashtun soldiers of the Pakistan Army from Tirah valley became casualties. In mindless retaliation, villagers surrounded Bibi Taran Kaur’s home, hurling curses and chanting slogans against the Pashtun Sikh family. Their loyalty towards their homeland was questioned even though the war was being fought hundreds of miles away. Villagers demanded their conversion to Islam or face death. Bibi Taran Kaur went on to describe the agony under which they were left with no choice but to adopt Islam. Villagers cut their hair as

first Pashtun Sikh families to have migrated to this place in West Punjab. Thereafter, with increasing Talibanisation in the western frontier, a rapid migration of Pashtun Sikhs has resulted in growth of their population to over 200 families at Nankana Sahib.

Soon thereafter, I saw a Sikh groom, adorned in wedding attire walk into the Janam Asthan gurdwara by himself. Within the Pashtun Sikh community, wedding affairs are kept very simple. Unlike the fanfare associated with Sikh weddings in India, those of the Pashtun Sikhs is minimal.

At Nankana Sahib, there is a growing community of Hindus from Balochistan, who have recently adopted Sikhism. At the Janam Asthan Gurdwara, the men who manage the shoe deposit area and the langar are of Balochi origin. They used to be under protection of Akbar



*A Pashtun Sikh groom inside the Janam Asthan Gurdwara*

flourishing trades. Their achievement is noticeable as they have succeeded in collaborating with the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) to improve the condition of numerous gurdwaras at Nankana Sahib. They have also established the 'Guru Nanak Ji Public Model High School', for children of all faiths.



*The golden palanquin in the Janam Asthan Gurdwara*

Bugti, a Balochi tribal leader, who was killed in Pakistan Army action in July 2006. Following disturbances, many Balochi Hindus migrated to Nankana Sahib and have devoted themselves to performance of service at Janam Asthan Gurdwara, and keeping Sikh form."

The Pashtun Sikh community at Nankana Sahib, through their initial struggles in establishing themselves during the 1970s, are now successful businessmen with



*Patti Sahib Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib*

Just 10 minutes away from the Janam Asthan Gurdwara is the historic Khalsa School of Nankana Sahib that the Sikh community had built prior to partition.

After partition, the institute was renamed as the Islamia School but with increasing Sikh influence in Nankana Sahib, its name has now been changed to 'Government Guru Nanak High School'.





***Sanctum sanctorum of the Patti Sahib Gurdwara***

A short distance away from the Janam Asthan is the Patti Sahib Gurudwara, where Guru Nanak received his first lessons from Pandit Gopal. This gurdwara has become functional only in recent years.

At the other end of the market is Gurdwara Bal Lila, where Guru Nanak and his friends used to play.

Janam Asthan, Patti Sahib and Bal Lila Gurdwaras were constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh after his conquest

of Multan in 1818-19. It is believed that at the place where the Kiara Sahib Gurdwara is built, Guru Nanak had taken his father's cows for grazing. When the owner of the land complained that the cows had ruined his fields, the crops miraculously reappeared.

In the vicinity is the Mall Ji Sahib Gurdwara, which has also started services in recent years. It was here, while the young Nanak was sleeping under a tree, that a king



***Gurdwara Bal Lila at Nankana Sahib***



***Mall Ji Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib***

cobra provided him shade by spreading its hood over his head.

After Guru Nanak, it was Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru who next visited Nankana Sahib. At the place where he stayed, now exists the Panjvi Pathshahi Gurdwara, which has been recently repaired. Thereafter it was Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru who stopped here while returning from Kashmir in 1621-22 and the place where he stayed is now the Chatti Pathshahi Gurdwara.

At the marketplace is a small Nihanga-di-Chavani Gurdwara, constructed by the *Akali* Nihangs during the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. At this gurdwara flutters a blue-coloured Nishaan Sahib, unlike the saffron ones in other gurdwaras, symbolic of its association with the martial order of Nihangs.

An hour away from Nankana Sahib is the city of Farooqabad, which prior to partition was called Chuharkana. Here exists a relatively large functioning gurdwara by the name of Sacha Sauda. This is where Guru Nanak performed selfless business, the returns of which continue to be generated till today.

The Sikh tradition of langar following Guru Nanak's gesture at Chuharkhana has thereafter been followed, serving food to millions at gurdwaras across the world without any distinction.



**Panjvi Pathshahi Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib**



**Nihanga-di-Chavani at Nankana Sahib**

The Sacha Sauda Gurdwara, like most others in the Nankana Sahib area was abandoned after partition of 1947 and only reopened in 1993.

Other than the annual events of Vaisakhi and Guru Nanak's birth anniversary celebrations, when Sikhs from all over the world visit Pakistan, this gurdwara otherwise has few visitors. However, the tradition of langar prepared in anticipation has been maintained till date by the Pashtun Sikhs. Within 10 minutes, fresh rotis were prepared for us and langar served with much love. "On return to Nankana Sahib, I stopped at Tambu Sahib Gurdwara, where Guru Nanak had rested under a tree on his return from Chuharkana. The tree that is believed to have provided shade to Guru Nanak, still stands after five centuries."



**Chatti Pathshahi Gurdwara at Nankana Sahib**



***Gurdwara Sacha Souda at Farooqabad***



***Langar being prepared at Gurdwara Sacha Souda***

In recent years, three hostel blocks have been constructed at Gurdwara Tambu Sahib with donations received from Sikhs in UK, Canada and America. Nankana Sahib, which was wrenched away from the Sikhs during the partition of 1947 is witnessing a re-emergence of Sikhs through the growing Pashtun Sikh community.

In inclusion Amardeep Singh felt, "My mind was much at peace at Nankana Sahib and I decided to spend many



***Gurdwara Tambu Sahib at Nankana Sahib***

more days here remaining in prayer and introspection, whilst participating in the daily services at Gurdwara Janam Asthan.

My journey across Pakistan, to search for our 'Lost Heritage' was coming to an end at this supremely uplifting place where I felt deeply spiritual and rejuvenated with faith."



# Amardeep Singh: Chronicler of the lost heritage

*Amardeep Singh with his book, published by the Nagaara Trust in New Delhi*

**L**ost Heritage: *The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan* by Singapore-based Amardeep Singh is a travelogue across Pakistan, seven decades after the searing and scorching Partition of India in 1947. In this book, the author shares his exploration of the remnants of the Sikh community that once thrived in these lands across West Punjab, North-West Frontier and Pakistan Administered Kashmir. His work covers abandoned, re-occupied and functional gurdwaras, forts, battlegrounds, mansions, arts, architecture, educational institutions, residential and commercial establishments that collectively reflect the erstwhile glory of the region which was once the Sikh Kingdom.

Born in Gorakhpur and schooled at the prestigious Doon School, first-time author Singh, 49, studied electronics engineering at Manipal Institute of Technology in India, and later Business Administration at the University of Chicago. For years, he worked in India and Hong Kong. In 2001, his job at American Express brought him to Singapore. Impressed with the Island nation, he opted to become a Singaporean in 2005.

In his late forties, when this father of two children hit 'mid-life crisis' in 2013, he decided to hang his boots to answer his 'spiritual calling'! The result of that break is this splendid and voluminous book *Lost Heritage – The Sikh Legacy in Pakistan*, published by the Nagaara Trust

in association with *Himalayan Books* at New Delhi. It is a tome with 507 pictures and over 55,000 words in text in 504 pages—a rare work of photography and scholarship that is making waves among those who value such historical and cultural treatises.

As Amardeep Singh recalls: “Impacted by the partition of India in 1947, our families moved from Muzaffarabad (now in Pakistan Administered Kashmir) to Gorakhpur, where I was born in 1966. While majority kept the tragic events of partition to themselves, my parents did not hesitate to share their memories of the region. We grew up hearing accounts of how they were affected and uprooted, struggling thereafter as refugees in their endeavor to re-start their lives. Hearing the positive and challenging accounts, left a deep impact, making me curious about the region. I grew up with a dream to once travel across Pakistan to understand the impact of partition cataclysm.

The Pakistan Embassy was very generous in granting me a 30 day non-restricted Visa. The journey was preceded by apprehension from family and friends. However, my calling was much stronger. I entered the country with no firm plan but just a desire to reach Muzaffarabad, our ancestral town. With 30 days at hand, I also wished to maximise exploring other areas in the country. Embarking on the journey, I kept connecting with like-minded people, who resonated

with my passion for exploration and they all helped and guided me. The research presented in this book is an outcome of the love and support showered by the common-man in Pakistan.

The remnants of the Sikh heritage are in abundance across Pakistan. Seven decades after the traumatic partition of 1947, the Sikh community remains deprived of its glorious heritage, wrenched from it and now virtually inaccessible to most. For those fortunate and able to visit Pakistan, they remain confined to the few functional gurdwaras. Would the heritage of the land where Sikhism was born and the Sikhs had created an empire, be limited to just these few functional gurdwaras? Are there any remains of the erstwhile society? This is what prompted me to be observant as I moved across the country. The remnants lie scattered, abandoned and some occupied. The abandoned sites were easier to access while to view the occupied sites, was challenging at times. As for the North-West Frontier and Pakistan Administered Kashmir, I was advised not to travel in these areas because of the trailing effects of terrorism. However I consider myself fortunate to have been able to make brief visits to these places as well.

Fear arises from one's mind trap. My passion for exploration far outweighed and ambiguous thoughts. This journey wouldn't have been possible without the support of many local Pakistanis, who saw a sincere passion in me. My apprehensions were short lived and dropped off as I inter-mingled with people and experienced their way of life, which is a part of the collective culture that our forefathers left.

Unconsciously, I had been preparing for this journey for years. Study of history of the area of Greater Punjab has been my passion. Photography and story-telling from common pursuits is another skill that I had been enjoying and developing over time. The journey into Pakistan in October 2014 was supported by these sharpened skills, acquired over time. A personal journey subtly transformed into a deeper search.

I entered Pakistan with an open mind and an open heart, which attracted similar energies.

After partition, Visa restrictions and the unfortunate relations between India and Pakistan, results in just a few fortunate ones able to visit the limited functional places of the Sikh heritage. However 80 per cent of the erstwhile Sikh empire (prior to the annexation of Punjab by British India) fell in what is now Pakistan. A culture that evolved and thrived across this region, surely has to have a broader footprint than these few accessible sites. What struck me the most was that footprint of the heritage is far greater than what Sikhs across the

world are currently able to freely access. Over time, most of these heritage sites have fallen into dilapidated condition. Only around 20% survive. An effort can at best only be applied on the remaining few sites, which would still be a herculean task to save them.

The entire trip was filled with a see-saw of emotions. At some points, seeing remnants of the glorious Sikh Empire and culture, my chest would swell in pride at the achievements of our forefathers across these lands. But then the emotions would reach rock bottom, seeing the dilapidation. Much is lost and little that is left, will probably not last more than a decade.

The most touching point of the trip was when I was exploring the remains of the abandoned Mangat Gurdwara at Mangat village. The faint remains of its frescos simply awed me while the crumbling building had me in tears. In the inner wall, when my eyes fell on a chalk graffiti done by some uncaring visitors, it shook me totally. The words read I LOST MY EVERYTHING. To me the line resonated with the loss of the Sikh community across these lands.

Having returned from Pakistan in November 2014, with over 1500 photos of the discovered remnants of the Sikh legacy, even as I was satisfied of having had the opportunity to visit my father's birthplace, it was only on 26 December 2014 that the thought of writing a book occurred. This motivation arose from a chanced glance on the British travelogues in my library, published in 1850s. In early 1800s British India feared that the outcome of *The Great Game* in Europe could lead Napoleon of France and Czar of Russia to enter India through Afghanistan and Punjab. The mighty Sikh Empire on the West of British India was feared by the British but strategically it was on their radar to be annexed. In planning, the British started sending spies into the Sikh territories, essentially to map out the territories in preparation for a potential war in the future. The travelogues of some of these spies were later published in London, after annexation of the Sikh Empire in 1849. Having read these travelogues years back, I had been able to form an impression of the might of the erstwhile Sikh kingdom.

Could my travel across Pakistan, seven decades after partition and providing a visual documentation of the remnants of the Sikh legacy, serve the same purpose for posterity, as the 180-year-old British travelogues served for me?

This became the motivation for me to write this book.'

*Extracts from an interview by Zafar Anjum, Editor-in-chief, Kitaab*



# Sikhs in Pakistan Today

Although today, Sikhs are a very small minority in Pakistan, their cultural, historical, religious and political roots are in the country, not only emotionally but factually and thus the region is rightfully regarded as their 'holy land.'

Of Pakistan's 160 million peoples, 95% are Muslim, while Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Ahmaddis (legislated as non-Islamic in Pakistan) comprise the remaining 5%.

Prior to the 1947 partition of India, which carved the new state of Pakistan out of British India, Sikhs had always played an important, nay dominant part, in life across the undivided Punjab, being leaders, administrators, educationists, landlords, businessmen and traders, apart from their traditional role as soldiers and agriculturists. Lahore, now Pakistan's prime city was capital of the Punjab ever since Maharaja Ranjit Singh created his kingdom. Many towns and places in the Pakistan of today, such as Nankana Sahib, birthplace of Sikhism's founder, Guru Nanak Dev, encompasses nine gurdwaras associated with different events in Guru Nanak Dev's life. The town remains perhaps the most important pilgrimage for Sikhs globally.

Although there are no reliable figures on Sikh presence in today's Pakistan, it is estimated that there are some 50,000 Sikhs scattered across the cities, towns and villages of Pakistan, the largest concentration being in



**'Train to Pakistan': Sikh pilgrims on their way to Nankana Sahib**

Peshawar, in Khyber Pukhtunkhawa. There are pockets of Sikhs in Lahore, Nankana Sahib, Hasan Abdal in the Punjab, as also in Gwadar, Kalat, and Quetta districts of Baluchistan.

In 1947, many Sikhs stayed on in Waziristan and Swat of the erstwhile Northwest Frontier Province. Tragically, Western Punjab and Sindh were virtually denuded of their Sikh and Hindu population in the communal massacres, with nearly all fleeing for India. Today, very large segments of the population of eastern Punjab and Haryana as also India's capital Delhi have their roots in towns and villages now in Pakistan, including former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, who came from Gah.

There has been a minor increase in the number of



***Captain Harcharan Singh***

Sikhs in Pakistan, following the turbulence which has ravaged neighbouring Afghanistan, which, like Pakistan, has had a small Sikh and Hindu population. There has been an exodus of refugees from Afghanistan into Pakistan during the past 30 years and because of porous borders, with some Sikhs joining their kinsmen in Peshawar and Lahore, while others emigrated to India and abroad.



***Inspector Gulab Singh at the Lahore Stadium***

Sikhs have usually kept a low profile within the monolithic population of Pakistan, which, as a constitutionally Islamic state, has had inconsistent and often intolerant relations with its minorities. Until 2002, Pakistan held a system of separate electorates for all its national legislative assemblies, with only a handful of parliamentary seats reserved for minority members. Minorities were legally only permitted to vote for designated minority candidates in general elections. However, during the regime of President General Pervez Musharraf an agenda of equality for minorities and promotion and protection of minority rights was pioneered, the implementation of which has been slow.

After the creation of Pakistan, the Sikh community's rights were demonstratively reduced but of late, the Sikh community within Pakistan has been making every effort possible to progress in Pakistan. Symbolically, Harcharan Singh became the first Sikh officer in Pakistan's army. In 2010, another Sikh (Amerjit Singh) joined the Pakistan Rangers and another, the Pakistan Coast Guard. The most visible Sikh in Lahore today is Gulab Singh, the first to be appointed as a traffic police warden and is highly cheered by passer-bys everyday, when they pass his post at Alif Laam Meem Chowk on Aziz Bhatti Road in Lahore Cantt.

## Looking after the holy shrines



The historical and holy sites of Sikhs in Pakistan are currently maintained by the officials of the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, responsible for their upkeep and preservation. Nonetheless, many Sikh shrines have fallen into disrepair since 1947, as the remaining Sikh population and its corresponding manpower, economic power and political influence is minuscule compared to that of the pre-1947 community.

As per an agreement between the governments of India and Pakistan, Sikh pilgrims could visit Gurdwara Janam Asthan at Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib at Hassan Abdal (Attock district), Gurdwara Dera Sahib at Lahore and Smadh Maharaja Ranjit Singh at Lahore on occasion of the birth anniversary of Guru Nanak, Baisakhi, martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev and death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh every year. (Muslim pilgrims could visit their five shrines in India too).

Some of the SGPC staff, which had been looking after these historical gurdwaras before the Partition, was allowed to be posted at Nankana Sahib, Panja Sahib and Dera Sahib to perform religious services, but following the 1971 Indo-Pak war, the Pakistan Government refused to issue/renew visa to the SGPC staff, including granthis (priests), ragis (devotional singers) and sewadars.



In 1979, when the Janata Party was in power at the Centre, a six-member delegation led by Gurcharan Singh Tohra, SGPC president, visited Pakistan to study the state of affairs of historical gurdwaras in that country, also meeting General Zia-ul-Haq, the then President of Pakistan.

Tohra raised the demand that SGPC staff should be posted at the gurdwara as per the practice before 1971. General Zia did not agree, and suggested that Pakistani Sikhs should be imparted necessary training for enforcing maryada (Sikh code of conduct) in the gurdwaras. He said he was prepared to send Pakistani Sikhs to India for the purpose.

Subsequently, General Zia persuaded about 50 Pakistani Sikhs to shift from Swat to Nankana Sahib, to assist the Waqf Board to run the gurdwara affairs in Pakistan. These families are residing in the complex of Gurdwara Patti Sahib.

A new Sikh generation in Pakistan, number just 120 (70 boys and 50 girls) in the age group of 5-15 have imbibed gurmat maryada, rising early in the morning, reciting shabad kirtan. After their studies in \ school, they learn the Gurmukhi script, and learn Gurbani in the evening from their elders.



These children have been observing almost all historical occasions sangrand, amavas and purnima. They also participate in religious functions organised by the visiting Sikh pilgrims from India and abroad.

Balwant Singh, a young man who teaches these children, says that these youngsters are very eager



to visit the Golden Temple and other historical Sikh shrines in India. Since their parents are small-time shopkeepers or businessmen, they cannot afford the expenses for the pilgrimage. "The SGPC and other Sikh organisations should extend all cooperation, including financial assistance...It is these children who are likely to look after the maryada of Sikh shrines in Pakistan in the future."

**The Guru Nanak Model School, Nankana Sahib** whose headmaster being Azgar Bhatti, was established in April 1999, where Gurmukhi is taught, having five Sikh and seven Muslim male teachers and seven Muslim lady teachers. At Nankana Sahib, there are eight Government schools and fourteen private schools among which Guru Nanak Model School occupies the top position.

About 142 Sikh students study here while the number of Muslim students is 410, of which 120 are poor and enjoy full fee concession. While Sikh students recite Sukhmani Sahib, Japji Sahib and Rehras Sahib, Muslim students recite verses from holy Qu'ran.

## Karachi's Sikh Community

The port city of Karachi, which was once regarded as Bombay's twin, is more cosmopolitan and multi-cultural than other cities of Pakistan. With approximately 3500 Sikhs residing in Karachi, largely in the Narain Pura Compound in Ranchore Lines and are also living in Kohinoor Centre, Jubilee Cinema, Garden Road and Manora.

There are six gurdwaras in different parts of the city, but the most active is Gurdwara Sikh Sangat in Ranchore Lines. The small-roomed Sikh Sangat Gurdwara is thus the place where devotees from all over the city convene during festivals. Built in 1910, the blue-walled gurdwara is located off the congested and dilapidated roads of the compound exemplifies the basic principals of Sikhism - simplicity and modesty.





# Sikhs in Khyber Pukhtunkhwara (NWFP)

Persecuted by Aurangzeb in the 18th century, Sikhs moved to the northern hills for refuge and assimilating with the Pakhtun tribes in these mountain regions, they are a breed apart. The tribal principle of sanctuary to the 'Amsaya', or protected one, was what eased them into a region known for its traditional and rigid view of Islam. These anomalous 'tribesmen' - their beards rolled, wearing distinctive colourful turbans - are now part of the landscape, under the protection of one Pakhtun clan or another.

As a Sikh trader Charanjit Singh said, "The Sikhs have an ability to completely integrate into the local culture," this being echoed by Jadran Afridi, a medical practitioner affiliated with the Pakhtunkhwa Qaumi Party (pqp), who said that "The Sikhs here speak local Pakhto dialects fluently, treat their womenfolk as tribal Pakhtuns do. They are as illiterate and hard-headed as Afridis and Orakzais, and they are just as dependable in personal loyalty. Their hospitality is proverbial; every household keeps separate utensils for their Muslim friends."

"There was a time when hardly any Sikhs remained in Peshawar," recalls 70-year-old Gian Singh. From Tirah, also in NWFP, where he moved in from Jalalabad after Najibullah's fall. "But now their families in places like Tirah are growing large, and business up there is shrinking." This has pushed many Sikhs down into Peshawar or nearby areas. "There must be close to a thousand Sikh families - about 10,000 people - living in Peshawar and the tribal areas," estimates Sona Singh, head granthi of Gurudwara Bhai Joga Singh in Peshawar's old Dabgari district.

Saroop Singh, who owns two shops and eight acres in Bara, is typical of the new generation of Sikhs who have discarded their roles as Amsayas in search of independence and a better lifestyle. "Economic pressures have weakened the ability of tribal clans to prevent outsiders from acquiring land," he says. "Many Sikhs who made money in trading have bought land; but agriculture is rain-fed, and there isn't enough arable land to go around."



However, the first casualty, even for the new generation, is education. Five years of religious schooling in Gurmukhi is about all the education most tribal Sikhs have had, and it's promptly discarded when the exigencies of practical life take over. According to Sona Singh, the head granthi, every Sikh settlement has at least one mohalla school to teach the Granth Sahib, though not science, history or other subjects. "The aim is mainly to keep the religious rituals alive," he explains. "Life in Pakistan is better," says Saroop Singh, who has visited Delhi and Ambala several times. "There is more respect for the Sikhs here." Like most of the Frontier Sikhs, he believes that Khalistan will become a reality some day. When that happens, they say, they will gladly begin the long trek back.



## The Pakistani Sikh diaspora

Although Sikhism as per Pakistani religious laws, is a monotheistic religion and therefore secured from violence, Pakistani Sikhs have had to suffer discrimination over the decades and therefore many have emigrated to the United Kingdom and Canada. There is a growing Pakistani Sikh community in Dubai. In the United Kingdom there are approximately 40,000 Pakistani Sikhs, in Canada around 18,000. The Pakistani

Sikh communities are often more likely to be integrated into the Pakistani community life than into British Sikh community, as many Indian Sikhs are patriotic to India, and Pakistani Sikhs often see the Khalistan movement as the most important Sikh movement. As Pakistan, then ruled by Zia ul Huq, supported the Khalistan movement from day one, many Pakistani Sikhs see their selves more on the Pakistani than Indian side

*Extracts from Sikhwiki*

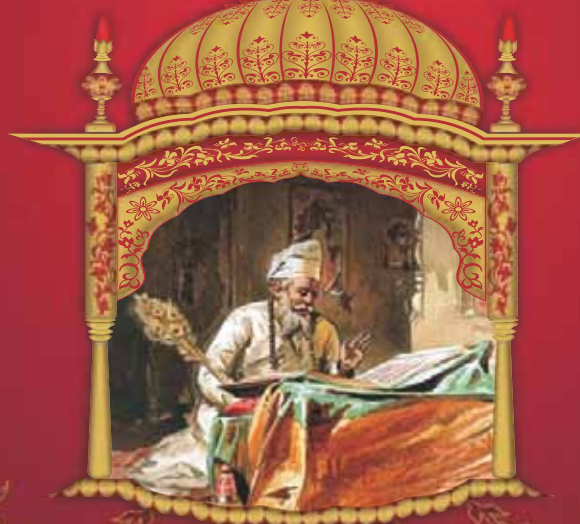


ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ ।।

*The Book is the Abode of God.*

# Guru Granth Sahib

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Dr. Mohinder Singh

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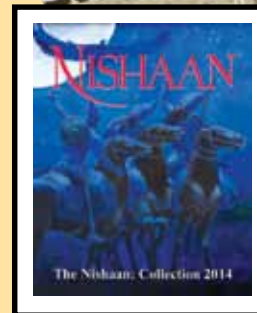
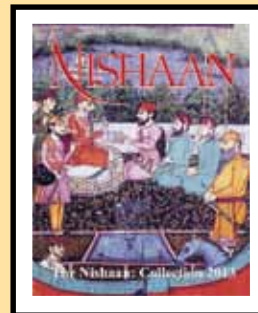
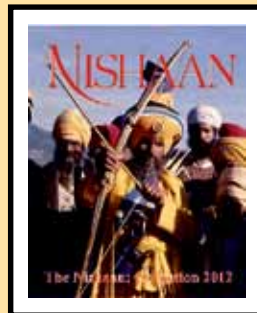
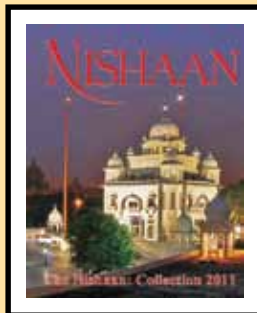
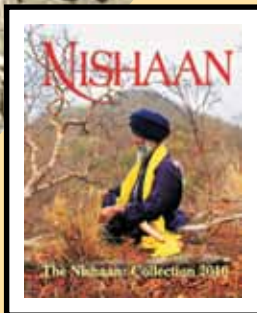
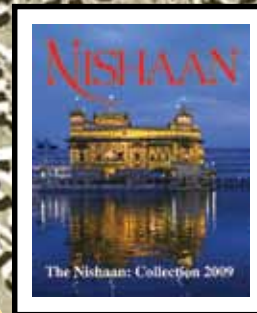
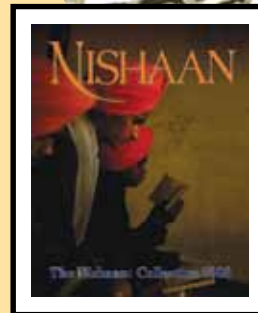
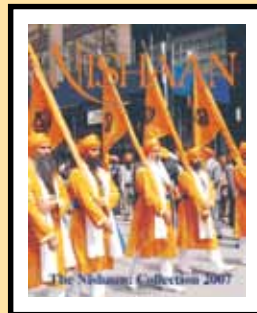
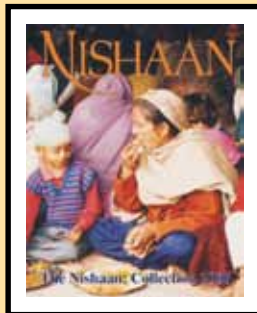
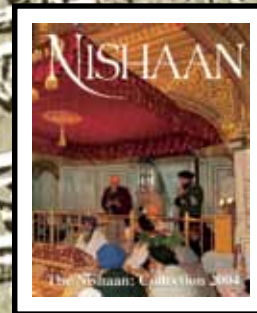
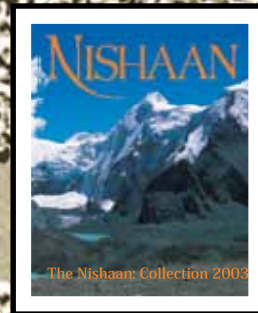
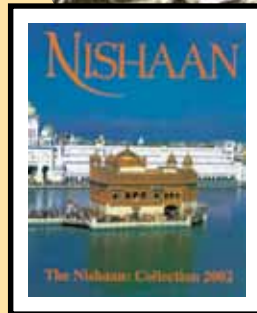
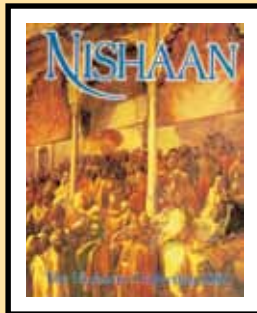
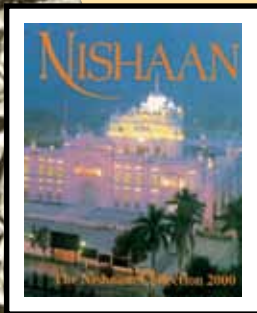
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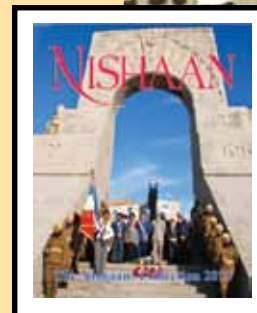
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