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Pitching it Straight



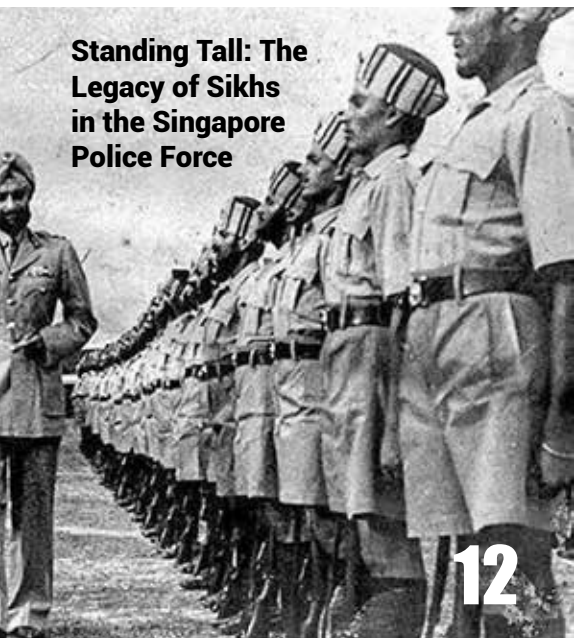
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EDITORIAL

Legacy of Guru Gobind Singh

Successful human movements rest on two structures: developmental initiatives, and periods of consolidation. Both phases progressed apace throughout the Guru period and the short eventful life of Guru Gobind Singh. His mission was critical to Sikh identity and to formalization of institutions that, thanks to the earlier Gurus, existed in nascent form.

With Guru Gobind Singh rested the pivotal responsibility of coalescing and melding them into a grand design for lasting purpose. I point to some inter-related themes that define the many splendored reality of Sikhi today.

The Meeri-Peeri doctrine elaborated by Guru Hargobind flowered under Guru Gobind Singh. From this arises the holistic primal idea of Sikh being a *Saint-Soldier* in life.

Guru Gobind Singh formulated four transformational events/precepts: 1. The rite of Amrit – a defining marker of Sikh identity; 2. As a free people Sikhs keep arms and are prepared to defend freedom; 3. The Guru Granth Sahib henceforth to be the repository of Sikh spiritual heritage; 4. Temporal authority to reside in the Sikh Panth acting in awareness of the spiritual primacy of Guru Granth.

It follows from this that there was to be an end to the line of Gurus in human form.

From this modest beginning Guru Gobind Singh led the Sikh nation that now is a significant presence in the world.

War had been thrust on Sikhs. What were the terms of engagement? What ends justify armed insurrection? What's a just war and what is not? Guru Gobind Singh clarified these issues by his conduct and in his composition, the *Zafarnama*.

War is not for pillaging, seizing people, or territory. Weapons are drawn only when all other means fail. Negotiations for peace continue even during war. Weapons are laid down whenever the foe appears so attuned. The enemy who surrenders or is captured is to be treated honorably. Finally, to be humble in victory, graceful in defeat.

Without the five articles of faith Sikhi would have been rapidly swallowed into the all-embracing tent of varied practices that define Hinduism. I buttress my argument with case studies of Buddhism, and Jainism. Both Indic religions are doctrinally distinct from Hinduism, yet their identity has been largely subsumed within Hinduism; neither retains much of an independent existence. Buddhism was at one time a powerhouse in numbers within India but no longer, though it remains a growing presence outside India.

Most people, including Sikhs, opt for one of two choices when they weigh the legacy of Guru Gobind Singh. Some see his contributions as independently transformative but disconnected from the Sikhi of Guru Nanak; thus, they miss their collective impact. Or else, they view Guru Gobind Singh as sharply departing from the peaceful path of Guru Nanak. Either way the continuing coherence of the Sikh way from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh is lost.

I ask you to reject such binary choices. Every action of Guru Gobind Singh is rooted in the life and teachings of his nine predecessor Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh's life and work embody the final integrative chapter on the development of the Sikh message. He was the master-weaver on the complex tapestry that is Sikhi today.

I.J. SINGH

‘Vismaad’ – The Awe Factor

Bhupinder ‘Bo’ Singh

What is awe? It is usually an emotion that is a combination of wonder, reverential respect and even a fear of sorts that makes one bewildered or completely enamoured.

Guru Nanak Devji has devoted an entire *shlok* in *Aasaa-De-Vaar* to describe the feeling of awe, which we will explore here. Guruji feels the awe in the created world and uses the word *vismaad* to describe that wondrous experience, which surprises the mind. Before exploring the *shlok* by let us first see what and how the scientific world describes it.

Awe is an emotional response to perceptually vast stimuli that transcend current frames of reference. “Awe has two phases,” says Daniel Stancato, a researcher at the University of California, Berkeley, who studies the impact of awe on emotional health. Awe arises when a person perceives something “so strikingly vast that it transcends one’s current frame of reference,” he opines. Next, awe forces someone to change his or her beliefs or worldview in order to make sense of the experience. Dacher Keltner and Jonathan Haidt in their paper in 2003 have concluded that awe has two aspects:

- Perceived vastness : anything that is experienced as being much larger than the self or self’s ordinary level of experience or frame of reference.
- Accommodation : a reshaping of our existing understanding of the world.

Stancato is the co-author of a 2015 paper that associated awe-inspiring experiences with positive social emotions, including generosity, selflessness, and ethical decision-making. Its major finding was that experiencing awe “can increase ‘prosociality,’ or inclinations to care for, share with and assist other people.” A 2019 study published in ‘Frontiers in Psychology’ found that experiencing awe led to decrease in self-importance. Other documented benefits include – humility, decreased materialism, spiritual feeling, connectedness, positive mood and wellbeing, life satisfaction etc.

Here’s how Guru Nanak Devji has described his experience of awe:

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਨਾਦ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਵੇਦ ॥ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਜੀਅ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਭੇਦ ॥

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਰੰਗ ॥ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਨਾਗੇ ਫਿਰਹਿ ਜੰਤ ॥

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਪਉਣੁ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਪਾਣੀ ॥

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਅਗਨੀ ਖੇਡਹਿ ਵਿਡਾਣੀ ॥

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਧਰਤੀ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਖਾਣੀ ॥

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਸਾਦਿ ਲਗਹਿ ਪਰਾਣੀ ॥

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਸੰਜੋਗੁ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਵਿਜੋਗੁ ॥ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਭੁਖ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਭੋਗੁ ॥

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਸਿਫਤਿ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਸਾਲਾਹ ॥ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਉਝੜ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਰਾਹ ॥

ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਨੇੜੈ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਦੂਰਿ ॥ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਦੇਖੈ ਹਾਜਰਾ ਹਜ਼ੂਰਿ ॥

ਵੇਖਿ ਵਿਡਾਣੁ ਰਹਿਆ ਵਿਸਮਾਦੁ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਬੁਝਣੁ ਪੂਰੈ ਭਾਗਿ ॥੧॥

“Vismaad naad vismaad ved. Vismaad je-a vismaad bhed.

Vismaad roop vismaad rang. Vismaad nagnae phireh jant.

Vismaad pa-un vismaad paanee. Vismaad agneekhaydeh vidaanee.

Vismaad dhartee vismaad khaanee. Vismaad saad lageh paraanee.

Vismaad sanjog vismaad vijog. Vismaad bhukh vismaad bhog.

Vismaad sifath vismaad saalaah. Vismaad ujharh vismaad raah.

Vismaad nayrhay vismaad door(h). Vismaad daykhay haajraa hajoor.

Vaiykh vidaan rahi-aa vismaad. Nanak bujhan poorai bhaag. ||1||”

(SGGS, Pg. No. 463)

Translation: I am wonderstruck observing that somewhere the wind is blowing and somewhere water is flowing. It is amazing how the fire is displaying its own astonishing plays. I am wonderfully astonished upon looking at this earth sustaining the creatures from multiple sources (e.g. egg, womb, earth, perspiration, etc) of birth. It is amazing, how the mortals are involved in the enjoyment of Your bounties. Astonishing is the experience of people being united or separated. O’ God, it is hard to believe that somewhere there is acute hunger and at other places things in plenty and voraciously being enjoyed. Somewhere the Creator is being praised and eulogised. Wonderful is straying-away (from the *Hukam* - divine commands) and wonderful is treading on the nicely

laid out paths. It is just astonishing to see this wondrous play of Yours. It is amazing that someone says that You are very near; yet another says that You are far off, while still others see You right beside them (pervading everywhere). Beholding these wonders, I am wonderstruck. O' Nanak, those who understand these astounding wonders of Yours are blessed with perfect destiny. In this shlok, Guru Nank has articulated how the **nature-awe** was experienced by him.

The sheer size, variety, spectacle, grandeur and brilliance of nature and its miracles are noticed and admired. Gurujī has other *shabads* where the experience of awe has also been shared as in *So Dar* and *Aarti*. When awe enters the mind, then the thought of 'I know it all' goes away, along with associated ego. When we feel incomplete, we become capable of experiencing awe or *vismaad*. That realisation immediately makes one feel as if we are a part of something bigger, longer lasting, mesmerising, and amazing. This feeling was captured by Gurujī in the last line in the *shabad* above, which can be termed as **spiritual-awe**. Similarly, Guru Arjan Devji has described that same experience in these words:

ਬਿਸਮਨ ਬਿਸਮ ਭਏ ਬਿਸਮਾਦ ॥

"Bisaman bisam bhe bisamaadh."

(SGGS, Pg. No. 285)

Translation: *Gazing upon His wondrous wonder, I am wonder-struck and amazed!*

ਬਿਸਮੁ ਪੇਖੈ ਬਿਸਮੁ ਸੁਣੀਐ ਬਿਸਮਾਦੁ ਨਦਰੀ ਆਇਆ ॥

"Bisam pekhai bisam suniai bismad nadree aieea."

(SGGS, Pg. No. 778)

Translation: *I gaze upon the Wondrous nature and listen to the Wondrous sounds; the Wondrous Lord has come into my vision.*

The feeling of awe in the experience of potency of Wonderous Lord is expressed in these words by Gurujī:

ਤੂੰ ਅਚਰਜੁ ਕੁਦਰਤਿ ਤੇਰੀ ਬਿਸਮਾ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

"Tu acharaj kudharat teree bisamaa. 1. Rahaau."

(SGGS, Pg. No. 563)

Translation: *You are wonderful! Your creative potency is awe inspiring! ||1||Pause||*

The final experience of awe is the experience of **self-awe**, where there is an understanding of self within a larger context of the entire creation. That experience has been captured in the Gurbani in the words of Guru Nanak Devji as follows:

ਵਾਹੁ ਖਸਮ ਤੂ ਵਾਹੁ ਜਿਨਿ ਰਚਿ ਰਚਨਾ ਹਮ ਕੀਏ ॥
ਸਾਗਰ ਲਹਰਿ ਸਮੁੰਦ ਸਰ ਵੇਲਿ ਵਰਸ ਵਰਾਹੁ ॥
ਆਪਿ ਖੜੋਵਹਿ ਆਪਿ ਕਰਿ ਆਪੀਐ ਆਪਾਹੁ ॥

*"Vaahu khasam tu vaahu jin rach rachanaa ham ke'ee.
Saagar lahar samundh sar vel varas varaahu. Aap
khaRoveh aap kar aapeenai aapaahu."*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 788)

Translation: *Wow! Wow! You are wonderful and great, O Lord and Master; You created the creation, and made us. You made the waters, waves, oceans, pools, plants, clouds, and mountains. You Yourself stand in the midst of what You Yourself created.*

Here we can see that the self is viewed as one of the creations, which is a realistic assessment, unlike the feeling of the self being the centre of the universe as with an egoistic. This experience witnesses the creator in the midst of creation and not separate from it. We have become accustomed to living a life on autopilot and have forgotten our innate ability to experience awe. We need to start by bringing our awareness to it and spending time in nature, trying to see the creator's manifestation in everything that we observe in nature. The experience of the awareness of **self-awe**, akin to a sort of deep observation and insight has been shared by Guru Arjan Devji in these words:

ਸੁੰਨ ਸਮਾਧਿ ਅਨਹਤ ਤਹ ਨਾਦ ॥

ਕਹਨੁ ਨ ਜਾਈ ਅਚਰਜ ਬਿਸਮਾਦ ॥

"Su(n)n samaadh anahat teh naadh.

Kahan na jaiee acharaj bisamaadh."

(SGGS, Pg. No. 293)

Translation: The Deepest Samaadhi, and the unstruck sound current of the *Naad* are there. The wonder and marvel of it cannot be described.

That '*Su(n)n Samaadh*' that Gurujī has described is essentially stillness, silence, calmness, and a total absence of fluctuations resulting from torrents of thoughts in the mind. That calmness and blissful feeling gives birth to the feeling of awe and ecstasy, which is expressed by Gurujī as *acharaj bisaadh*. According to the Gurbani, that experience is so exhilarating that one does not know its limit, not does one want to come out of it, and only the words of awe come out:

ਇਆ ਮੰਦਰ ਮਹਿ ਕੋਨ ਬਸਾਈ ॥

ਤਾ ਕਾ ਅੰਤੁ ਨ ਕੋਊ ਪਾਈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

"Eiaa ma(n)dhar meh koon basaiee.

Taa kaa a(n)t na kouo payee. 1. Rahaau."

(SGGS, Pg. No. 871)

Translation: *Then what is it, which dwells in this temple of the body? No one can find its limits. ||1||Pause||*

In conclusion, let us try to summarise the experience of *vismaad* from Guru Nanak Devji's *shlok* described above and try to imbibe it in our existence as well.

The elements that comprise the ethereal and surreal aspects of nature include:

1. Sounds (including music) : Guru ji is awestruck by the variety of sounds from humans, animals, birds, nature, musical instruments and so on.
2. Scriptures (Ved) : Guru ji is in awe of the written word, and the depth of knowledge the words convey is mindboggling.
3. Living Beings : Guruji is awed by the sheer variety, colour, shapes, and their unique distinctions, movements and identity.
4. Unique Appearances : The range, variety of forms, and species that change forms makes Guruji awestruck.
5. Colours : The sheer variety of colours and permutations and combinations of hues in nature, species and vegetation transports Guruji in awe.
6. Animals : Even the sight of animal creatures wandering around naked, unashamed takes Guru ji in awe as it leads him to ponder why humans have to cover themselves.
7. Air : It sustains life, refreshes and its blowing and howling creates natural phenomenon that creates a sense of awe.
8. Water : It is again essential for life, quenches thirst and how it assumes shape of containers it is poured into amazes Guru ji. The term encompasses all liquids and vapours becoming steam, ice, snow, hail, thunder, and lightning and so on.
9. Fire : The source of heat, warmth, with its dazzling display and ability to transform fills Guruji with wonder.
10. Earth : Wondrous is the earth that is the source, nurturer, sustainer, and supporter of all forms of life.

11. Sources of birth : Guruji is awed by the sources of birth – womb, egg, from the earth as plants, from the secretion as sweat, microbes, bacteria, etc.

12. Tastes and pleasures : Guruji is even awed by the variety of tastes that abound and pleasure the species relish from those tastes that are enjoyed through the five senses.

13. Union and Separation : Experiences entailing meeting (union) and separation (death) awe Guruji.
14. Hunger and Copious Consumption : Pangs of hunger and indulgences in copious amounts makes Guruji awestruck.
15. Praises and Adoration (of Almighty) : Guruji is in awe of those engage in praises and adoration.
16. Wilderness and Paved Path – Guruji even finds awe in those straying in the wilderness, the less chosen path, as well as in those treading on the paved path of 'praise and adoration.'
17. Closeness and Distance : Some see Almighty as very intimately close while others feel His separation and distance, which puts Guruji in awe.
18. Awe Factor : Seeing all these diverse wonders, Guruji is awestruck, and exclaims that this mystery of awe is only experienced through good fortune.

This is the type of experience that humans have always longed for. However, to gain a fraction of that grandeur many make use of intoxicants, drugs, herbs, medicines, exercise, yoga postures, and even prayers.

But Guruji explains that everyone can experience the feeling of awe. All we need is to spend more time in nature with awareness. Those who are blessed experience the awe, and get freed from the attachment to the material world. Instead, they get attuned to the Creator, who is full of wonders:

ਬਿਸਮ ਬਿਨੋਦ ਰਹੇ ਪਰਮਾਦੀ ॥ ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਮਾਨਿਆ ਏਕ ਲਿਵ ਲਾਗੀ ॥

*"Bisam binodh rahe paramaadhee.
Gurmat maaniaa ek liv laagee."*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 1342)

Translation: *The exciting and intoxicating worldly plays come to an end, for those who accept the Guru's teachings, and become lovingly attuned to the One Lord.*

Bhupinder 'Bo' Singh is a Houston based businessman & an engineer by profession. He hails from Myanmar & educated in India. He is passionate on Sikh history, spirituality & an author of seven books.

The Concept of Gur Gaddi in Sikhi: Shabad Guru shows the path

Dr. Prithipal Singh

Sikhi is 'a way of life.' It allows followers to remain attached to the almighty while carrying out their daily routine. Those who adopt this belief are known as Sikhs. The term 'Sikh' comes from the Sanskrit word *shishya* meaning disciple or student. Thus, Sikhs are disciples or students, who are dedicated to the teachings of the gurus. Their daily life is governed by a practical application of their understanding of the basic tenets of their faith.

The faith originated with the advent of Guru Nanak Ji, recognized as a spiritual teacher or philosopher or guide. He is referred to as the founder of Sikhi and the first occupant of the "Gur Gaddi" – the seat of religious authority. He was followed by nine Guru Sahibans – "Spiritual messengers or masters". The ten Masters occupied the Gur Gaddi for 239 years (from 1469 to 1708). The Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh Ji, then anointed the "Sacred Scripture" as "The Eternal Guru", the sole occupant of the "Gur Gaddi".

This entire history of succession from Guru Nanak to Guru Tegh Bahadur has been beautifully described by Guru Gobind Singh Ji in his famous composition *Bachittar Natak*. This is considered to be a brief autobiography and is divided into 14 Chapters. Chapter 3 describes the emergence of the Bedi and Sodhi clans. Of the 10 Guru Sahibans, Guru Nanak belonged to the Bedi clan while seven others, from Guru Ramdas to Guru Gobind Singh belonged to the Sodhi clan.

The ten Guru Sahibans in the Sikh pantheon lived exemplary lives and set a worthy spiritual and moral code not only for their followers but for all humanity. They enabled followers to awaken higher consciousness and lead fulfilling lives with dignity, freedom and honour. The first and foremost requirement of following this is the need to recognise the almighty as the one and only supreme guide for all matters of moral and spiritual growth.

The Succession of the Gur Gaddi

The history of succession in the Sikh pantheon is very interesting. It is founded on a proper understanding of spirituality, humility, devotion and selfless service. It is not hereditary (in the literal/common sense) and the successor was required to prove their credentials to be anointed as the next occupant of the Gur Gaddi.

The Sikh religion originated with the agman or arrival of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Interestingly, there is mention about the *agman* of Guru Nanak in several ancient texts, such as the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*. Bhai Kirpal Singh Gill has provided an excellent account of these. For example, in the *Rig Ved*, *Mandala 7, Mantara 5*, there is a mention that when in the mortal world, sinful ways will be on the rise and noble behaviour will diminish, a prophet of the *khatiri* clan shall come and guide the people through ten individual forms. This also records the fact that Guru Nanak of the Bedi clan would preach religious ways. This avatar would be a householder as well as a raj yogi (a

person who is revered as a ruler and leads a spiritual life.) Interestingly, the *Rig Ved* is a 5000-years-old scripture and it was recorded some 4500 years before the advent of Guru Nanak. (Bhai Kirpal Singh Gill. *Prophecies about Guru Nanak in Vedas*. ETERNAL VOICE, Vol. 1, 08)

The Founder of Sikhism

Guru Nanak Dev Ji had two sons, Baba Srichand and Bhai Laxman Das. He realised that they would not be worthy successors to his philosophy and his disciple Bhai Lehna Ji was recognised as having imbibed his true teachings. He was accordingly regarded as the ang or a part of the same spiritual personality of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Therefore, he was named Guru Angad Dev Ji, the successor to Guru Nanak Dev Ji. There was no family relationship or hereditary succession. Guru Nanak Dev Ji remained a spiritual guide and led the life of a common man for a few years when Guru Angad Dev Ji occupied the Gur Gaddi. This was no ordinary succession. It is firmly believed that the same light or jyot passed on from Guru Nanak to Guru Angad. This was evident in the Guru's bani or the Guru's compositions or Shabad Guru as the path for understanding the new religion. The sacred compositions of Guru Nanak Dev Ji were recorded in pothis which were handed over to Guru Angad Dev Ji.

This succession has been described by the scholar Bhai Gurdas Ji (*Vaar 1, Pauri 45*) as follows:

ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਵਾਰ 1 ਪਉੜੀ 45
 ਥਾਪਿਆ ਲਹਿਣਾ ਜੀਵਦੇ ਗੁਰਿਆਈ ਸਿਰਿ
 ਛਤੁ ਢਿਰਾਇਆ
 ਜੇਤੀ ਜੇਤਿ ਮਿਲਾਇਕੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਰੂਪ
 ਵਟਾਇਆ

ਲਖਿ ਨ ਕੋਈ ਸਕਈ ਆਚਰਹੇ ਆਚਰਜ ਦਿਖਾਇਆ
 ਕਾਇਆ ਪਲਟਿ ਸਰੂਪ ਬਣਾਇਆ

*Thaapiaa Lahinaa Jeenvaday
 Guriaaee Siri Chhatr Firaaiiaa |
 Jotee Joti Milaai Kai Satigur Naanaki
 Roopu Vataaiiaa |*

*lakh I N Koe Sakae Aacharajay
 Aacharaju Dikhaaiiaa |*

Kaaiaa Palati Saroopu Banaaiiaa ||45 ||

During his life time He (Guru Nanak) waved the canopy of the Gur Gaddi on the head of Lehna (Guru Angad) and merged his own light into him. Guru Nanak now transformed himself.

This mystery is incomprehensible for anybody that awe-inspiring (Nanak) accomplished a wonderful task. He converted (his body) into a new form. There is also a composition in the Guru Granth Sahib by the bards Balwand and Satta as follows:

ਰਾਮਕਲੀ ਕੀ ਵਾਰ (ਅੰਗ 966)

ਨਾਨਕਿ ਰਾਜੂ ਚਲਾਇਆ ਸਚੁ ਕੋਟੁ ਸਤਾਈ ਨੀਵੈ ਦੈ
 ਲਹਵੇ ਧਰਿਉਨੁ ਛਤੁ ਸਿਰਿ ਕਰਿ ਸਿਫਤੀ
 ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਪੀਵੈ

ਮਤਿ ਗੁਰ ਆਤਮ ਦੇਵ ਦੀ ਖੜਗਿ ਜੋਰਿ
 ਪਰਾਕੁਇ ਜੀਅ ਦੈ

ਗੁਰਿ ਚੇਲੇ ਰਹਰਾਸਿ ਕੀਈ ਨਾਨਕਿ
 ਸਲਾਮਤਿ ਥੀਵੈ

ਸ਼ਹਿ ਟਿਕਾ ਦਿਤੋਸੁ ਜੀਵਦੇ

ਲਹਣੇ ਦੀ ਢੇਰਾਈਐ ਨਾਨਕਾ ਦੇਹੀ ਖਟੀਐ
 ਤੋਤਿ ਓਹਾ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਸਾਇ ਸਹਿ ਕਾਇਆ
 ਫੇਰਿ ਪਲਟੀਐ

Ram Kali ki Vaar (SGGS 966)

*Naanak Raaj Chalaaiiaa Sach Kott
 Sathaanee Neev Dhai ||*

*Lehnae Dharioun Shhath Sir Kar
 Sifathee Anmrith Peevadhai ||*

*Math Gur Aatham Dhaev Dhee
 Kharrag Jor Paraakue Jee Dhai ||*

*Gur Chaelae Reharaas Keeee Naanak
 Salaamath Thheevadhai ||*

Sehi Ttikaa Dhithos Jeevadhai ||1||

*Lehnae Dhee Faeraaeai Naanakaa
 Dhohee Khatteeai ||*

*Joth Ouhaa Jugath Saae Sehi Kaaeiaa
 Faer Palatteeai ||*

Nanak established the kingdom; He built the true fortress on the strongest foundations.

He installed the royal canopy over Lehna's head; chanting the Lord's praises, He drank in the ambrosial nectar.

The Guru implanted the almighty sword of the teachings to illuminate his soul.

The Guru bowed down to His disciple, while Nanak was still alive.

The King, while still alive, applied the ceremonial mark to his forehead. ||1||

Nanak proclaimed
 Lehna's succession
 – he earned
 it.

They shared the One Light and the same way; the King just changed His body.

Guru Angad Dev Ji (the second Nanak) occupied the Gur Gaddi for about 13 years (from 1539) before anointing his successor, Guru Amardas Ji in 1552. Guru Angad Dev Ji also had two sons – Baba Dasu and Baba Dattu, and two daughters – Bibi Amro and Bibi Anokhi. The melodious rendering of gurbani by Bibi Amro, in her marital home, brought Amar Das Ji to the Guru's Darbar. Baba Amar Das Ji was about ten years younger than Guru Nanak and met Guru Angad Dev Ji (25 years younger than him) at the age of 61, which was many years after the passing away of the first Guru. He served Guru Angad Dev Ji with total dedication for about twelve years and established His understanding of spirituality. This led to his spiritual recognition by Guru Angad Dev Ji who anointed him as his successor. The ascendance of Guru Amar Das as the third Nanak has been recorded in a composition in the Guru Granth Sahib (Ang 1395 *Aap Narayan Kaladhar Jag Mein Parvaroah*, which translates to: the Lord Himself wielded His Power and entered the world). He occupied the Gur Gaddi for 22 years (from the age of 73 to 95).

Guru Amar Das Ji (like Guru Angad Dev Ji) had two sons – Baba Mohan and Baba Mohri, and two daughters – Bibi Bhani and Bibi Dhani. However, he anointed his son-in-law Bhai Jetha Ji as the fourth Nanak, naming him Ram Das (meaning servant of the lord). Chroniclers suggest that this greatly upset Baba Mohan, who had expected to be the successor to his Father. Guru Amar Das Ji, however, recognised the devotion and spirituality in Bhai Jetha Ji and ensured his succession to the Gur Gaddi. According to the description by Satta and Balwand as recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib (Ang 968 – *Dhan Dhan Ram Das Guru Jin siriaa Thinaa savaraiaa*: Blessed, Blessed is Guru Ramdas; He who created you, has also exalted you).

The ascendance of Guru Ram Das as the fourth Nanak was a 'real blessing.' Historical sakhis also mention the Bibi Bhani requesting her father, Guru Amar Das Ji, to grant the Gur Gaddi to her husband's family.

The fourth Nanak, Guru Ram Das Ji occupied the Gur Gaddi for seven years (from the age of 44 in 1574 till he turned 51 in 1581. He had three sons, Baba Prithi Chand, Baba Mahan Dev, and Guru Arjan Dev. The young Arjan was blessed by his maternal grandfather, Guru Amar Das Ji, and imbibed spirituality during his childhood. He provided many instances of his understanding of Guru Nanak's philosophies and that of the other Guru Sahibans. He was anointed as the successor to his father at the young age of 18 years in 1581. He thus became the first occupant of the Gur Gaddi who was born and raised in the Guru's household. This upset his elder brother Baba Prithi Chand, who did not reconcile with the idea that he was denied the Gur Gaddi, which he felt was his right according to the Law of Primogeniture (being the first born). A composition by Satta and Balwand' is recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib (Ang 968 - *Chaarae Jaagee Chahu Jugee, Panchaaein Aapae Hoaa*: the four Gurus enlightened the four ages; the lord himself assumed the fifth form) to describe the ascendance of Guru Arjan as the fifth Nanak. There is also a composition by Bhat Mathura announcing the anointment of Arjan Dev as the fifth Nanak:

ਸਵਈਏ ਮ 5 (ਅੰਗ 1409)

ਮਥਰਾ ਜਨ ਕੇ ਪੁਤ੍ਰ ਕੇ ਦੀਨ ਦਯਾਲੂ ਹੈ
ਸੰਗਤਿ ਸਿਰਿਸਿ ਨਿਹਾਲੁ ਕਰੀ

ਰਾਮਦਾਸਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਗ ਤਾਰਨ ਕਉ ਗੁਰ ਜੋਤਿ
ਅਰਜਨ ਮਾਹਿ ਧਰੀ

Savaaya M. 5 (SGGS 1409)

*Mathhuraa Jan Ko Prabh Dheen
Dhayaal Hai Sangath Srist Nihaal
Karee|| Raamadhaas Guroo Jag
Thaaran Ko Gur Joth Arajun Maahi
Dhharee ||4|*

The God of Mat'huraa is Merciful to the meek; He blesses and uplifts the Sangats throughout the Universe.

Guru Raam Daas, to save the world, enshrined the Guru's Light into Guru Arjun. ||4||

When Guru Arjan was martyred at Lahore, he was succeeded by his only son Hargovind, who became the sixth Nanak in the Sikh pantheon. He was only 11 years old and shouldered the responsibility of leading the followers with spirituality and valour for 38 years. A composition of Guru Arjan announcing the birth of his son is recorded in the Guru Granth Sahib (Ang 396 - *Sat Guru Saachai Dheea Bhaej, Chir Jeevan Oupajiaa Sanjog*: the true Guru has truly given a child. The long-lived one has been born to His destiny). This also led to a continuation of the Gur Gaddi in the Sodhi family of Guru Ram Das Ji.

Bhai Gurdas Ji (Vaar 1, pauri 48) records the fact that after Guru Hargovind, four more Gurus would occupy the Gurgaddi.

ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ ਜੀ ਵਾਰ 1 ਪਉੜੀ 48

ਪੰਜਿ ਪਿਆਲੇ ਪੰਜ ਪੀਰ ਛਠਮੁ ਪੀਰੁ ਬੈਠਾ
ਗੁਰੁ ਭਾਰੀ

ਅਰਜਨ ਕਾਇਆ ਪਲਟਿਕੈ ਮੂਰਤਿ
ਹਰਿਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਚਾਰੀ

ਚਲੀ ਪੀੜੀ ਸੋਢੀਆ ਰੂਪੁ ਦਿਖਾਵਣਿ ਵਾਰੇ
ਵਾਰੀ ਦਲਭੰਜਨ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੂਰਮਾ ਵਡ ਜੇਧਾ ਬਹੁ
ਪਰਉਕਾਰੀ

ਪੁਛਨਿ ਸਿਖ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ਕਰਿ ਛਿਅ ਮਹਲਾਂ
ਤਕਿ ਦਰਸੁ ਨਿਹਾਰੀ

ਅਗਮ ਅਗੋਚਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਬੋਲੇ ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਸੁਣਹੁ
ਸੰਸਾਰੀਕਲਿਜੁਗਿ ਪੀੜੀ ਸੋਢੀਆਂ ਨਿਹਚਲ
ਨੀਵ ਉਸਾਰਿ ਖਲਾਰੀ

ਜੁਗਿ ਜੁਗਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਧਰੇ ਅਵਤਾਰੀ

*Panji Piaalay Panji Peer Chhathhamu
Peeru Baithhaa Guru Bhaaree |*

*Arajanu Kaaiaa Palati Kai Moorati
Harigobind Savaaree |*

*Chalee Peerhee Soddheea Roopu
Dikhaavani Vaaro Vaaree |*

*Thhalibhanjan Guru Sooramaa Vad
Jodhaa Bahu Praupakaaree |*

*Puchhani Sikh Aradaasi Kari Chhia
Mahalaan Taki Darasu Nihaaree |*

*Agam Agochar Satiguroo Bolay Mukh
Tay Sunahu Sansaaree |*

Kalijugu Peerhee Soddheeaan

*Nihachal Neenv Usaari Khalaaree |
Jugi Jugi Satiguru Dharay Avataaree
||48 ||*

(From Guru Nanak to Guru Arjan Dev) Five pirs were there who drank from the five cups (of truth, contentment, compassion, dharama, discerning wisdom), and now the sixth great pir is holding the Guruship.

Arjan (Dev) transformed himself into Harigobind and sat majestically.

Now the Sodhi lineage has started and they all will show their selves turn by turn.

This Guru, the vanquisher of armies, is very brave and benevolent.

The Sikhs prayed and asked that they have seen the six Gurus (how many more are to come).

The true Guru, the knower of the unknowable and seer of the invisible told the Sikhs to listen to.

The lineage of the Sodhis has been established on the sound foundation.

Four (yuga 2, yuga 2 i.e. 2+2=4) more Gurus will come to earth.

Guru Hargovind was not directly succeeded by his son but the next Guru, the seventh Nanak was Guru Hargovind's grandson, Har Rai (the son of Bhai Gurditta Ji - the eldest son of Guru Hargovind). He was 14 years old and occupied the Gur Gaddi for 17 years.

Guru Har Rai Ji anointed his young five-year-old son Guru Har Kishan, as the eighth Nanak in 1661. He occupied the Gur Gaddi for less than three years. When young Guru Har Kishan fell victim to small pox in Delhi in March 1664, he fulfilled his spiritual responsibilities by announcing that the next Guru would be his baba or grandfather. This referred to the younger brother of his real grandfather (Baba Gurditta Ji) and the youngest son of the sixth Nanak (Guru Hargovind) who had been sent to Bakala with his mother, Mata Nanaki. Historians have recorded that as many as 33 claimants set up their institutions for recognition as the

true successors to the eighth Nanak. But, a devoted trader, Lakhi Shah Wanjara, recognised the true Guru and proclaimed that Tegh Bahadur was the ninth Nanak.

After a year of the announcement made by Guru Har Krishan Ji, Guru Tegh Bahadur occupied the Gur Gaddi in March 1665 at the age of 44 years. He did not succeed his father Guru Hargovind directly, but waited for 21 years. He spent this time in meditation and channelised his thoughts to understanding spirituality and the philosophy of his predecessors. After ten years of occupying the Gur Gaddi, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji (like his grandfather, Guru Arjan Dev Ji) became the second of the Guru Sahibans to be martyred by the Mughal rulers.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji mentions this 'supreme act of sacrifice' in his composition Bachitar Natak as follows:

ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਬਿੰਦ ਸਿਘ ਜੀ (ਬਚਿਤ੍ਰ ਨਾਟਕ)
ਠੀਕਰ ਫੋਣ ਦਲੀਸ਼ ਸਰ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪੁਰ ਕੀਆ ਪੇਯਾਨ
ਤੇਗੁ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ ਕਰੀ ਨ ਕਿਨਹੂ ਆਨ
ਤੇਗੁ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਕੇ ਚਲਤ ਭਯੋ ਜਗਤ ਕੇ ਸੋਗ
ਹੇ ਹੇ ਹੇ ਸਭ ਜਗ ਭਯੋ ਜੇ ਜੇ ਜੇ ਸੁਰ ਲੋਗ
“*Thekar phor Dilash siir Prabh Pur
kiya Payan*

*Teg Bahadur se kriia kari N kinahu
Aan*||15||

*Teg Bahadur ke chalet bhayo
jagat ko sog*

*Hai Hai Hai sab jug bhayo Jai Jai Jai
sur log*||16||

Guru Tegh Bahadur broke His earthly vase on the head of the Emperor of Delhi; And went to the Abode of God.

No one has ever done such a unique deed as did Guru Tegh Bahadur.

On the Ascent of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the whole world went into mourning. Alas! Alas! rose the wailing cries from the earth;

While the shouts of Glory! Glory! resounded the heavens.”

Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the only son of the ninth Nanak occupied the Gur Gaddi after the martyrdom of his father in 1675 at the age of nine. After 33 years of occupying the Gur Gaddi, Guru Gobind Singh then anointed the holy scripture – the Granth Sahib as his successor. This has been explained in his last sermon at Nanded by Guru Gobind Singh Ji as follows

ਸਿਖ ਰਹਿਤ ਮਰਯਾਦਾ (ਸਰੋਮਣੀ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਾ
ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧਕ ਕਮੇਟੀ)

ਆਗਿਆ ਭਈ ਅਕਾਲ ਕੀ ਤਬੀ ਚਲਾਯੋ ਪੰਥ
“ਸੱਬ ਸੱਖਿਣ ਕੇ ਹੁਕਮ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨਯੋ ਗੁਰੰਥ”
ਗੁਰੂ ਗੰਥ ਜੀ ਮਾਨਿਓ ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਗੁਰਾ ਕੀ ਦੇਹ
ਜੇ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਕੇ ਮਿਲਬੇ ਚਹੈ ਖੋਜ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਮੈ ਲੇਹ
“*Agya bhaiee akal ki tabhi chala
panth*

*Saab sikhon ko hukam hai Guru
Manyo Granth.*

*Guru Granth Ji Manyo Pargat Guran
ki Deh*

*Jo Prabh ko Milboche Khoj
Shabad mai Leh”*

The message of The Almighty has come, the Panth has to continue

All Sikhs are commanded to take the Granth as Guru.

Accept the Guru Granth as “The Eternal Guru”

Those who wish to meet The Almighty look towards the Shabad

(in “The Eternal Guru”)

Finally, since 1708, The Guru Granth Sahib remains the ‘sole occupant’ of the Gur Gaddi, thus being recognised as ‘the eternal Guru.’ In this context, Dr. Bhai Harbans Lal has emphasised that “we did not adopt a book as Guru. We adopted shabad or hymns of Guru Granth as our Guru.”

It is very important to understand the fact that the Guru Granth Sahib represents the Shabad Guru. It serves as the ‘medium or carrier for holding together’ the bani. This concept is based on a composition of Guru Arjan Dev Ji as follows:

ਸ਼ਾਰਗ ਮਹਲਾ 5 (ਅੰਗ 1226)

ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਥਾਨ

ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਗੁਣ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਪੂਰਨ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ
ਗਿਆਨੁ

Saarag Mehalaa 5 || (Ang 1226)

Pothhee Paramaesar Kaa Thhaan ||

*Saadhasang Gaavehi Gun Gobindh
Pooran Braham Giaan ||1|| Rehaao ||*

This Holy Book is the home of the Transcendent Lord God.

Whoever sings the Glorious Praises of the Lord of the Universe in the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy, has the perfect knowledge of God. ||1||Pause||

Guru Ramdas Ji’s Shabad emphasises the need to ‘act according to the words of the Guru’s bani’

ਨਾਟ ਮਹਲਾ 4 (ਅੰਗ 982)

ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ
ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਰੇ

ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਹੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨੁ ਮਾਨੈ ਪਰਤਖਿ
ਗੁਰੂ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ

Natt Mehalaa 4 || (Ang 982)

*Baanee Guroo Guroo Hai Baanee Vich
Baanee Anmrith Saarae ||*

*Gur Baanee Kehai Saevak Jan Maanai
Parathakh Guroo Nisatharae ||5||*

The Word, the Bani is Guru, and Guru is the Bani. Within the Bani, the Ambrosial Nectar is contained.

If His humble servant believes, and acts according to the Words of the Guru’s Bani, then the Guru, in person, emancipates him. ||5||

In conclusion, it would be appropriate to accept that the Shabad Guru is the true successor of the Gur Gaddi in Sikhi.

Prithipal Singh had the honour of teaching for 40 years in the University of Delhi and constituent colleges. He has been published in many Sikh journals and magazines on various topics in Sikh Religion and History.

The Secrets of Past

A Poem by Dr. Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry

Diwali night brings with it the secrets of past

Candles and lamps mark the festival of lights

Its glare blinds me
reminds me of that dark night
thirty-eight-years back....

The celebrations were not yet over

This time crackers burst our houses
And burnt our men
Arson, kerosene oil and burning tyres
Replaced the crackers

The sounds of crackers

simultaneously accompanied by
the screams of mothers
trying to protect the honour
of their daughters...

necks garlanded with burning tyres

turbans disrobed
beards trimmed
hair cut
cigarettes forced into the mouth...

screaming for mercy

with folded hands,
helpless faces
tearful eyes...
shocked and muted, they breathed their last

Diwali night brings with it the secrets of past

The sounds of crackers and the night brings with it
The era(z)ed memories of thousands of bodies...
the crackers remind the bursting gas cylinders
of fuming houses and various mounds of ashes lying
everywhere

The festival is not welcomed this year...nor any year

no lamps and candles to be lighted
for nothing can light up
the darkened faces and
the broken hearts.

Dr. Ishmeet Kaur Chaudhry is an educationist, author, and poet teaches at the Centre for English Studies at Central University of Gujarat. She was recognized as an Inspired Teacher for The President of India's In-residence Program at Rashtrapati Bhawan, New Delhi in June 2015.

Standing Tall: The Legacy of Sikhs in the Singapore Police Force

Monica Arora



Singapore's diverse cultural fabric is intricately woven with the tales of immigrant communities, each leaving an indelible mark on the nation's identity. Among these narratives, the Sikhs emerge as trailblazers in industry, commerce, and culture. Arriving on Singapore's shores during the colonial era, early Sikhs brought with them a potent blend of a strong work ethic, entrepreneurial zeal, and a vibrant cultural heritage, leaving a lasting impact on Singaporean society.

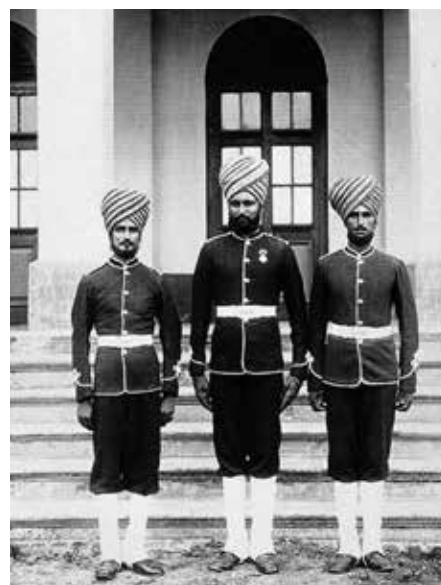
One of Singapore's earliest riots occurred in 1854 when two leading Chinese secret societies clashed. Started from a quarrel over a bag of rice, it quickly escalated into widespread riots between the Hokkien-dominated Ghee Hock against Ghee Hin, backed by the Teochews. As many as 5,000 men fought on the streets for eight days, resulting in the death of 400 Chinese, dozens of shops looted and some small villages destroyed.

Without proper trainings, the small police force were inefficient and incapable of dealing with the unexpected conflicts.

The inception of Singapore's police force traces back to the establishment of the British East India Company's trading post in February 1819. However, it was on 25 March 1881 that the first European constables, alongside 54 Sikh recruits from Punjab, set foot on Singaporean soil.

This marked the beginning of a significant chapter in the history of law enforcement in the region. The influx of Sikh constables continued and by August 1881, Singapore boasted a contingent of 100 Sikh policemen.

Historical records reveal that in 1881, the Police Force in Singapore was divided into two units: one unit comprised mainly of Europeans and the second unit consisted mainly of Sikhs.



*Sikhs from Punjab, India, were recruited to boost the strength of the police force. By August 1881, there were about 100 Sikh policemen in Singapore**

*Sikh police officers patrolling the streets of Singapore as part of maintaining law and order in the 'Dock Police'**





*Inspection of Sikh police officers by the Maharaja of Patiala in c.1941**

“Their commanding stature often instilled a sense of intimidation among troublemakers, effectively preventing disturbances from escalating”

*Early Singapore Police Traffic Constables on duty wore ‘wings’ on their back, as this gave them an impression of being larger and helped the motorists see the constable from a distance. c.1930**



The Sikh police and their families were all housed in the barracks at Pearl Hill and they built the first Gurdwara Sahib in the vicinity.

Drawing inspiration from the successful policing by Sikhs in the Federated Malay States and Hong Kong, the British administration was confident in their ability to form the core of an outstanding police force. Therefore, they were recommended to the Straits Settlements Police Force to tackle the day-to-day challenges in policing.

In late 1881, a Sikh contingent comprising 165 men arrived in Singapore. Stringent recruitment criteria mandated a minimum height of 175 cm and a chest measurement exceeding 96.5 cm. Prospective recruits underwent rigorous medical examinations, swore oaths of honesty and faithfulness before magistrates, and received baptism at the gurdwara, symbolising their commitment to exemplary conduct.

Baptism was a prerequisite for all Sikh contingent officers, believed by the British to ensure steadfast and honourable behaviour. Adherence to the code of conduct for baptised Sikhs including the maintenance of uncut hair, beards, and moustaches, as well as wearing turbans. These were enforced through regular inspections by British officers.

Initially stationed at the Tanjong Pagar Police Station and Tanjong Pagar Dock Police Station, Sikh policemen were tasked with countering Chinese Secret Societies and safeguarding the docks, harbours, and warehouses. Overtime, their ranks swelled as Sikhs were recruited in large numbers, their reputation for discipline, loyalty, and bravery making them indispensable to the colonial administration.

The Sikh officers were mainly responsible for managing public order incidents and upholding peace



within the town. Notably, a riot squad comprised of 50 Sikh officers remained on standby, serving as a potent deterrent against potential unrest.

Their commanding stature often instilled a sense of intimidation among troublemakers, effectively preventing disturbances from

escalating. Their duties often extended beyond Singapore, with officers deployed to Christmas Island, which was then part of the Straits Settlements.

Here they were tasked with restoring law and order, which had deteriorated to such an extent that some felt that the islands were lost.

*Badminton doubles team, 18 November 1960**



Sikh officers once again managed to quell the unrest and were credited with bringing order back in a span of a few months.

By the early 1930s, there were many Sikhs who served in the Additional Police Force at the Naval Base in

Senawang. These Sikhs converted a hall located in their barracks into a Gurdwara Sahib.

In the absence of a granthi, some of the Sikh Police personnel used to perform the duties of a priest. The

civilian Sikh Sangat from the nearby areas of Senawang also used to come to this Naval Base Gurdwara for their prayers.

Unlike their counterparts, Sikh police officers were easily identifiable by their distinctive appearance, proudly donning turbans and maintaining their religious identity while discharging their duties. This diversity within the police force mirrored Singapore's multicultural ethos, emphasising inclusivity in its institutions.

Beyond law enforcement, Sikh officers were entrusted with guarding government buildings, critical installations, and providing security during significant events and visits by foreign dignitaries. Their adaptability and dedication led to expanded responsibilities, including beat and traffic duties.

The establishment of the Sikh Contingent in 1881 laid the foundation for Singapore's Sikh community. The Sikh Police Contingent Gurdwara erected a year later served as a focal point for religious and community activities. The legacy of the Sikh contingent lives on through the vibrant history of the Sikh community in Singapore, enriching the tapestry of the nation's heritage.

Following the First World War, the Sikh contingent contributed to building the Silat Road's Gurdwara in 1924, fostering the growth of the Sikh community. Unfortunately, post the Second World War, the contingent was disbanded. But its legacy endures through the vibrant history of the Sikh community in Singapore, and as one of the many threads in the distinguished heritage of the Singapore Police Force.

**All photographs courtesy of the National Museum of Singapore and National Heritage Board.*

The Partition Of Panjab: My Family Story

Inni Kaur

Summary: The Guinness Book of World Records states: "On 15 August 1947, the partition of British India triggered the largest ever mass migration, uprooting over 18 million people." The land of the five rivers, Panjab, became divided into two parts: West Panjab went to Pakistan, and East Panjab became a part of India. This is one story of the 18+ million people separated from their roots.

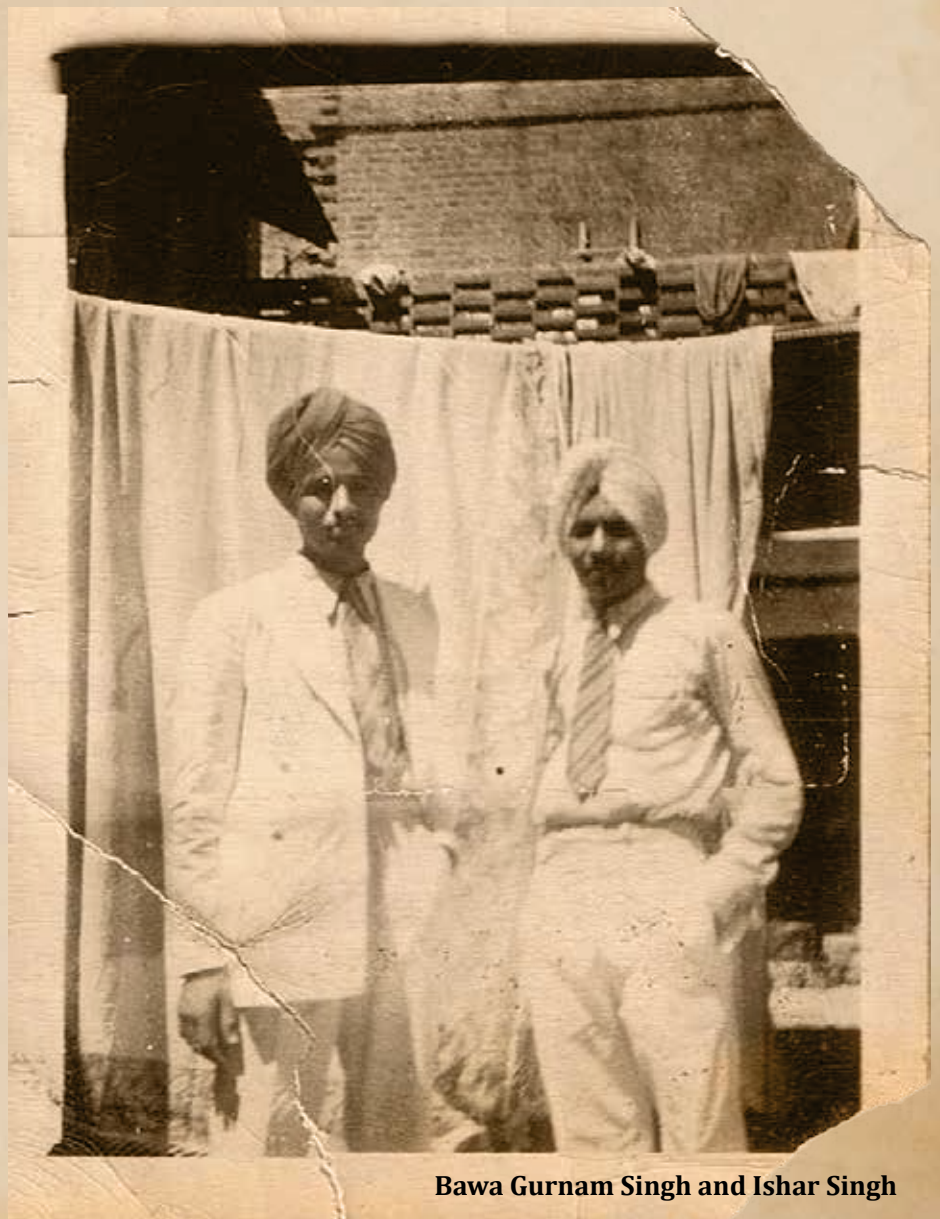
Monday, August 15, 2022, marks the 75th anniversary of the Partition of Panjab.

I could finally visit my father in Delhi in March of this year. It was a much-needed visit after a three-year separation due to Covid-19 restrictions. I aimed to spend most of my five weeks with him – which I did. There is something to be said about just being present. One does not need to fill every moment with chatter. Sometimes, being there is enough for the most profound conversations to flow.

One evening, while watching the news, Dad turned to me and said, "Will they (Ukrainians) ever return? We never did?" At that moment, I realized the depth of his pain; though he rarely speaks about it, Partition is still with him. The sadness in his words spoke volumes. The memories of his ancestral homes in Chakwal and Jhelum were still with him.

Seventy-five years have passed since the Partition of Panjab and the creation of India and Pakistan. And yet, the longing to go back has not waned. At one level, my practical father says, "It's all gone. There is no point in remembering?" And yet, he remembers and sort of grieves.

On one of my earlier visits, I insisted he tell me what happened to the



Bawa Gurnam Singh and Ishar Singh

family during Partition. He tested my powers of persuasion. But finally, he relented, and we began the recorded sessions.

The following is the story of my father, Bawa Gurnam Singh (b. 1931 – Chakwal, Dist. Jhelum, pre-partition Panjab), son of Harnam Kaur and Hari Singh Bawa. As relayed to me by my father:

“You know, during Partition, I got saved twice in one day. I was 16 and stayed with my Nana ji (maternal grandfather) Mehtab Singh Maini in Jhelum. He was a Congress leader who was constantly in and out of jail.

“While those times were challenging, they were also interesting. Every influential leader used to stay at Nana ji’s big home. The main house was for the family, and the exterior was for guests.

“At that time, in Jhelum, there were daily protests against the British Government. The women led their processions, and Nani ji (maternal grandmother) also marched. The youngsters were the most vocal. I was actively involved in politics, so I was subject to several police beatings. It was their way of getting back at Nana ji.”

“Dad, how old were you during these beatings?”

“I was in grades 7 and 8 studying at the Khalsa School in Jhelum when the beatings occurred. The police used to come to our school, pick up a few other boys and me, take us to the police station, thrash us, and send us back home. I remember one particular beating. The police officers were beating us lightly. I guess they felt sorry for us because we were children. A British Officer saw what was happening.

He immediately came over, took the cane from the police officer, and thrashed us. I still remember that beating. But that was life in those days.

“In August 1947, I was in the 10th grade and back in Jhelum for the school holidays. Nana ji’s home was the political hub. Everyone came there to get information and give it. One day, Inder Singh Gadhok and his younger brother Dilbagh Singh came to inform Nana ji that they were leaving for Ambala. The Muslim community had hired them to bring back their Pir (saint) living there. The two brothers and Sri Ram, the driver, were leaving the next day by bus.

“I knew Inder Singh very well. He was the don of Chakwal. Nobody dared cross him. He greatly loved and respected my taya ji (father’s older brother—Bawa Jewan Singh). Inder ensured everyone knew that our family was under his protection.”

“Dad, a don?”

“Yup! Something like today’s mafia. Inder controlled a large part of the bus transportation in Panjab. I used to ride for free on the buses because of him.”

I’m flabbergasted. I make a mental note: I have to learn more about Inder. But not right now.

“I was eager to see the Independence Day celebrations in Delhi. My older brother Amrik Singh studied at the Delhi Polytechnic College and stayed at the Kashmiri Gate hostel. I begged and pleaded with Nana ji to allow me to go with Inder to Amritsar. From there, I would catch the train to Delhi. With great reluctance, Nana ji agreed.

“The following day, I left. Inder drove the bus up to Lahore. When we entered Lahore, he told Sri Ram to take over as we entered the Muslim area. So, Sri Ram drove, and the three of us lay flat on the seats hidden from public view. But Sri Ram did not know the way and constantly asked Inder for directions. He came to a critical junction and did not know where to turn. Inder got up to see where we

were. At that moment, the people on the ground saw a Sardar on the bus. They started shouting, and before you knew it, they threw a small bomb at our bus. It hit the rear wheel tire of the bus. The tire exploded, causing a huge sound.

“A predominantly Muslim crowd immediately surrounded the bus. Just then, an army unit passed by and stopped to see what was happening. The group told them we were terrorists and were throwing bombs at them.

“Inder, of course, protested. The army officer decided to search our bus. When he opened Inder’s suitcase, a photograph caught his eye. He asked Inder how he got this photograph. Inder told him that it was his childhood photograph. The officer looked shocked. It turned out that he was Inder’s childhood friend, Hussain, who had left Chakwal many years ago. Hussain was thrilled to reconnect with Inder. Under Hussain’s protection, the repair of the bus tire happened, and we were escorted to Mughalpura, a part of town that was Sikh and Hindu-dominated. Hussain said we would be safe here and should leave for Amritsar from Mughalpura.

“We spent that night at Inder’s relative’s home in Mughalpura. In the middle of the night, Inder woke us up. He said that he had an eerie feeling and that we should leave immediately. He was sure something terrible was going to happen. He insisted his relatives leave with him, but they refused, assuring him they were safe.

“The four of us got on the bus and left for Amritsar immediately. When we reached Amritsar, we heard that the Muslims attacked Mughalpura and killed everyone. We had narrowly escaped death.

“Inder dropped me off at the Amritsar railway station and proceeded to



*Bawa Gurnam Singh
at the age of 16*



Dilbagh Singh



Inder Singh

“One day, Inder Singh Gadhok and his younger brother Dilbagh Singh came to inform Nana ji that they were leaving for Ambala. The Muslim community had hired them to bring back their Pir (saint) living there”

Ambala. At the station, I could not get a ticket for Delhi. The Government had stopped all trains going into Delhi. I guess they did not want refugees coming into the capital and disrupting the celebrations. I sat at the train station for four days.

My luggage and money were stolen. My passport and a few photographs in a muslin bag hanging from my neck under my shirt were all I had left. Nana ji had insisted that I carry my passport that way. I had a British Indian passport, stamped in red: 'Son of a revolutionary.'"

"Wow! 'Son of a revolutionary?' How did you feel about that, Dad?"

"Great! It was like a badge of honor. The people who used to help the British Government got titles like 'Sardar Bahadar,' 'Sardar Sahib,' 'Khan Bahadur,' and 'Khan Sahib,' and many such phokat (hollow) titles. They were local equivalents of 'Sir' and knighthoods. There used to be weekly processions in front of these people's homes. They were gadhars (traitors). We were real heroes fighting for our freedom."

"Dad, what did you do for food? You had no money?"

"Food was no problem. Free food was available at the station for the refugees. On the fourth day, a long train with a large sign saying 'Delhi' arrived at the station. Everyone, including me, boarded that train, thinking we were going to Delhi. But that was not the case. The train was heading for Patiala.

"I knew my mother's sister Rani and husband Amar Singh Ghai lived in Patiala, but I did not have their address. Talk about being lucky! A tongawala (a horse-carriage driver) stopped me as I left the train station. I recognized him immediately. He was Kala from Chakwal. I told him all that had happened since I had left Jhelum. He insisted I stay with him and ride with him until I found my relatives. I hesitated at first. But I had no choice, so I agreed."

"Dad, why did you hesitate?"

"He was a dangotara."

"Who, what, is a dangotara?"

"Dangotras in Chakwal were beggars. A few of them did odd jobs. Every Saturday, they would go begging door to door. They used to carry a small bowl with mustard oil and a small idol. People would put money in their bowls. But Kala did not beg. He owned his tonga (horse carriage).

In 1942, when we came from Zaidan, Iran, to get my eldest sister Jasbir bhen ji married, my father hired Kala

for the entire wedding month. Kala was in charge of getting everyone from the train station and delivering all the supplies from the market to our home. So, I knew him well.

"Kala took me to his home, a small two-room house. His wife and children were also there. I remember he gave me his best charpai (cot) to sleep on.

"On the third day of riding around Patiala, I spotted my uncle carrying

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a bag of vegetables. I immediately asked Kala to stop and ran to my uncle. My uncle was shocked to see me and took me home. I stayed with my aunt and uncle for five days. They were very, very nice to me. They got clothes for me, gave me money and bought my train ticket to Delhi.

"When I arrived in Delhi, I went straight to my brother Amrik's hostel in Kashmiri Gate and knocked on Room 302. Amrik opened the door

and was stunned to see me. Are you alive? Are you really alive? He kept asking. I was surprised by his question.

"He then told me that Nana ji had read in the Urdu paper Milap that the bus I was on was attacked in Lahore, and no one had survived. The family thinks you are dead. He rushed to the post office and sent two telegrams to our parents in Zaidan and Nana ji in Jhelum, informing them all that I was alive. Years later, I discovered that my parents had said my antim ardas (final prayers) in Zaidan.

"For two months, I stayed with Amrik at his hostel. It was against hostel rules. But there was nowhere else I could stay."

"Dad, what was Delhi like in August of 1947? What did you do for those two months?"

"I don't know what was happening all over Delhi. I can only say what was happening in my area. It seemed calm. I did not see any organized mobs, though I did see a few stabbings. Amrik's friend Sayali advised me to join the NCC (National Cadet Corp.). So, I registered at the Kashmiri Gate Police Station, within walking distance of the hostel.

"Every morning at 8 a.m., I would go to the police station. Two policemen and I would then go in a jeep to rescue Muslims. We used to go door to door, as the houses in Kashmiri Gate were in small lanes. I remember one time entering a place that looked empty. But it was not.

There was a young girl around 14 - 15 years old hiding there. When she saw me, she started screaming. I calmed her down with great difficulty and told her I was there to help, not harm her. Her entire family had left without her. We took her back to the police station, and she was taken by bus to the Purana Qila (Old Fort) Refugee Camp.

"I spent two months in Delhi this way. I used to have lunch at the police station and sneak back into the hostel at night. I got caught the day Amrik went to Rohtak. The warden insisted that I leave the hostel immediately. Amrik's friends did not appreciate the warden's order. They held their ground and said that I was not to go. To keep the peace, the warden took me to his home. I stayed with him for three days until Amrik got back. The warden's home was far nicer than the hostel.

"Amrik had gone to Rohtak to see if our Mama ji (mother's brother), Dr. Darshan Singh Maini, and his wife, Tejinder, were willing to have me stay with them and complete my studies. Of course, they agreed. Darshan Mama ji had just gotten a job at the Government College. That was the good news.

"Then Amrik told me that Nana ji was dead. My whole world came to a standstill. I adored my Nana ji. He was the biggest influence in my life. He really loved me. I learned so much from him. Because of him, I joined the Congress Party, even though my father was an Akali."

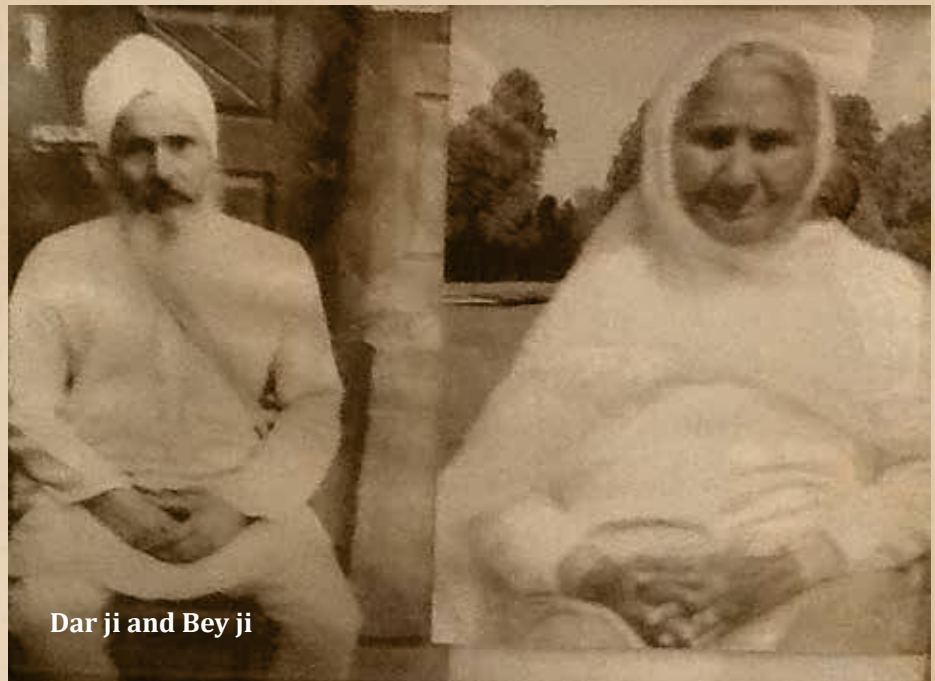
Rohtak

"In Rohtak, I joined the Government High School, but the school was closed and had nothing to do. So, I volunteered at the Rohtak Refugee Camp. "The camp was an open field near the High School. Admiral Gurdeep Singh, a retired navy officer, was in charge of the camp. He ran a very tight ship. We were about twenty volunteers, and I was responsible for the rations. I worked at that camp for five to six months."

"But Dad, you were so young? How come you had such an important charge?"

"I worked very hard. I spent all my waking hours at camp. I would only go home to wash up and change. The rest of the time, I was at camp.

“Running the camp was not difficult because the refugees helped a lot. The biggest problem was the fights they had amongst themselves”



Dar ji and Bey ji

"I remember when Sarojini Naidu, a well-known poet and freedom fighter, visited our camp. Admiral Gurdeep Singh introduced me to her as head of rations. She was also shocked to see a sixteen-year-old in such an important position."

"What was the camp like? What were you doing there?"

"I was managing the rations and doing whatever was required. Our camp had nineteen items on ration – spices, medicines, quilts, rice, lentils, etc. The rations came from Delhi and were stored at the high school. Gurdeep Singh would send a telegram listing what was needed. The next day, the trucks delivered them. We had about 20-30 trucks delivering supplies every day. "As far as I remember, there were no Sikh

refugees at our camp. Most of the refugees were from Multan. The men were big and hardworking. They unloaded the trucks and stored the rations. Each man carried a sack of 100 kilos of rice on his back. They put up the tents and the toilets and did all the manual work at camp. No labor was hired to do any of the work.

"Running the camp was not difficult because the refugees helped a lot. The biggest problem was the fights they had amongst themselves. Almost every day, part of our jobs was to settle their disputes.

"The only thing that was difficult at camp was providing security for the young orphaned girls. Gurdeep Singh had a special section right in the middle of the camp next to his office for them. He had barbed

wire going around those tents and guards protecting the girls. I think there were about thirty girls. He sort of adopted them. He got them trained, married, and gave each one a sewing machine and Rs. 500 from his personal finances.”

“So, Dad, there seemed to be a government in place?”

“Of course, there was. There never was a fight at camp over rations. But the mood was somber. Everyone was crying. They had lost all their belongings; some had lost family. I used to cry a lot listening to their stories. Mami ji (aunt) used to get angry seeing my swollen eyes and dirt-filled clothes. She wanted me to stop volunteering, but I didn’t.

“Living conditions were challenging at camp. At one point, we had about 400,000 refugees. Slowly, people began to move out. When the orders came to close the camp, we were down to about 50,000 refugees. They were asked to leave, which was not easy.

“I must say, Gurdeep Singh did a remarkable job. He was an amazing man. I salute him.

“The school eventually reopened, and I joined the High School. I had a good friend in Ishar Singh who volunteered at camp. I think that friendship helped greatly in settling down in Rohtak.”

“Dad, what are your thoughts about the Partition?”

“Partition was like separating your children. It was so wrong. I don’t think anyone could have imagined what happened. Nana ji, who was a Congress leader, never for a moment thought that he would have to leave Jhelum. Partition changed everything. Our home, our land in Chakwal, everything was gone. All my childhood connections were lost. I never went back.”

Dad goes silent.

My mind drifts ...

I want to know more about my great grandfather, Bhai Mehtab Singh Maini (1880 - 1947, son of Bhagwan Singh and Sarasti Devi – Pind Vahalee, District Jhelum).

I reach out to his son.

“Uncle ji, tell me what happened to you during the Partition?”

The following narration is by Sarmukh Singh Maini (1928-2019), son of Mehtab Singh and Budhwanti Kaur.

“Dear Inni, in all these years, you are the only one who has asked, (he says).

“I was in my final year of high school (matric) during Partition. We were eight siblings. In August of 1947, my sister Tej Kaur, my brother Trilochan Singh, and I were the only ones left with our parents in Jhelum. By mid-August, Dar ji (father) sent my brother and sister to Amritsar with our good friend Sardar Avtar Singh. His son had come with a military truck to evacuate his family. So I was the only child with our parents.

“I can still hear Dar ji’s voice: ‘So what if there is a Pakistan? It does not mean we have to leave Jhelum.’

“But things in Jhelum began deteriorating rapidly after August 15. Our home was in Machine Mohalla No. 1. (Machine Mohalla 2 was a Hindu area; Machine Mohalla 3 was a Muslim area). Our family had three interconnected houses. My two uncles (Dar ji’s brothers, Sant Singh and Sardar Singh) had their homes on either side. We could reach each other’s homes via the roof.

“One September morning, many Hindu and Sikh families came to our home to seek refuge. The Muslim mob forced them out and took over their homes. By that afternoon, there were about 3000 people in our homes.

“Around 5 pm that day, the Muslim mob stood outside our home and began shooting. Many people knew that Dar ji did not own a gun. But we had one gun in the house that belonged to my cousin. Dar ji grabbed that gun and started firing back at the mob. The shooting went on for about an hour or two. I was handing Dar ji kartoos (cartridges), which I had put in my pockets.

“At 7.30 p.m., the mob began to torch the house. The fire started raging from all sides. We had to evacuate and come out in the open. We walked towards the police station through the small bazaar behind our home. I was walking with my parents on either side. None of us saw the gunman sitting on the roof of one of the Sikh homes.

“He fired on Dar ji. I am sure Dar ji was his target. The bullet hit Dar ji’s left thigh. I immediately had Dar ji lean on me. We struggled and walked another 100 yards to the police station. The police station was barely 200 yards from the house.

“The police could hear the firing, but they did not come to help. While walking toward the police station,



Sarmukh Singh Maini



Bawa Gurnam Singh

“Partition was like separating your children. It was so wrong. I don’t think anyone could have imagined what happened. It changed everything. Our home, our land in Chakwal, everything was gone. All my childhood connections were lost. I never went back”

I saw a constable and requested his help to reach the police station. Instead of helping us, he spat on us, saying that we were kafirs (infidels). Dar ji knew this constable. The police station was overcrowded. It seemed like every Hindu and Sikh family from our area was there.

“I remember Dar ji asking me for water at the police station. He was bleeding heavily. I could not leave him. I asked the constables if they could bring me some water. None did. Dar ji knew all of these constables.

“Suddenly, I saw Narpal Rai Khairati, a very good friend of Dar ji’s. He lived about 500 yards from our home. He immediately went to the hand pump, wet his white turban, and poured water into Dar ji’s mouth.

“All the wounded people were put in a truck and taken to the Civilian hospital.

“Although I was not hurt, my clothes were drenched with Dar ji’s blood. I, too, boarded the truck. Dar ji was in a semi-conscious state. By now, it had gotten dark. I emptied my pockets of the remaining bullets and threw

them from the truck. Then I removed Dar ji’s gatra (belt), which held his kirpan, gold pocket watch, and Rs. 5000, and put them in my pockets.

“I was hoping that he would get the proper treatment and survive. But soon after we arrived at the hospital, he died in my arms. A few of my friends also died that day.

“The following morning, I, along with the others, was taken by the police to the main Gurduara, declared a refugee camp. The police took away Dar ji’s kirpan from me.

“When I got to the Gurduara, I told

Bey ji (mother) that Dar ji was no more. She went silent. From that moment on, she focused her full attention on me. I was in a state of shock. She kept saying: it will be alright, it will be alright.

"Bey ji and I stayed at Ramey Shah's home opposite the Gurduara Singh Sabha for a few days. Ramey Shah was a kind and good man. He knew us very well. His house was on the banks of the river Jhelum. That area was safe at that time.

"After five days, twelve trucks came to the Gurduara to evacuate 10,000 people. There was such a rush to get onto the trucks. Bey ji couldn't jump on the truck, so we returned to Ramey Shah's home.

"The following day, around 10 a.m., I heard my name being broadcast via a loudspeaker on the road. There was a message for me to appear with Bey ji by order of the Indian Government representative Lala Avtar Narain (father of ex-PM Inder Gujral).

"Ramey Shah requested that we take his young daughter as well. He stayed behind. So, the three of us sat in the car with an armed escort. The car took us to the truck convoy in the Cantonment area. The convoy was waiting for us. We boarded the truck and headed to India.

"At Gujranwala, our convoy was held up for 8-10 days due to floods. We slept on the ground. There was hardly any food. We were lucky if we got one roti a day. It was terrible. This is how we reached Amritsar.

"My elder brother was waiting for us. He did not know that our father had been killed. You should have heard him weep when he heard the news."

Uncle goes silent. It's a similar silence that I experienced when my father narrated his story.

Gently, I ask, "Uncle ji, did you go back to see if your house survived?"

"No. It was not safe to go to that area. But I now know that our home has been converted into a mosque. Can you believe that?"

I pause to digest this. A mosque!

"Uncle ji, do you remember the date when this happened?"

"I think it was September 25, 1947, but I am unsure. I was in such a state of shock. Everything was gone, and I knew nothing would be the same again.

"Please tell me a little more about Dar ji's life."

"Bey Ji was from a Hindu family. She was one of seven sisters. Her father wanted one Sikh son-in-law, so he got her married to Dar Ji. Bey Ji was illiterate when she got married. Dar Ji taught her Gurmukhi, and she became a staunch Sikh under his influence. That tells you how important his Sikhi was to him.

"He was a great hunter and a horseman. One year at the mela in Jhelum, he accepted a challenge to ride a beautiful wild horse. The horse's owner was confident of winning. Well! Dar ji jumped on the horse and rode it like a champ. He was in his early forties then.

"In 1930, he was jailed in Gujarat for over a year under the Civil Disobedience Movement. It was a terrible time. The business suffered greatly.

"He was a member of Chief Khalsa Diwan and used to go to Amritsar every two months for their meetings. He was in Amritsar in July of 1947 for a meeting. He was also the President of the Gurduara Choa Sahib (Rohtas, Jhelum).

"Sant Suraj Singh, the Panjabi poet, used to stay with us regularly. He had written a book Jagrit Khalsa in verse against the British Raj. Dar ji got the book published. When the book hit the market, the police immediately returned to our home and confiscated the print run.

"I remember one Vaisakhi: Baba Kharak Singh came to deliver a lecture at the Choa Sahib Gurduara. British intelligence found out.

They and the local constables arrived at the Gurduara to arrest him.

The Sikhs immediately formed a circle around Baba ji. The British Officer told Dar ji that he would have to use force if prevented from arresting Baba ji.

Dar ji told them they could arrest Baba ji after the lecture but not before. They reached an agreement. Baba Kharak Singh was arrested after he delivered the lecture at the Gurduara without the use of force."

Scenes from the film "The Last Samurai" flash before me. I can see Dar ji in action.

I know how he died, but the hunger to know how he lived gnaws me.

Reprinted from SikhRI.org

Inni Kaur, Creative Director at the Sikh Research Institute (SikhRI) since 2010, has held roles such as Board Chair and CEO. A prominent figure in the Sikh community, she advocates for interfaith and women's issues. Inni is an experienced speaker, addressing prestigious institutions like Yale, Columbia, and the U.S. Office of the Pentagon Chaplain. As an author, poet, and painter, she has published a range of titles, including Journey with the Gurus, Sakhi-Time with Nani ji, Thank-You, Vahiguru, Daddy's Turban, The Story of Us, and The Fragrance of Bhai Vir Singh. Inni has contributed to documentaries on Sikhi and curated exhibitions worldwide. Actively involved in fostering interfaith understanding, she serves on various boards and is a local Justice of the Peace. She resides in the United States. Explore more at www.InniKaur.com.

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A full-page photograph of a mountain trail. In the foreground, a hiker wearing a black jacket with yellow accents and a black hood is seen from the side, holding a black trekking pole. The trail is a wide, light-colored dirt path that curves through a rocky, mountainous landscape. To the left, there are large, grey rock formations. In the background, there are steep, rocky mountains with patches of snow and some sparse vegetation. The sky is a clear, bright blue with a few wispy white clouds. The overall scene is one of a high-altitude trekking environment.

DIARY OF A MOUNTAINEER: TREK TO EVEREST BASE CAMP

Sukhinder Singh Parmar





A trek to the Everest Base Camp is on the wish list of travellers all over the world but very few actually venture forth. The walk entails paths going past Sherpa villages and Tibetan-style monasteries, right into the heart of the Himalayas. All around is nature's glory in the form of glaciers, lakes and snowclad mountain peaks. Some of these are Ama Dablam, Pumori, Nuptse and Thamserku and amidst the meandering paths lie the lodges or teahouses that transport one to the idyllic life amidst natural beauty.

Tracing the footsteps of pioneers like Hillary, Tenzing, Messner and so many others is awe-inspiring but the biggest reward is knowledge of the fact that that the journey takes us to the base of the highest peak in the world – Mount Everest! That adrenaline rush is enough to keep one going!

One embarks from wherever one is based and reaches the airport at Lukla. The trek from the airport to the base camp takes a minimum of 15 days. Acclimatisation to the high altitudes is an integral part of the process. In case one wants to make the most of the trek, then factor in a few extra days to visit Thame, a couple of days to visit Chhukung another few days to go to the lakes of the Gokyo Valley and the reward is the picture-perfect landscape to behold.

What makes the trek challenging is the altitude as Base Camp is situated at 5600m (18,373ft) above sea level. Trekkers need to spend one or two nights above 5000m (16,404ft), because at an altitude higher than 4000m (13,123ft) one tends to feel sluggish, lethargic and breathless owing to the rarified air. This and the physical exertion of walking sometimes can pose a challenge but overall, the experience is worth every moment.

Here is an account from the diary of Sardar Sukhinder Singh from a trek



to the Everest Base Camp from 09 April - 22 April 2024

'The dream was realised for a reason. It was like a seed in his mind and he nurtured it with faith in Sache Patshah. Hard work, discipline and a year of preparation, along with a coach Like Bikramjeet Singh Ghuman, support of family and friends - this was what took us to the Everest Base Camp and this is our little story.

Teghbir Singh was born on 24 September 2018. He was four years of age when he started preparation primarily in January 2023. We did the bookings through Himalayan

Social Service, an agency based at Kathmandu.

Day 1: We reached Delhi on 08/04/2024 to catch a flight to Kathmandu. Received by the agency representative, we were transferred to the hotel. We rested and prepared for the early morning 5-hour car travel to Ramechep Airport after some last minute shopping at Kathmandu.

Day 2: Started at 1 am in the morning, we drove to Ramechep Airport. Unfortunately, the flight to Lukla was suspended and then cancelled in the evening. Lukla Airport is one of the

most dangerous in the world and the pilots rarely take chances, which is just as well as, Teghbir spent the day with our group trekkers, strolling around the quaint little airport.

Day 3: The weather cleared and we finally took off from Ramechap airport to *Lukla*, a small beautiful village that caters to a whole lot of trekkers from around the world. Lukla is where the trekking begins. This village has some great restaurants, cottages, hotels, not to mentioned kit that can be bought or rented for the trek. At Lukla, we had lunch and packed up for the first 6-hour trek to reach Phakding village which was our resting point for the day. We completed day 1 of our trek full of energy and enthusiasm. What surprised us was the night temperature, which dropped to sub-zero. Through the night, my focus was to keep Teghbir and myself warm.

Day 4: We started from *Phakding* at 8am for *Namche Bazaar*, an important tourist destination along the way to Base Camp and Annapurna Circuit. It was a grueling 11 kms trek. We were encouraged to take continuous intake of water and warm juice to avoid dehydration and dates to maintain energy levels. *Namche Bazaar* offers the liveliness of hills and is a conglomerate multicultural festivity hub. Once we reached *Namche Bazaar* which checked in to a 'Tea House' where we rested, warmed ourselves before eating supper and then sleeping. The temperature once again dropped further and I was glad that we carried adequate clothing.

To those not familiar with the term, tea houses are not so much houses that serve tea, but are rather small bed-and-breakfast-like hotels that are dotted along most of the treks in the region. They are the most popular form of accommodation for travellers to the Everest region as they provide an easy, pay-as-you-stay approach to trekking in one of the highest areas of the world.



Day 5: Started from *Namche Bazaar* for *Tengboche*, a village in which the *Tengboche* Monastery is situated, which is an important seat of Buddhist learning situated at 4000 metres above sea level. On this 9 km trek, we encountered snowfall. Amidst dropping temperatures and a vertical climb of three hours straight, this high altitude trek was simply worth enduring. Teghbir Singh though tired, enjoyed the snowfall. Tengboche received snowfall all

Above: The Chardi Kalaa attitude of my son 'Teghbir Singh' greatly impressed all those trekkers who thought of giving up.

Right: There is a sense of relief when you reach the rock that has a sign marked in spray paint starting, Everest Base Camp-5,364m.



night and the temperature remained around -5 degrees.

Day 6: After a heartily breakfast, we resumed our trek towards *Dingboche*, located at a height 4410 metres. It was the most beautiful trek route we had encountered till now. It was from here that we saw Mount Everest for the first time. The Rhododendron Forest trek of almost 2 kms was a sight worth remembering. On this route, we encountered strong icy winds and a snow storm. Teghbir Singh remained all fit and mesmerised by nature. We reached *Dingboche* Village which was to be our acclimatisation spot. This meant that we were to stay here the next day so that our bodies could adjust with the environment. We had a good nourishing meal of garlic soup which is the major feature at high altitude treks.

Day 7: On acclimatisation day, we woke up late and Teghbir enjoyed the sunshine. The entire day was spent regaining energy, drinking liquids, eating a protein rich diet, visiting the local *stupas*, roaming around the village and sitting in a café. The temperature remained around - 6 during the day and dropped to -10 at night.

Day 8: Next day, we started for *Lobuche*, at an elevation of 5030 metres. Here there was no vegetation and all around was a cold desert and rocky terrain. After an exhausting trek of 9 hours, we reached *Lobuche*. Teghbir had shown signs of exhaustion but was enthusiastic as our final destination was just a day far.

Day 9: The final Day was challenging in every way. We were to reach *Gorakshep*, a trek of almost 6kms and then after lunch, proceed to Everest Base Camp. In the evening, we had to return back to *Gorakshep*. We were walking on glacier. There was snowfall during the night. The trek was daunting and a steep climb for the first 3 hours. We reached *Gorakshep*, our lunch point almost 2 hours later than scheduled.

Fatigued and exhausted, I saw that Teghbir had had a hard climb as was the case with me. But was happy and reassured to see that he was in high spirits. He recited the Sakhi of Bhai Bachitar Singh and that was the source of his courage. Eventually, Guru's grace kept us going.

We reached at base camp at 3.51 pm. This was indeed a sight worth remembering, an achievement that young Teghbir gained through sheer merit and faith in Guru's grace. It was overwhelming. All we could do was hug each other and thank the Almighty for it. Unfurling the Nishan Sahib at base camp was the highlight of our trek. We stayed there for almost half an hour and started the trek back to Gorakshep.

Teghbir singh received a grand welcome at Gorakshep from team members. He was the youngest trekker in the entire group at that time.





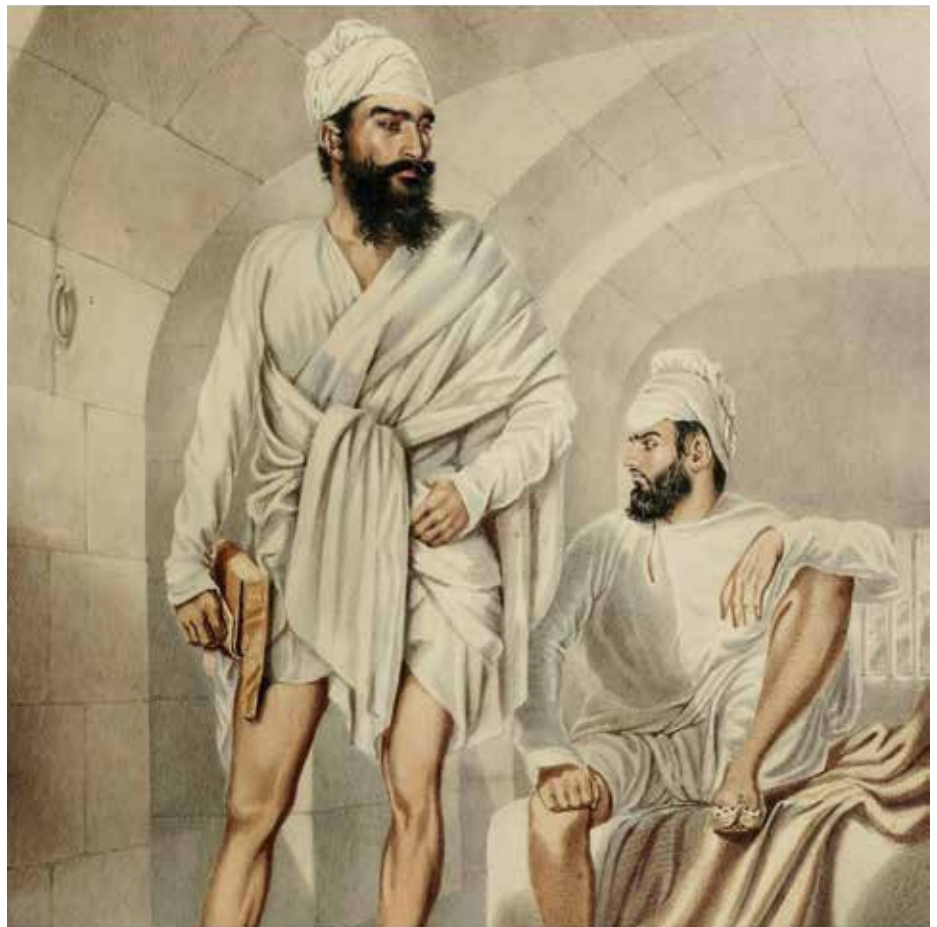
SINGAPORE'S FIRST SIKH

Rishipal Singh Sidhu



***Bhai Maharaj Singh and
Khurruck Singh in a prison
cell By Colesworthy Grant
(Calcutta 1850)***

***One of the first and more
visible gurdwara's of
Singapore is the Silat Road
Gurdwara***



It is an undisputed fact that Bhai Maharaj Singh was the first Sikh to arrive in Singapore, but it was not of his own volition. Following his arrest in India, he was exiled to Singapore as a political prisoner by the British in July 1850. He was a much feared and admired freedom fighter for his anti-British revolutionary activities.

He spent his entire time in Singapore in solitary confinement in a 40 feet by 15 feet cell with the windows walled up and rendered dark, dingy and absolutely unhealthy, literally converting the cell into a dark dungeon in Outram Prison, and resulting in making him practically blind. This inhumane treatment was contrary to Governor-General Lord Dalhousie's instructions that the two State prisoners should not be treated with unnecessary rigour; were apparently ignored by the British authorities in Singapore. In his book *Bhai Maharaj Singh; Saint-*

Soldier, Martyr of the Sikh faith, Choor Singh notes that examination of the correspondence between the Governor of the Straits Settlements and the Governor-General in Calcutta showed that the conduct of Bhai Maharaj Singh was unexceptional but that of Khurruck Singh evinced a little of untoward demeanour. Khurruck Singh had often given vent to his temper by refusing food, tearing the clothes off his back and throwing things at the ground.

With no contact with the outside world, it is instructive to ponder on his significance and contribution to the Sikh community in Singapore? To satisfactorily answer this question, it is first necessary to briefly recount Bhai Maharaj Singh's earlier life and times, especially his anti-resistance activities against the British in the Punjab. Bhai Maharaj Singh's birth name was Nihal and he was born in Rabbon in Ludhiana district to a Sikh

Grewal family. He was deeply pious from a very early age, showed great interest in religion and spirituality, and was totally immersed in *Naam Simran* (Meditation) and *Sewa* (Community Service), and this led him to join Bhai Bir Singh's dera (dwelling or encampment) in Naurangabad at a very young age. On receiving *Amrit* (baptism), he took on the name Bhagvan Singh. "During his stay there, legends record his power to work miracles". According to some accounts, he was born in 1770, and he would therefore have been close to eighty years of age by the time of his arrival in Singapore. In serving the *sangat* (congregation) at the dera he would address each one as Maharaj Ji, and this is how he became known as Bhai Maharaj Singh amongst them.

Bhai Bir Singh was a retired soldier turned ascetic and his *dera* also served as a military base with a volunteer army comprising close to 1,200 musket men and 3,000 horsemen. It served as a resistance point against the Dogras rule and dominance in Punjab following the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, offering refuge to all those persecuted by them. Following Bhai Bir Singh's death in a military clash with the Dogras, Bhagvan Singh took on the mantle of leadership of this dera, leaving shortly afterwards to create his own dera in Amritsar.

The First Anglo-Sikh War in 1845-1846 and the Second Anglo Sikh War in 1848-1849 were a series of conflicts between the British East India Company and the Sikh Empire. "In 1847, tensions arose between Maharani Jindan Kaur and the British who wanted to deprive her of her power. This resulted in the so-called Prema plot which envisaged the murder of Henry Lawrence, the British envoy. But the plot and Bhagvan Singh's role in it was uncovered and the British

had his property confiscated and declared him an outlaw. The British Governor General Lord Dalhousie put a bounty of ten thousand Rupees on his head. Bhagvan Singh went underground together with 600 of his followers, who called him Bhai

“Bhai Maharaj Singh was a spiritual descendant of Guru Gobind Singh and epitomized all the true qualities of a great *Sant-Sipahi* of the Khalsa Panth, displaying qualities of piety, fortitude and heroism as a great revolutionary”

Maharaj Singh as he became known as a holy warrior against the British". Bhai Maharaj Singh moved among and inspired the soldiers to fight with courage and determination and to resist British attempts to annexe the Sikh Kingdom. He was a strategic planner and attempted to spirit

away Maharani Jindan and her son Dalip Singh from a Lahore palace to a safe haven. During the Anglo-Sikh Wars, Bhai Maharaj Singh took upon himself the impossible task of saving the Sikh Kingdom from extinction. In the true tradition of a Saint-Soldier, he felt compelled to take up arms, and kept up this struggle even after the Punjab was annexed in March 1849.

"Etymologically, the word *bhai* means brother, but within early Sikh tradition this word was also used as an honorific for the holy men of the *Panth* (the word *Panth*, from Sanskrit *patha*, *pathin*, or *pantham*, literally means a way, passage or path and, figuratively, a way of life, religious creed or cult. In Sikh terminology, the word *Panth* stands for the Sikh faith as well as for the Sikh people as a whole). To qualify for this title of Bhai, a person had to demonstrate a capacity to interpret the *Adi Granth* (Sikh holy scripture), communicate the wisdom of the Gurus it enshrined, and be publicly recognized for his piety. If, in addition he could work miracles, heal the sick and give succor to the distressed, he was sure to occupy a position of considerable reverence and influence within the community".

Bhai Maharaj Singh's most ardent wish was to free India from British rule and this led to his association and involvement with like-minded allies in a number of military skirmishes with the British forces. He escaped arrest on many occasions and the British started calling him *Karnivala* (possessor of special powers) to account for their own failures and lack of success in arresting him. He was however finally arrested on 28 December 1849 together with 21 of his companions all of whom were unarmed. Following his arrest in the winter of 1849, the Deputy Commissioner of Jalandhar sent a report to his superiors. He

commented that “the Goroo (Bhai Maharaj Singh) is not an ordinary man. He is to the natives what Jesus Christ is to the most zealous of Christians. His miracles were seen by tens of thousands and are more implicitly relied on, than those worked by the ancient prophets”. However, Oberoi clearly points out that “he himself never explicitly claimed this power, but it was granted to by others ...miracles ascribed to him gave credence to his prophetic status”. It is pertinent to note here that the Sikh Gurus never performed miracles to convince others about their faith, spiritual superiority or occult powers or to save themselves from calamities or penalties. Guru Nanak himself pointed out that he could do nothing against the laws of nature. It is only He who can perform a miracle. For him, the *Naam* (True Name) is the miracle and he knew of no other miracle.

Books written by the late Retired Justice Choor Singh on Bhai Maharaj Singh recount the shabby treatment that Bhai Maharaj Singh received at the hands of his captors in Singapore and the rapid deterioration of his health. His eyesight was failing and in letters written in prison in 1854 addressed to his friend Bhai Jusrut Singh of Naurangabad, Bhai Maharaj Singh expressed his wish to return home (an extract of one of his letters is included in Appendix I).

On his death on 5 July 1856, he was cremated somewhere outside the prison grounds by his steadfast companion Khurruck Singh. It is not really known what happened to his ashes. Khurruck Singh is considered to be the second Sikh in Singapore. He was released not long after in January 1857 but his freedom was short-lived. Events in the Straits Settlements, as well as the outbreak of the Indian Mutiny in May that year made European residents fearful of Indian convicts. Khurruck

Singh had acquired a reputation as a “Rajah” among the convicts, and was rumoured to have hatched a plot to kill all the Europeans. When this plot was discovered, he was swiftly re-arrested, and transferred by boat to Penang in August 1857. He was incarcerated at Fort Cornwallis, and then briefly in its jail, before his final release in Penang sometime after March 1860. According to Naidu (2015), he thereafter disappears from historical record.

There are many narratives on its history and origins, and popular belief that an unmarked *samadh* (tombstone) erected in the grounds of the Singapore General Hospital belonged to a Sikh sant (saint) imprisoned by the British in the 19th century. The word *samadh* in Punjabi is used to describe a cenotaph or structure commemorating the dead, akin to a tombstone but without the mortal remains. It appears that this *samadh* was first erected on vacant land outside the Outram Road Prison and later moved to the Singapore General Hospital grounds. Apparently, the name Baba Karam Singh was also ascribed to Bhai Maharaj Singh. However, there is no evidence or records of any religious person by the name of Baba Karam Singh in Singapore.

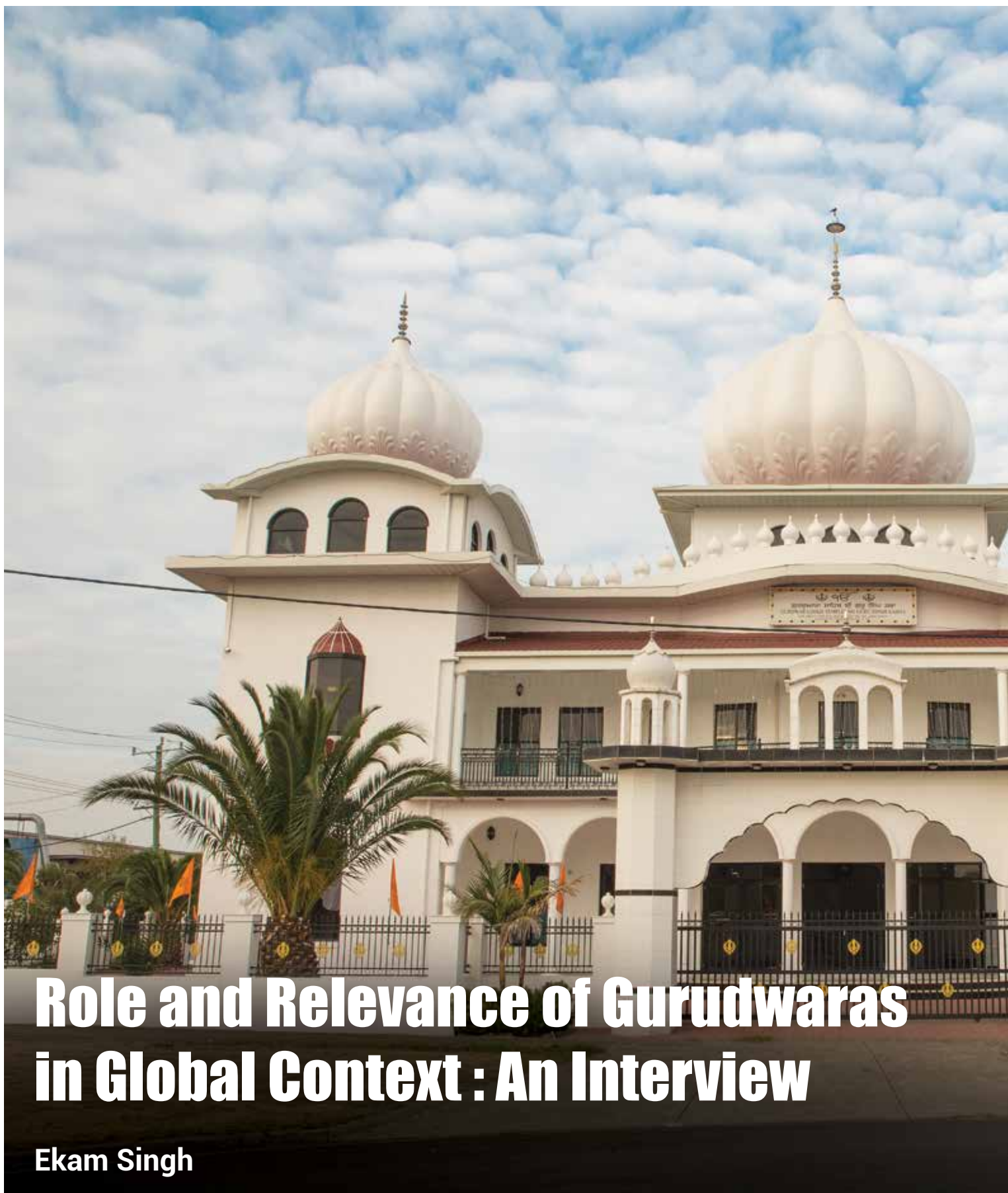
It is a mystery as to how this name, Baba Karam Singh, came to be associated with this shrine. Non-Sikhs, Chinese, Muslim and North Indian devotees started visiting and praying at the site of the tombstone to seek his intercession, and in the belief that their prayers had been answered, started donating money and jewellery. The *samadh* took on a different identity when the Sikh devotees appropriated the site, installed the Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh holy scripture) and held regular prayer sessions and religious functions at this site. An elderly lady by the name of Ram Kaur used to

reside there and do *sewa* (selfless service).

Plans to expand the Singapore General Hospital combined with the fact that the hospital grounds were considered an inappropriate site for religious worship, led to its relocation to the grounds of the Silat Road Gurdwara on 12 October 1966. It is important to note that belief in Bhai Maharaj Singh’s benevolence and supernatural powers and worship at his *samadh* goes against the basic tenets and beliefs of Sikhism, which is the main reason why the Bhai Maharaj Singh Memorial Gurdwara was built next to the main Gurdwara Sahib Silat Road building in the early 1990s and construction completed in October 1995.

Bhai Maharaj Singh was a spiritual descendant of Guru Gobind Singh and epitomized all the true qualities of a great *Sant-Sipahi* (Saint-Soldier) of the Khalsa Panth, displaying qualities of piety, fortitude and heroism as a great revolutionary and freedom fighter against British rule. Accounts of his life and exploits would most certainly have been recounted about him by later Sikh migrants to Singapore. He is revered by the Sikh community in Singapore as a *Shaheed* (Martyr) and historical icon.

He served as a rallying point and unifying influence for the early Sikh community in Singapore which was then drawn and marked by caste and regional differences, and this reverence for Bhai Maharaj Singh continues to grow till today. As Senior Counsel and former MP Davinder Singh aptly put it, “he is proclaimed as a *shaheed* (martyr) who died trying to save the Sikh kingdom from the imperialistic ambitions of the British. His heroic and saintly deeds have left an indelible impression on the hearts and minds of Singapore Sikhs. Bhai Maharaj Singh is particularly special to us because of his brief residence in this country”.



Role and Relevance of Gurudwaras in Global Context : An Interview

Ekam Singh



Gurdwara Sahib Craigieburn, Melbourne, Australia

Growing up in New Delhi, India, I do not think I can recall a time when I did not know of the Gurudwara. There was one on the same block as my home—where I lived for the first eighteen years of my life. Its crystal-white dome, the echoes of the evening Rehras Sahib and the taste of the fresh Kadha Prasad are memories I associate with home and peace.

Since then, I have not been so lucky to have one so close to where I lived, but I have found many worldwide. Each is different, yet so similar. It is hard to define gurudwaras in one big umbrella. They vary stylistically so often, from the more traditional structures from 19th century Punjab to basements in brownstones in the West. Different in form but same in function and character.

Gurudwaras around the world are not characteristically defined like churches or mosques with distinct architectural features like the Gothic buttress or the Ogee arch, which stylistically distinguish and better define such structures. Instead, they are defined by function—the langar, the community culture and most of all, the open door. As an architect, I always saw them as civic spaces, as spaces where one is free to gather and assemble regardless of where one comes from. But this definition is incomplete at best. The gurudwara is, first and foremost, a place of worship. Therein lies a question then.

To answer this underlying question and expand my understanding of the gurudwara, I reached out to Dr. Devinder Pal Singh, a renowned academic and the Director at the Center for Understanding Sikhism in Mississauga, Canada. His research on Sikh Studies and culture is unparalleled. What follows is our conversation in the form of an interview wherein he discusses the complexities and simplicities of the



Gurdwara - Gravesend, United Kingdom

Gurudwara and its role in Sikhism, North America and the world at large.

Ekam Singh: What is the role of the gurudwara for the Sikh community?

Dr. Singh: Gurudwaras have crucial importance to the religious, social, and political life of the Sikhs. They have performed a critical part in developing the Sikh religious traditions and shaping Sikh history. Since its inception, the role of a gurudwara (initially called Dharamsal) for the Sikh community has been manifold. First, it is where the Sikhs assemble for worship and prayer. There are three main

functions carried out in all public Gurudwaras. One is Kirtan - the singing of hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib; another is Katha - the reading of the Guru Granth Sahib and explanations. The third primary function is Langar (free community kitchen) for all visitors.

Along with these primary functions, Gurudwaras around the world also serve the Sikh community in many other ways including, libraries of Sikh literature, museums of historical artifacts, schools to teach children Gurmukhi, the script of the Sikh scriptures, training centers for martial arts (e.g., Gatka, Judo, Karate etc.), and charitable works. In

addition, various ceremonies (e. g., naming of a child, marriage, funeral etc.) are performed at Gurudwaras. Finally, gurudwaras also act as assembly places for the Sikhs to reflect upon and take appropriate decisions about the Community's critical social, religious, and political issues.

Ekam Singh: What is the role of the gurudwara for communities outside Sikhism?

Dr. Singh: People of all faiths are welcome at a gurudwara. Initially, a gurudwara was a place where Sikhs could go to hear the human Gurus speak. Generally, there are four doors for the entrance to the sanctum



San Jose Gurdwara Sahib, California

sanctorum in a Gurdwara. It suggests that everyone is welcome, regardless of one's status, occupation, gender, religion, caste, color or creed.

At the time of community and national emergency, Gurudwaras act as shelter/refuge for the people. For instance, during the devastating fire that almost engulfed the town of Fort McMurray, Alberta, in 2016, the Sikh community came together to collect 1 million dollars in food and clothing for those affected by the fires. In addition, nine semi-trucks full of food and clothing were sent to the victims by the gurdwara leaders in the spirit of Seva (selfless voluntary service) and Sarbat da Bhalla (well-being of all people).

Another way that the Sikhs have manifested their service ethic to the society is through the tradition of Langar (the community kitchen) in the Gurdwara, where free warm meals are served to all visitors, without any distinction of religion, race, ethnicity, gender, or economic status. Currently, the Sikhs have taken the Langar outside of the gurudwaras. Now, they serve meals in other venues, even at the places where people are suffering from natural and manmade disasters. For instance, UNITED SIKHS and the Yangon Sikh Gurdwara served Langar to thousands of Myanmar cyclone survivors in 2008. During 2010, United Sikhs' volunteers

served Langar to survivors of the earthquake in Haiti. The Sikhs also served Langar to flood-hit victims in Kerala (2018), Chennai, Tamil Nadu (2018), Uttara Khand (2018), Assam (2019), and Bihar (2021) in India.

Through its Langar Aid project, Khalsa Aid International, UK serves the homeless, vulnerable, and those struggling with poverty in the UK. They also work internationally to provide humanitarian aid in disaster and war zones. For instance, in 2015, it set up a free bakery near the war zone to feed fleeing Syrians.

The inclusiveness and Oneness of all humankind are much renowned Sikh doctrines. Sikhs took these concepts

beyond the Sikh community by helping and serving others without discrimination. Consequently, now even Muslims, Hindus, Christians, and many others donate towards Langar, and do it because this is what Oneness looked like and felt like.

Ekam Singh: How do you think Gurudwaras responded to the pandemic?

Dr. Singh: It is difficult to outline all activities taken up by the worldwide Gurudwaras to combat the Corona pandemic. But I hope a few would suffice. For instance, a few media reports are as follows:

In March 2020, when the New York mayor's office approached the Sikh Center in New York, USA, for assistance, the Sikh Center handed out tens of thousands of food packages to various federal agencies in the region for distribution among the needy. Besides, during the pandemic, Sikh volunteers delivered thousands of meals to

vulnerable populations, including homebound seniors and those unable to afford meals, in New York, California and Washington state, USA. Gurudwaras in Melbourne and Adelaide cities of Australia started a free tiffin service for those in isolation during the pandemic. The needy persons can even order food by telephone, which is delivered to their doorstep by Sikh volunteers (March 2020).

In Canada, many gurudwaras launched a food-delivery service for free, with the help of local restaurants and Sikh families to help the needy persons (May 2020). In the UK, the Midland Langar Sewa Society served hot meals to the homeless in Birmingham, and its teams reached out to those who had isolated themselves, throughout the UK. Many other gurudwaras in countries like New Zealand, South Africa, Germany, etc., are also involved in similar exercises.

Various Gurudwaras of the Lucknow, Mahanagar, Aishbagh,

Gomti Nagar and Alambagh cities in Uttar Pradesh, India, had launched 'oxygen langar' for patients requiring oxygen during home quarantine. In addition, Lucknow Gurudwara Management Committee provided two hearses for taking covid positive bodies to the cremation ground free of cost. This service was for free and for all. Moreover, the committee ensured that the poor utilized its services more (May 2021).

Several Gurudwaras worldwide opened their door to establish Covid 19 vaccination center at their premises to provide easy access to the service to the community and others. For instance, the vaccine clinic at Surrey Sikh temple in British Columbia, Canada, successfully delivered vaccination services to all people (May 2021).

As another example, I would like to add that during the first wave of Covid in India, Bangla Sahib Gurdwara, New Delhi, India fed



**Gurudwara Manning Drive
Edmonton Alberta, Canada**



75,000 people every day. At the time of the second wave of corona pandemic, Guru Harkishan Institute of Medical Sciences and Research, located on Bangla Sahib's premises, started a free-of-cost 100-bed dialysis center for all without any consideration of caste, colour, creed or class (July 2021).

Ekam Singh: In your personal life, what role does the gurudwara play?

Dr. Singh: In my personal life, gurudwara plays a crucial role as a beacon of light. It provides help in rejuvenating my faith, providing temporal and spiritual guidance, and a feeling of community fellowship. Gurudwara also plays a crucial role in linking me to an extraordinary Sikh

heritage, full of selfless service and sacrifice to humanity. Several of my life affairs (naming ceremony of my children, marriage, funeral, prayer, thanksgiving ceremonies etc. of my family) have been settled at the gurudwara.

Ekam Singh: Historically, how do you think the gurudwara has evolved in the North American context?

Dr. Singh: As of 2020, there are 24 countries in North America. Among them, the United States is the biggest one by population while Canada is the largest country by area. Areawide, the four main countries of North America are the USA, Canada, Mexico, and Greenland. The Sikh population is about 0.7 million in

the USA, 0.5 million in Canada, and only 8000 in Mexico. In contrast, no figures are available for the Sikh population in Greenland.

The first Sikh community entered the United States via the West Coast during the 1890s. At present, there are more than 300 gurdwaras in the United States, situated in big cities like Los Angeles and small rural farming towns alike.

Gurdwara Sahib Stockton, located in Stockton, California, is renowned for being the first gurudwara in the United States. The Pacific Coast Khalsa Diwan Society founded the gurudwara in 1912. It was also called 'Gadari Babeyan da Gurdwara' (the gurudwara founded by the members of the Hindustan Gadar Party.)



The first Sikh immigrants came to Canada in 1904 and established themselves in British Columbia. They created the Vancouver Khalsa Diwan Society in 1906. Under its leadership, Sikhs built their first Gurdwara in 1908 in the city of Golden, British Columbia, Canada. By 1920, several other gurdwaras had been established in various cities, e.g., Victoria, New Westminster, Golden, Abbotsford, Nanaimo, Fraser Mills and Paldi. An independent, elected executive board controlled each. At present, there are over 150 Gurudwaras in Canada, managed by local management committees.

There are about 8000 Sikhs in Mexico and only one gurdwara in Mexico City. In 1976, S. Arjan Singh, a granthi from India, came to Mexico City to look after it. There is almost no Sikh population in Greenland, so there is no Gurudwara.

From the architectural point of view, Gurdwaras in USA and Canada have evolved from a simple single room structure to magnificent structures with elaborate detailing and decoration. In addition, most cities now have several gurdwaras, each reflecting slightly different religious views, social or political opinions, or caste backgrounds. Sikhs now have access to a complete set of public observances through them. For most communities, Sunday services are available there, followed by langar provided by members of the *Sangat* (congregation).

Worship in the gurdwara includes reading scriptures, meditation, prayer, and singing hymns. Anyone who follows the conventions for entering a gurdwara can participate and avail of the services. Though a few Canadian congregations have integrated chairs and tables, but

worshippers mostly sit on carpets. In addition, various Gurburabs and traditional Sikh calendrical celebrations, e.g., Vaisakhi etc., are celebrated in Gurdwaras. Sikhism gives particular importance to family life, philanthropy, service and defence of the faith. Traditionally, service has been expounded as service to the religion and the community. However, this service perception is slowly incorporating a broader perspective of North American social issues. However, one component of the traditional Gurudwara system missing in North America Gurudwaras is the lack of sarovars (water tanks) in their proximity and thereby they fail to care for marine life and Nature.

Many Sikhs wish to teach their children their culture and religion. So, many Gurdwaras offer classes teaching religious precepts and

Punjabi language to children; some second-generation Sikhs speak Punjabi but need to be formally taught the Gurmukhi script in order to read Sri Guru Granth Sahib. In addition, national and regional conferences to discuss Sikh issues are often held in various cities, and informal contacts between regional Gurdwara managements are usually maintained. However, the primary organizational basis of North American Sikhism is the local gurdwara association, and some North American Sikhs also maintain solid religious ties with India.

Since the last many years, there have been several attempts to establish an integrated national Sikh religious organization within Canada and USA; however, this aim has not been achieved yet. Nevertheless, with its strong community institutions, group consciousness, and ready adaptation to new technologies, Sikhism has grown in North America, especially Canada and the USA, despite the pressures of assimilation and secularization.

Ekam Singh: How do you think the building itself or the architecture speaks to you as someone who studies Sikhism?

Dr. Singh: As a Sikh, Gurdwara building or architecture, for instance, Harmandir Sahib, Keshgarh Sahib and Anandgarh Sahib etc., speaks to me on two levels, i.e., Temporal and Spiritual.

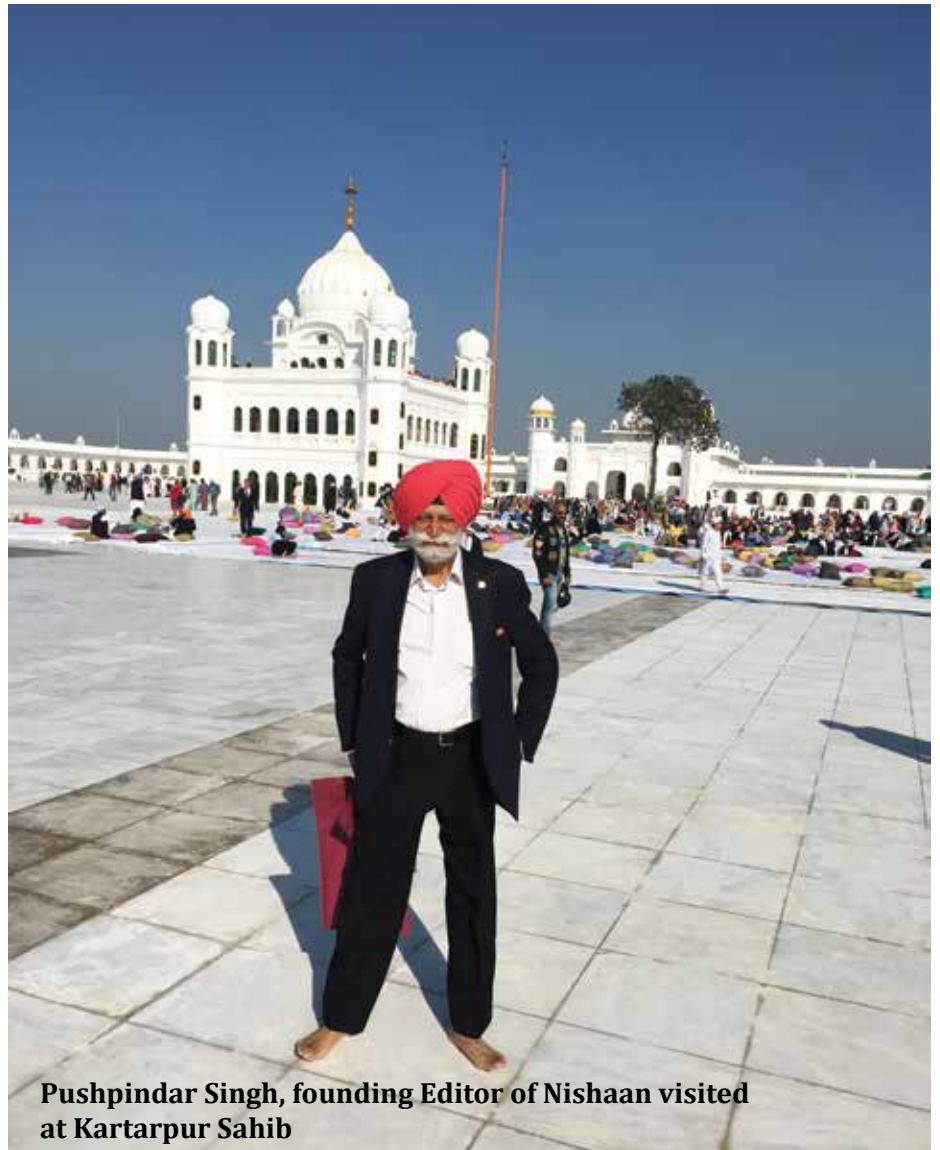
On the temporal level, massive columns, portals, inner structures, bukharchas (3 or 4 paneled projecting windows in a row) on the projecting base, and chhatns (kiosks) on the parapet remind me of Rajput architecture. But, on the other hand, the dome, arches, minarets, and underground cellars resemble Mughal architectural style. However, gurdwaras also display the innately

eclectic nature of their architectural design. They possess several distinct features and bring forward an identifiable picture of a style that can indeed be called Sikh Architecture.

For instance, compared to Hindu temples, Gurudwaras are more spacious, with the addition of adjoining divan asthan (assembly halls), where necessary, e.g., Manji Sahib Diwan Hall in Hari Mandir Sahib. Moreover, often, they have an entrance from all four sides. They are also not oriented to any particular direction like the Muslim mosques. *Guru ka Langar* (community kitchen and dining hall) is an essential adjunct to a gurdwara, and most

gurdwaras have sarovars (bathing tanks) in the vicinity. A gurdwara is recognizable from afar by the Nishan sahib, the Sikh pennant in yellow or blue flying atop a high flag post. Gurdwaras are often devoid of any sculptured images in or around them.

Basically, any gurdwara's building need not conform to any specific architectural design. The only essential and established requirement is the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib in a building under a canopy, on a higher platform, relative to the floor, where the devotees sit. But in time, many gurdwaras came to have structures of a particular design imitating the



Pushpinder Singh, founding Editor of Nishaan visited at Kartarpur Sahib

pattern of Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar.

Based on their plan form, Gurudwara buildings can be classified into four primary shapes: the rectangular, the square, the cruciform and the octagonal. However, cruciform is rarely used. One specific example of cruciform structure is Gurudwara Nanakjhira at Bidar in Karnataka, India. On the other hand, the famous Gurudwara Baba Atal in Amritsar is octagonal. Many gurdwaras have an octagonal sanctum sanctorum within their rectangular or square hall. An open or covered circumambulate passage usually runs around the sanctum.

Gurdwaras buildings vary in height too. These can be one to nine storeys high. However, these buildings are often topped by a dome. Moreover, many gurdwaras have basements below the ground floor, for instance, Bhora Sahib at Anandpur Sahib and Gurudwara Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji, near Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar.

A recurrent element of gurdwara design is the preferred use of two-storey height with an all-around gallery at mid-height,

leaving the center of the ground floor covered only by the top roof or the dome. As a rule, the dome is the crowning feature of a gurdwara. Even flat-roofed, rectangular gurudwara buildings often have a decorative dome over the spot where Guru Granth Sahib is installed.

Many times, a small single-room shrine is topped by palki, a palanquin-like roof derived from the Bengal style of architecture. Generally, the dome is ribbed or fluted. Various dome shapes often mark our shrines. These shapes include hemispherical, oblong, conical or three-quarters of a sphere. The more frequently used dome shape is spherical. The dome starts from a floral base and has an inverted lotus symbol top from which rises the kalash (the ornate finial).

Gurdwaras domes are usually painted in white or many times in gold. Domes of some important gurdwaras are often covered with gold-plated copper sheets. In contrast, domes of many other gurudwaras are lined with marble slabs or white or colored porcelain pieces.

Besides the large central dome,

there are often four other cupolas, one at each corner and several small solid domes embellishing the parapet. An ornate finial, the Kalash, invariably tops the dome. It shoots up in the form of a cylindrical construction, usually with some spheroids and concentric discs culminating in a small canopy with pendants hanging at the outer rim. The Kalash is traditionally made of brass or gilded copper. However, recently the use of steel or gilded khanda (double-edged sword) as pinnacle has come into vogue.

A Gurudwara's interior is often beautified using gachch or stucco work, tuknor fixing of mirror pieces, jaratkari or inlay work, mohrakashi or filigree, latticework or stone grills, and fresco painting. These techniques produce beautiful designs and friezes based on vine, plant, flower, bird, and animal motifs. Marvelous examples of such work can be seen in the Harmandir Sahib. The most significant number of frescoes have been painted on the first-floor walls of Baba Atal. It is important to note that Gurdwaras are not ornamented with depictions of God. They don't have ritualistic



Gurdwara Sri Kalgidhar Sahib in Takanini, Auckland

objects inside like the kind one may find in Catholic cathedrals or Jewish synagogues. The Guru Granth Sahib, the home of the eternal guru, is all that Sikhs require.

Each Gurdwara contains a deorhi (entrance gateway) too. The deorhi is usually an impressive structure and large, and it often serves as an office. A unique aspect of Sikh architecture is the contribution and participation of the common persons in raising or building a gurdwara.

On the spiritual level, a Gurdwara is where I can join a holy congregation (Sadh Sangat) in communal worship. The four doors of the Sanctum Sanctorum at Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar and similarly of many Gurdwaras worldwide make me aware that people from all directions (North, South, East, and West) and all the Varnas of Hinduism (Brahmin, Kshatriyas, Vaish and Shudar) are equally welcome at Gurdwaras. It helps me realize the importance of the Sikh values of universal fellowship and equality.

Another aspect of spiritual significance for me is the depiction of Lotus symbolism in Sikh art and architecture. For example, Harmandir Sahib floating in the middle of a pool is the personification of the lotus flower. A fully bloomed and open lotus flower represents full enlightenment and self-awareness. As mentioned earlier, most of the Gurdwaras are adorned by domes.

A dome symbolizes an unopened bud of a lotus flower. The unopened bud is symbolic of a folded soul that can unfold and open itself to the divine truth. Even the architecture of the buildings in and around Harmandir Sahib and the tops of the pillars in the parikrama (walkway) around the Harmandir Sahib have symbolic lotus leaves decorating them. The lotus flower's opening petals symbolize the potential for the soul

to expand and blossom into beauty and divinity. They represent the surrender of the mind to the power above. They embody openness and submissiveness even as the roots are mired in the muddy waters of worldliness and sin.

Another aspect of Gurudwara that rejuvenates my spiritual life is the Pangat and Langar traditions in Gurudwara. Langar hall is a regular part of a Gurudwara building. The activities at langar hall promote the Sikh values of Pangat (sitting at the same level in a row), selfless voluntary service, Sangat (universal fellowship), and equality for all.

Ekam Singh: Which is your favorite gurudwara in New York or North America?

Dr. Singh: In my opinion, all gurudwaras, wherever the teachings of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are preached, are equally important. However, some gurudwaras are more famous due to their historical association with the life events and activities of Sikh Gurus and Sikh martyrs. I do not have a personal preference for any Gurudwara in New York or North America. The essential criteria for deciding which gurudwara I should visit are the availability of quality spiritual and temporal services at a Gurudwara, its easy accessibility, and its nearness to my location.

Ekam Singh: How does the gurudwara embody Sikh values?

Dr. Singh: Gurdwaras embodies the Sikh values of Universal fellowship, equality for all and selfless service to others through its various institutions such as Sangat (Holy congregation), Pangat (sitting at a level in a row or a group) and Langar (community kitchen). Seva (Selfless Service) is central to the Sikh faith. It is part of Guru Nanak's central message. The contemporary Sikh community is keeping this tradition alive by helping people at disaster

sites worldwide and serving Langar in the scores of gurudwaras located worldwide. Through the pandemic, Sikhs have been seen to host oxygen langar, feed millions of migrants, distribute food through deliveries, drive-through set-ups and Seva trucks (July 2021).

From the architectural point of view, the four doors of Sanctum Sanctorum at Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar and many Gurudwaras worldwide signify that people from all directions, all Varnas of Hinduism, all races, and all nations are welcome at Gurudwaras. Thereby the Sikh value of equality for all is embodied.

The Sikh Gurus showed the world how to appreciate the interdependence of living beings and their environment. They also displayed the way to nurture this interrelationship. All their constructions adhered to this principle. Thereby, they built many Gurudwaras surrounded by large pools, which supported marine life, especially fish. It was/is a sign of living in harmony with the environment rather than in conflict. The seventh Sikh Guru, Guru Har Rai developed Kiratpur Sahib as a town of parks and gardens. Kiratpur, being located on the banks of a tributary of the Sutlej River, he planted flowers and fruit-bearing trees all over the area. It created a healthful environment, attracting beautiful birds to the town and turning it into an idyllic place to live in.

Though respect and love for the environment and Nature are common to almost all religions, the naming of sacred shrines (Gurdwaras) after trees is exclusive to the Sikh religion. There are about 60 Gurdwaras named after 19 species of trees. In addition, many tree species are preserved in several Gurudwaras all over India.

Ekam Singh: How does the gurudwara embody civic values?

Dr. Singh: Gurudwaras play a vital role in teaching civic and moral values to the adherents of Sikhism and pilgrims.

Solidarity is the first and essential civic value because it depends on the concretion of social relations. Solidarity consists of providing support to the person in need, essentially in a time of difficulty. In any town's gurudwara, any traveler can find food and a place to rest their tired limbs for a night or even longer.

Cooperation is another civic value embodied in Gurudwaras through the organizations of its various activities, be it organizing a holy congregation, Langar activity, Gurburab celebrations, Nagar Kirtan event, or any other philanthropic activity. All these activities are taken up and completed with the cooperation of the volunteers.

Education is commonly viewed as driving moral and ethical perspectives and actions. In general, better educated citizens are more tolerant of minority ethnic and religious groups, and other marginalized groups. They are more dedicated to civil liberties, and more likely to oppose government repression. Through various discourses and scriptural teachings, Gurudwaras play a critical role in educating people about the crucial issues related to an individual's social, cultural, and spiritual life. In addition, visitors to the Gurudwaras are often made aware of the common heritage of the community through lectures, presentations, and exhibitions.

The civic values such as justice for all, freedom of thought and expression, equality, inclusiveness, tolerance,

mutual assistance, participation, truth, patriotism, human rights, the rule of law, self-restraint, respect for others and voluntary service are much propagated through the sermons and various other activities (e.g., Gurmat Camps etc.) taken up at the gurudwaras for the benefits of Sikh community and society in general.

Ekam Singh: Thank you, Dr. Singh, for sparing your valuable time for this interaction. It was wonderful meeting you and listen to your views on various aspects of role of Gurdwaras in Sikh religion

Ekam Singh is a writer and architect based in New York City. His body of work includes design-builds for refugees alongside cutting-edge architectural experiments. He has written for platforms such as The Wire, Rethinking the Future and the Architect's Newspaper.



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Of Books, Home, Belonging & Leaving a Nishaan

Artika Aurora Bakshi



It's within the walls of the historic Galle Fort, during the 2024 Galle Literary Festival, that I met Balli Kaur Jaswal and Jasbinder Bilan, two prolific diasporic writers, talking about their books, their themes, and the places they call home.

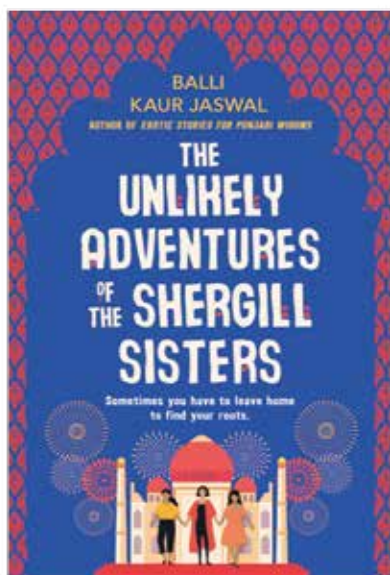
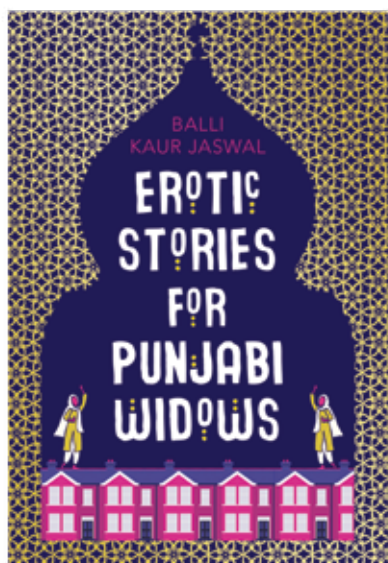
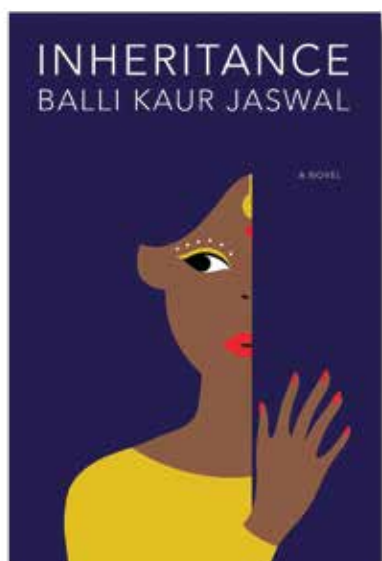
*Balli Kaur Jaswal is the internationally bestselling author of five novels, including **Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows** which was selected by Reese Witherspoon's book club. She was named a Best Young Australian Novelist by the Sydney Morning Herald after the publication of her debut novel **Inheritance**. Her follow-up novel **Sugarbread** was shortlisted for the Singapore Literature Prize.*

*Jaswal's short stories and essays have appeared in the UK Sunday Express, Cosmopolitan Magazine, The New York Times, Harper's Bazaar, and Best Australian Short Stories. Jaswal's latest novel is **Now You See Us**, a murder-mystery about domestic workers in Singapore.*

I first heard about Balli Kaur Jaswal when I reviewed *Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows*. Balli is a Singaporean novelist, having family roots in Punjab. All her previous novels have a strong Punjabi theme, and her latest one, *Now You See Us*, though about the Filipinos in Singapore, has a Punjabi character. The *Unlikely Adventures of the Shergill Sisters* transports

the readers from a quintessential Punjabi borough in London to the actual heartland in Amritsar. The essence of Punjabi culture, especially in the lives of those who have left a long time ago, wafts throughout her writing, which is engaging. The stories are bold, touching on topics such as identity, family dynamics, and cultural and generational differences, which are relevant,





cleverly using humor, to highlight the idiosyncrasies that are common to the Punjabi way of living. An adept reader will understand the relevance of her books in today's times.

"You always put a bit of yourself in every novel, and you think about where and how you see yourself, trying to represent different aspects of your identity into your novel. Sometimes we write to work things out, and to bring forth the issue that you want to highlight. For me it's been about where I belong, and how much of this identity is mine. Even though Now You See Us centres around the Filipino domestic workers in Singapore, I also wanted to include the experience of migrant workers, many of whom are from Punjab."

Singapore is home to Balli, and as with many of us, who have left the land of our birth, or the land of our ancestors, she understands what it feels like to be an outsider. While many, like Balli, who is a citizen of Singapore, find equal opportunities of growth, for the migrant workers, a sense of being marginalised can creep in. With the written word, writers have the power to bring forth such issues, with a hope of creating awareness and making diasporic communities feel strengthened. Singapore, according to her, is peaceful and tolerant, and many different ethnicities coexist, forming the unique fabric of the Singaporean society. But even then, based on which strata of society one belongs to, minorities, globally, can feel left out.

"As a diasporic writer, to some extent, I feel I have to give a voice to my community, but I don't feel I have a responsibility towards keeping an image. I find myself examining the way we do things. Keeping up appearances is a problem which many communities have, and instead of misrepresenting how they truly function, I try to represent and develop nuances in the characterisations, and in the way in which the Punjabi diasporic community is perceived."

As a writer, Balli not only gives a voice to the community, her books encourage conversations, which further encourage a community to introspect, examine, evolve, and belong. She belongs to a generation which understands diversity, and has made a place for themselves in Singapore, which to them is home. This generation stays connected to its roots, because as per Singaporean law, children are required to study their mother tongue.

"Most Singaporean Punjabis know the language and are very proficient in it, as they have studied it from Grade One until they finish school. This helps with the preservation of culture. The youth that I meet have a good balance between wanting to preserve their Punjabi heritage, and being part of conversations which talk about how they are perceived, further accepting that while they are different, they are still a part of a society which is tolerant to differences."

"Singaporean Punjabis are quite a mix of Singapore and India. The younger generation doesn't really miss life in Punjab, because they have never lived there. It's not missing a place in a tangible sense, but contemplating a life which they think they might have had, had the families not moved away. Every migrant has a shadow life. When I was growing up, there was a sense of reaching into the culture, and knowing how people were living in Punjab, and trying to assimilate it into the way we lived. With the older generation, and certainly with migrant workers, they miss family. They miss the way of living, the personal connections that you find in Punjab. In a house in Punjab, even today, you have generations living in this one big house, knowing the others who live nearby. There is a connection they feel to the land, the land of their ancestors. In Singapore, things are always changing and that sense of familiarity and belonging is what people miss sometimes."

Through her writing, not only does



Balli connect with others, she also tries to work out her own sense of belonging, having lived in many other countries. According to her, diaspora is another country in itself, and migration and transition are their own spaces too, which make interesting themes to write about. The otherness which she resisted when growing up, is now one of the central themes in her writing, making her novels immersive, interesting,

and introspective.

"The otherness has become my superpower. I realised that the world we live in today has so much contradiction and overlap. You would be a very dull person if you were just one thing. I learnt to embrace it, and use it as an asset, where I can be different, and I don't need to be the same as everyone or fit in."

The best writings come from

inspirations around us, and the inspiration for *Erotic Stories for Punjabi Widows* came from a visit to Southall, London, a place which is still rooted in the idea of what Punjab was when many families migrated. It's in stories such as these, where beauty and sadness are deftly juxtaposed, that the yearning for home, for roots, for a sense of belonging can be felt. With *The Unlikely Adventures of the Shergill Sisters*, the idea was to understand the space between tradition and modernity, through the lives of three sisters, who have never been to India, and how they are perceived by each other and those in their extended circles.

"I hope that my stories spark conversations, and provide people with insights into their own lives and those of other people. Through stories, we get to live a slightly different life for a while. I also wish that people use their own otherness in a positive way. Instead of seeing themselves as a 'confused overseas desis', they replace confused with complex, having many different aspects and perspectives, and then using those as assets."





Jasbinder Bilan is the Costa Award winning author of *Asha and the Spirit Bird*, *Tamarind and the Star of Ishta*, *Aarti and the Blue Gods* and *Xanthe and the Ruby Crown*. Jasbinder's books have been nominated for the Carnegie Medal, Long-listed for the Blue Peter Award, shortlisted for the Waterstone's Prize and won The Indie Book Awards.

In her writing she loves creating magical worlds inspired by her love of nature and wild places. Jasbinder's books are both a window and a mirror. She writes characters she would love to have seen in the books she read as a young girl.

Her latest book *Nush and the Stolen Emerald*, is an exciting historical adventure with themes of decolonisation, belonging and female empowerment.

Jasbinder Bilan finds inspiration for her writings from the home she left years ago. She wears her heritage proudly, and like Balli, she too has used the nuances of her mixed culture to write stories, some of which are set in a village like her own. Her target audience, very different from Balli's audience, are middle-graders and young adults, who she transports into magical realms, in which family and community play an important

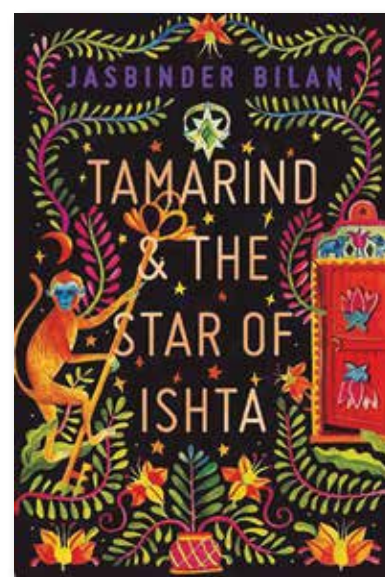
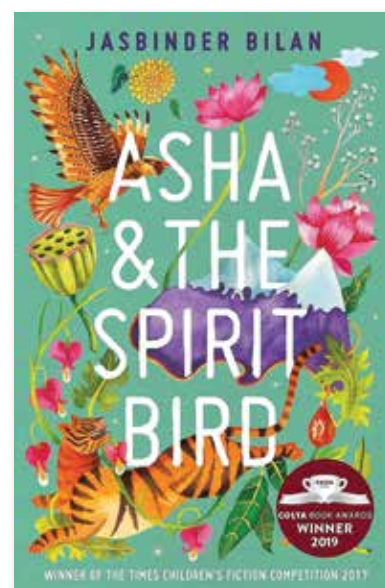
role. Her writing is vivid, evocative, and emotionally empowering, encouraging her readers to find strength in their diversity.

"I always wanted to write, and as a little girl, I loved writing and drawing, but I didn't really know how I could become a writer. When I was growing up we didn't have any author visits, and I didn't think it could be a job I could do. It took quite a long time, and I decided to become a teacher. It was the closest thing, and I was happy that I was still surrounded by books and stories. Eventually, when I actually decided that I wanted to be a writer, I took a step towards creative writing. And that's when I had to think of a story that would go on to become my first book.

*I was born on a farm in the foothills of the Himalayas, and my family moved to England when I was a baby. I grew up in a house in Nottingham which was full of stories of the place that my family had left behind. My Maaji, my grandmother, was the person who connected me to the stories of the home, of India, of how our farm was. So, all those years later, that became the inspiration for my first novel, *Asha and the Spirit Bird*."*

Written in Nottingham, far away from where her roots are, Jasbinder's stories follow in the line of the rich storytelling culture of India. Her settings, which are the foundation of her stories, are a sensory delight that immerse the readers into the world that she creates.

*"I am a visual writer. I begin with a setting, and for *Asha and the Spirit Bird*, I had a clear picture in my head of a little girl playing in the dust with water. Behind her was a tall mountain with snow. In that one image, I had my story. I knew a few things I knew about it, and for the rest, I started to quiz myself about who the girl was, what was her story, what was the worst thing that could happen in the setting, and what was the best that could happen."*



Jasbinder's stories take you back to the time when grandmothers indulged children with stories. Emotionally and culturally enriched, her stories have a simplicity which evokes feelings of love, hope, and resilience.

"When I started writing, I had a few wishes. I wanted to incorporate some of the conversations I have had with my Maaji when I was a young girl. One of them, when I was around eight years old, was about death, and the sadness it brings forth, especially when you are close to the person. Her reply about reincarnation stayed with me, and I incorporated that into my first book."

Jasbinder's Punjabi heritage has always been with her, and the stories she has heard from her grandmother, about her childhood in India, are reflected in the innocence of her protagonists.

"We grew up in England, always aware of what we had left behind. For my father, it was difficult, because he had loved it there, surrounded by his land, working on it. My uncle had lived in the U.K. before we moved, and he had wanted his family together. Moving to England, a choice that my father made in the hope for better education, opportunities for us, wasn't the easiest. But because the whole family was together, even though in separate houses, the tradition of gathering together kept us connected with the culture we had left behind. We have lovely memories of when everyone would meet up for big family dinners. My Maaji lived with us, and within her she carried Punjab, and the stories from back home, which created a strong foundation for us in the U.K."

"My children, who are of dual heritage, as my husband is English, connect with their Naniji, the way my siblings and I connected with Maaji. I speak Punjabi because it was the language of communication with my grandmother. My parents made sure

we spoke it the right way, and not with an accent. We were always proud of that, because it's language that also keeps you connected to your roots."

Like most first generation migrant Punjabis, Jasbinder too had tried to fit in by navigating the two cultures and choosing the English one. The seventies in England were very different to today, where diversity is embraced.

"As youngsters we always tend to see what the others are doing, and we

"When I started writing, I had a few wishes. I wanted to incorporate some of the conversations I have had with my Maaji when I was a young girl"

try to do the same in order to belong. But as you grow, and gain more confidence, you start understanding the strength in being different.

For me it came through my storytelling at a much later stage. Probably, if I had written a book when I was younger, I wouldn't have written this book. I would have written something to fit myself into a mould that wasn't the authentic me. The authentic me is proud of my heritage and my roots.

When I actually wrote, it was so natural, because it was all about the things I loved about my Maaji, things that I felt viscerally in my bones, of being this little girl from Punjab."

"My stories are a gift to myself, and to the young readers, who can experience a different world. When my first book was published in 2019, it was unique, as there weren't many diverse books in the market. The U.K. is a diverse country, and I feel that this should be visible in the literary world too. I wrote the story because of who I am, and the stories I wanted to tell, and not in an attempt to break moulds. But if it encourages diversity, and if it breaks the mould, I feel I have accomplished something. It wasn't easy as the interest in diverse stories wasn't there. No one saw it as a problem.

The Book Trust report was hugely influential, as they realised there was an issue. Book Trust is the U.K.'s largest children's reading charity that encourages children to read. They realised that there wasn't enough diversity in children's books, in the main characters, and the themes. Even in bookstores, one would be hard-pushed to find books by diverse voices. Because of the efforts by the Book Trust, which are ongoing, you see diverse literature being recognised, and widely read in the U.K."

The Galle Literary Festival is a world-renowned festival in Sri Lanka, known for its distinct format and style. Being an important port during olden times, Galle was a melting pot of cultures, with the Portuguese, Dutch, and British, leaving their mark, as traders and colonists. It's during the festival, that the literati gather in Galle, with literature, culture, art, food, music, and heritage, reverberating through the cobbled streets of this old port town.

Memories of Kinnaird: A Beacon of Light for the Punjabi Woman

Nanki Kaur



Coming from a family that was a part of the India-Pakistan partition, I have often heard elders reminisce about their pre-partition lives, including the many friends they made in their youthful school days. It was very interesting when a whole new world of Kinnaird College established in Lahore in 1913, in present-day Pakistan was introduced to me. This is when I had the opportunity to interview Mrs. Priyo Batra, the President of OAKS (Old Associates of Kinnaird Society) in India, and other members of the alumni on behalf of the Partition Museum, Amritsar between 2019 and 2020. Through their memories a magical journey and story was

revealed to me: one of women's empowerment, leadership, and lifelong friendships.

Kinnaird College, an iconic institution located in Lahore has had an immense impact not only in recent years, but also when Lahore was part of undivided Punjab. At a time when women's education in undivided Punjab was not given much importance, Kinnaird College stood as the lone beacon of light for many. It was set up when students from Kinnaird High School started to demand further higher education opportunities, which eventually led to its establishment by the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission. The Zenana Bible and Medical Mission

was initially established to carry out missionary work among elite women in India, but soon started offering medical services as well.

At the time of its establishment, Kinnaird College was the only women's college in Punjab. It gained further importance when there was a growth in women's education across the country and shifts in curriculum. Kinnaird College (or 'Kinnaird' as it is fondly called) was a relatively new institution at the time of its establishment and it clearly reflected these changes in society. Subjects like history, political science, geography and science were given equal priority as domestic skills. The numerous members of its alumni whom I

“The numerous members of its alumni whom I have interviewed, such as Mohini Chaudhry, testify to this fact. Mohini, a top student, studied Geography Honours at Kinnaird before Partition”



(Above): Mohini Chaudhary with her classmates

(Below): Cast of the annual play 'Barretts of Wimpole Street' performed by Kinnaird Dramatics Society in 1947



have interviewed, such as Mohini Chaudhry, testify to this fact. Mohini, a top student, studied Geography Honours at Kinnaird before Partition.

“I came first in Geography and took up Geography Honours. So, I got a scholarship, you know how much it was? 25 rupees! My father said, ‘Now, stop it!’ he got angry with me – ‘25 rupees!...I’ll give you a month and then you are not going back to Lahore’”

Despite the opposition she faced from her father, she continued her studies.

Similarly, Prem Krishnan who recounted her life’s story to me by reciting poems out of a slim white book in her hands, mentioned how Kinnaird helped her achieve academic excellence in not only social sciences and sciences, but also gave her a command over languages. “I had been attending Hindi medium schools, so when I joined Kinnaird, I felt extremely conscious of my low knowledge of English. But very soon, my teachers and my classmates helped improve my skills...and today I can write comfortably in both languages!”

Watching these women reminisce their academic achievements in college made me realise how Kinnaird had given them the chance to hold their own in a society which otherwise looked down upon them academically.

These interviews also revealed how Kinnaird was an institution which gave women the environment to grow and develop holistically. During a period when women were mainly restricted to the household, Kinnaird provided their students with opportunities to undertake extra-

curricular activities. Prem Krishnan, with tears in her eyes, recounted episodes from her dramatic classes with Mrs. Najmuddin. "She was my favourite, and she encouraged me to take part in many plays and performances." Uma Ratra, another alumnus of Kinnaird, also revealed to me how every student was required to take up one sport and one activity, at the very least.

Kinnaird also taught its students leadership and concern for their community. Mohini Chaudhry spoke to me with much excitement about how she was the Treasurer and Deputy Senior Student during her senior year at Kinnaird - "We had a system that was sort of like a small election where you had to put in your votes. First, for the one who is going to be the president, then for the treasurer. We used to collect 4 annas from everybody; I remember that because I was the treasurer. And then, the treasurer used to take care of all the functions of the year, like Diwali, Holi, and Eid. I was then chosen as the Deputy Senior Student. And then we had a Games President, and a Health President who used to check on everybody if they were keeping well. This used to be our committee; and we used to meet once a week."

What made Kinnaird memorable for many of its partition-era alumni was Ms. McNair. A graduate from the University of Edinburgh, Ms. Isabella McNair came to India in 1917 and became the principal of Kinnaird in 1928.

Each person I interviewed remembered her quite vividly. Ms. Ratra revealed to me during her interview: "Ms. McNair believed that the relationship between teachers and their students was extremely important...Can you imagine, she made it a point to remember each and every girl's name and the place they came from!"



Portrait of Ms. McNair



Uma Ratra

Cast and crew members of 'La Giocanda' performed by the Kinnaird Dramatics Society in 1946



Listening to these interviews I came to realise that for those who studied at Kinnaird College, the relationships students had with each other and their teachers played a major role in their lives, shaping them to become the women they became, and valued for the rest of their lives.

These lessons and bonds have now become part of the precious memories many hold dear of the places and people they were forced to leave behind.

(This work was published first in the Partition Museum Blog. All interviewee photographs belong to the Partition Museum.) Photos 3, 4, & 6 belong to the Kinnaird Archives.

Nanki Kaur is a 'young heritage professional', who works to create awareness of and preserve our national and global heritage. She has been exposed to the workings of numerous heritage institutions and monuments in Europe, Egypt, as well as at the Partition Museum in Amritsar and INTACH.

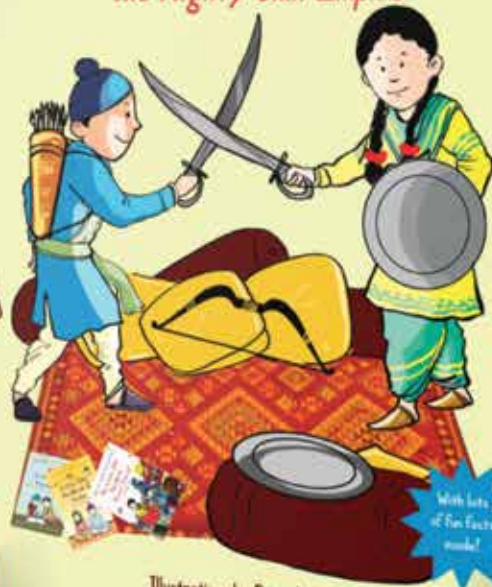
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The Mighty Sikh Empire



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ARTIKA AURORA BAKSHI



Turn the pages and revisit the history of
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of the Sikhs. Read about Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the
glory of the Khalsa Army. Journey along the Koh-i-Noor,
as it finds its way to the Tower of London.



The Sacred Amritsar

Artika Aurora Bakshi

A city of mystics, with the notes of Gurbani, the songs of Kabir, and the poetry of Bulley Shah, reverberating for centuries through the gallis of Amritsar. The sounds have gotten lost over the din of development, the city growing, competing, sometimes forgetting its own place, and the “SACRED” it holds within. The “SACRED” essence of Amritsar spreads once again with Teamworks Arts, Sacred Amritsar festival, a festival that honours the art, literature, heritage and culture of Amritsar, Punjab and on a larger scale, India.



(Top Right) Poetry of Punjab: Surjit Patar with Sarbjot Singh Behl

(Top Left) Saumya Kulshreshtha with Sarbpreet Singh, Sarbjot Singh Behl, and Swanand Kirkire

(Bottom left) IP Singh of Faridkot

"The endeavour is towards rediscovering cities and spaces, and stuff that is beyond what you expect. Everybody looks at Amritsar primarily for the Golden Temple. But when you actually move around the city, when you see its built heritage, it's extraordinary. The city has everything from the Harmandir Sahib which was built during the time of the gurus, to the Lion of Punjab's time, when Amritsar and Lahore were twin cities, the Summer Palace in Rambagh Gardens and the Gobindgarh Fort.

Amritsar's colonial heritage also stands out, with magnificent buildings such as the Town Hall, and some of the other restored buildings like The Earth from the early 20th century, which used to be the Victoria Jubilee Hospital during those times, and later the Vijay Hospital. It lay unused for 30 years. When you start restoring some of these heritage monuments and create value within that, you then open up the possibility of having people relook at their old havelis and ensure that the city



Sanjoy K Roy

doesn't lose its essence. In respect to Amritsar, sewa needn't stop at the edge of the precincts of Darbar Sahib. Why shouldn't the sewa be for the whole city, for the people themselves, for the environment, and about discovering the SACRED within? We have forgotten our connection in many ways, so the Sacred series we do, whether it's here or in Benaras, in Florida, in Madurai, is to help find the reconnection to ourselves, and

to the divine within. The series is about discovering yourself through music, arts, empathy, and love, and feeling proud of our own heritage. The morning events cater to the delegates who participate. Our evening events are free events, open to the people of the city we are in. It's not a bubble that we create, we create connections, which further encourage people to connect with others and themselves."



"There is a whole debate about conservation, preservation, and rebuilding. Public spaces, especially those with heritage value need to be relooked at, and restored through conservation, and in some cases, through rebuilding, but with sensitivity, and not by changing history to suit yourself. The past roots us, giving us our tradition, our cultural grounding, our identity. And if you learn from the past, which we very rarely do, then perhaps you get an essence of what the present is, helping us envision a better future."



The Partition Museum comprehensively charts the Partition with a narrative arc that moves from the time before partition, proceeds to the independence movement, the early demands for separate countries, and ultimately the Partition and its consequences. Established as a People's Museum, the Partition Museum endeavors to depict the Partition as it was experienced by the People.



"From day one, our mandate was to encourage young people, especially students, to visit us, to understand what the partition was, here in Amritsar and in Delhi.

I believe that if the younger generation doesn't appreciate history, then it's a question of how soon are we going to forget it, and how soon are we going to repeat the mistakes. So I feel it's important for us to remember that, and this endeavour is a step in that direction.

The Sacred Amritsar is an incredible platform honouring the city of Amritsar, and we are happy to be associated with them. The museum is housed in the historic Town Hall, a late-19 century building, which makes it even more special."

The Sacred Amritsar is a celebration of mystics-poets and their timeless verse and this festival honours the spirit of Amritsar, known for its rich and diverse cultural heritage.

Kishwar Desai

"Sleepwell is in the business of making mattresses, and we want people to sleep well. On one side, we take care of that by giving them the best mattresses available. Comfort



Namita Gautam

is a very subjective thing, so we have different types of mattresses to suit different requirements. But we also know that when there is any problem, may it be physical, intellectual, or emotional, sleep is the first thing that gets affected, so we want to take care of that too. We want people to feel emotionally well so that they can sleep well. If you are not well, no mattress will work. So on the other side, we take care of that too, through our Sleepwell Foundation.

The foundation is involved in a lot of emotional awareness programmes, targeting the youth. We have different programmes for different age groups. One of our programmes is about "Emotional Wellness" and "Emotional First Aid". Being associated with the Sacred series is an extension into our commitment towards emotional wellness, because music and performing arts also give sukoon, which then relaxes everyone, further improving their sleep patterns. I have known Sanjoy since the last forty years, and I have seen the work that he does. So when Teamwork Arts shared this proposal with us, we agreed to associate with them.

They also saw the connect with our foundation, and that's why they approached us. The Sacred series honours the cities that it goes to, and if we talk specifically about Amritsar, the city has vibes which transcend all religious beliefs. People get an opportunity to experience the city and its heritage."



"My association with Teamwork Arts is very tangential. I have known the company and Sanjoy for about twenty years, going back to the time when I was posted in the Indian High Commission in London. They were doing a show for the Government of India, and invited us to the Edinburgh Fringe. It was an eye-opener for me. I had never seen Indian culture so beautifully presented. People had very clichéd notions about performing arts in India. So when I was posted as the Consul General in South Africa, I had the opportunity to interact with Sanjoy again, and asked him to create his magic there as well. We continued to collaborate in Egypt and Australia when I was posted there. So when I moved to Amritsar, we thought we could do something here too. I was just the catalyst. They have been amazing, and credit to them for having planned such an exquisite festival in Amritsar, with their sponsor Sleepwell. I am very happy that this is the second edition in our wonderful city, and I hope it stays as a regular feature on our cultural calendar, and continues to grow."

"Amritsar doesn't need an introduction. It's already a major tourist attraction. But what this festival does is, that it gets a very discerning audience of delegates, who come from across the world. They do the same when they organise the Kabira Festival in Benaras, and in some of their other events. Teamwork Arts has built a reputation for their excellence in how they present the arts. For that kind of an audience, the experience of coming to Amritsar, doing the city walks, tasting the cuisine, learning a little bit about the history, the literature, the arts, is what meaningful tourism is all about. It's not about going to a monument and taking selfies, but immersing yourself a little bit in the art, culture, and heritage of the city. The programming has been curated in a way where all those elements have been skillfully taken care of, in addition to the artists, from Amritsar, other cities in Punjab, and from other regions of India, who have participated. For the delegates to have heard Surjit Patar's poetry,

to have listened to the writings of Nanak Singh, the experience itself would have enriched their understanding of Amritsar, of Punjab, and of Sikhism. Festivals such as the Sacred Amritsar are also good for our city, as they expose the residents of the city to an immersive appreciation of their own heritage."



Navdeep Suri is a retired Indian diplomat, the grandson of acclaimed Punjabi novelist & poet Nanak Singh.



Teamwork Arts was founded in 1989 by Sanjoy K. Roy, who serves as its Managing Director. The company is dedicated to curating and promoting cultural events, festivals, and performing arts across India and internationally.

Information on www.thesacred.in and www.teamworkarts.com



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PITCHING IT STRAIGHT

M.S.Unnikrishnan

He left behind the deep scars of the partition holocaust to rebuild a life for himself and his devastated family at Patiala in Punjab, first as a cricketer, then as a coach, administrator and academy guru. Sardar Gurcharan Singh's life has been a saga of struggles and sacrifices, setbacks and tears, yet he never gave up, till he attained his goals, one by one. His resilience and hard work enabled him to reach the pinnacle of glory, by playing life's gambit with a straight bat.

He was the Chief cricket coach of the Sports Authority of India at the National Stadium, Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) Zonal and the National Coach. Felicitations and awards such as the Dronacharya and Padma Shri Awards were accorded to him for his unprecedented achievements in producing over a dozen international cricket players for both the Tests and limited-over formats. He is also credited with grooming hundreds of national, zonal, state and institutional players.

With unrelenting hard work, diligence, discipline and his undying passion for sports, particularly cricket, Sardar Gurcharan Singh carved a special niche for himself in the theatre of life. He was one of the most productive, successful cricket coaches in the country, nay the world, and that is perhaps the reason that even into his nineties, Gurcharan Singh ji is as active and productive as ever.

I have known Gurcharan Singh ji from the late seventies, when I was a rookie Sports Reporter with the Patriot newspaper, and he was cricket coach at the National Stadium. I have been a ring-side witness to his many landmark feats, which he achieved with total commitment and devotion. However, I fully understood the trials and tribulations, struggles and challenges, he had undergone only when I collaborated with him while writing his memoir, 'Pitching It

Straight...Memoir of a Cricket Guru.' Writing the book was a revelation, and an eye-opener as many of the hidden facets of his life tumbled out of his hitherto closely guarded closet. When his father and uncle were shot dead by a rampaging mob during the partition riots at Ganda Kas in the Punjab province of Pakistan in 1947, Gurcharan Singh was barely 12 years old. He was a student at the Mota Singh Public School. He was taken out

“With back-breaking hard work, diligence, discipline and his undying passion for sports, particularly cricket, Sardar Gurcharan Singh carved out a special niche for himself in the theatre of life”

of the boarding school, and the Army shifted the family to a temporary relief camp, before sending them to Patiala in Punjab amidst death and destruction all around. His passion for sports—volleyball, swimming, hockey and athletics to cricket—hewed out a new path for him, with the benevolent hands of the Maharaja of Patiala Yadavindra Singh over his head. With the blessings of the Maharaja, Gurcharan Singh

made his Ranji Trophy debut for Patiala under the captaincy of Lala Amarnath, never to look back. He was a right-arm off break bowler and a right-handed batter. He played first class cricket for the erstwhile teams of Patiala and Southern Punjab, and ended his career after a six-year stint with Railways, where he shared the dressing room with the likes of Lala Amarnath, Dattu Phadkar, B B Nimbalkar, Nari Contractor, Budhi Kunderan and Vasant Ranjane. Gurcharan Singh played 37 first class matches, taking 44 wickets at an average of 33.50 and scoring 1198 runs with one century to his name. He eventually got a coaching diploma from the National Institute of Sports (NIS) in Patiala and qualified to become a professional cricket coach.

Gurcharan Singh would often surmise that if his family was not forced to shift to Patiala because of partition, and had he grown up in Ganda Kas in Pakistan, he would have surely ended up in his family business of making and selling carpets, as there was no facility to play cricket in his village, though he would often travel great distances to play volleyball.

He would also narrate that he learnt swimming in the local pond near his home, but his life really bloomed only after he came to Patiala. There, he enrolled in the City School to become the captain of the school's cricket team, bypassing many senior players.

After proving his mettle as a cricketer at the school level, he was taken on a stipend by the Mahindra College to play for the college, and help the College lift the Inter-College and Inter-University titles. About the four years he spent with the Mahindra College, Gurcharan Singh would joke that he neither 'failed' nor 'passed' after studying in Mahindra College, as his brief was to play cricket, and not study! But playing cricket was a great learning experience which stood him in good stead in his life's journey.



(Left): Gurcharan Singh receiving Padma Shri award from President Droupadi Murmu on March 2023



(Right): Inspite of his age Gurcharan Singh continues to teach the next generation the art of playing cricket

“He founded the Dronacharya Cricket Academy in Delhi apart from running two cricket clubs, Delhi Blues Cricket Club and the Neo Sports Cricket Club to offer opportunities to talented boys to play in the Delhi cricket league and other tournaments”

Gurcharan Singh ji, who has been integral to the story of the rise of Indian cricket since independence.

His coaching legacy includes grooming hundreds of players who played the Ranji Trophy and a dozen who went on to play international cricket. He received the *Dronacharya* Award in 1987, becoming the second cricket coach after Desh Prem Azad to have received the accolade. He was bestowed with the Padma Shri Award in March 2023, which was yet another plume on his well-adorned crown.

After earning a diploma in cricket coaching from the National Institute of Sports (NIS), Patiala when he was an employee of Indian Railways, Gurcharan Singh played for the Railways. He also coached the team, before opting to take up coaching full time with the NIS in Delhi, where he became the chief cricket coach of the Sports Authority of India at the National Stadium.

His well-wishers had advised him not to quit the Railway job to become a cricket coach, but his true calling was on the cricket field, to give wings to the dreams of young boys. He did not disappoint them, and he did not regret his decision to make cricket coaching his full-time vocation either. He later founded the Dronacharya Cricket Academy in Delhi apart from running two cricket clubs, Delhi Blues Cricket Club and the Neo Sports Cricket Club

to offer opportunities to talented boys to play in the Delhi cricket league and other tournaments. He has coached over a hundred players who would play domestic cricket at the highest level in the country, 12 of whom—Surinder Khanna, Kirti Azad, Maninder Singh, Sunil Valson, Vivek Razdan, Nikhil Chopra, Ajay Jadeja, Gursharan Singh, Murali Kartik, Gagan Khoda, Rahul Sanghvi and Vijay Mehra (who played for the



UAE national team)--went on to play international cricket.

Gurcharan Singh ji also coached the Indian team, then captained by Kapil Dev, for two years in 1986 and 1987 and also coached Maldives in 1985.

He set up the Gwalior Cricket Academy at the bidding of then Union Minister Madhav Rao Scindia, and he also formed a team for Modern Foods, when Bhagawat Jha Azad was a Union Minister in charge

of the Corporation. He used to take cricket teams to England to give exposure of English conditions to his boys, and many talented players had hugely benefited from such tours to the Blighty.

Aged 89, Gurcharan Singh Ji remains active in Delhi cricket, despite having retired from SAI almost three decades ago.

A reminder of this was given on social media in December last year

when a photo of him clad in full cricket gear and walking out to bat in a local match, attracted thousands of viewers, to reassert his life's dictum to never give up, and play with a straight bat always, defying the odds of age.

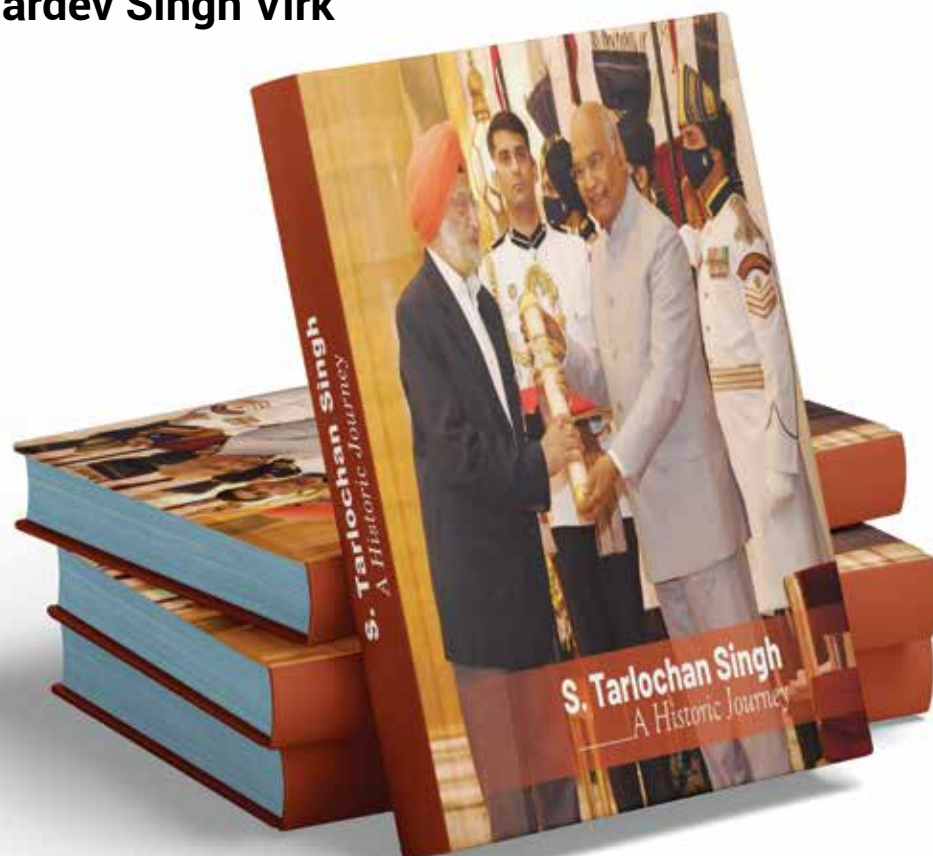
MS Unnikrishnan is a leading sports journalist, who has worked for many leading newspapers, including The Tribune.

Sardar Tarlochan Singh: A Historic Journey

Book Review by Prof. Hardev Singh Virk

I have known Tarlochan Singh as my senior in Mohindra College Patiala and have kept a track record of his achievements as the years have gone past. He is a well-wisher of all his friends and foes as eulogised by Prof. Balkar Singh in his tribute. I had reviewed his books for 'The Sikh Review' in the past. He even sent me an online copy of his book 'A Historical Journey.' Prof. Dr. Karamjit Singh, Vice Chancellor of Jagat Guru Nanak Dev Punjab State Open University, Patiala pays glowing tributes to Sardar Tarlochan Singh in his Foreword: "Padam Bhushan Sardar Tarlochan Singh is hailed as a walking encyclopaedia on Sikhism, sports, Indian politics, and Punjab. He is known as a Sikh leader who is an able parliamentarian, a well-read columnist, a successful communicator, and a proven administrator."

We get an overview of Tarlochan Singh's work and achievements after he completed his M.A. in Economics in 1955 from Mohindra College, Patiala, affiliated to Punjab University, Chandigarh: "Tarlochan Singh held several prestigious positions such as Director, Department of Tourism, Culture, Museum and Archaeology, Government of Punjab; and later Director, Publicity and Public Relations of the 9th Asian Games Organising Committee, New Delhi. He was appointed as a Press Secretary to the Presidents of India followed by the position of Managing Director



of Delhi Tourism Government of India; Chairman of Delhi Tourism Corporation; Chairman National Commission for Minorities, Government of India with the status of Union Cabinet Minister." There is a long list of sterling qualities of Tarlochan Singh recounted in the Foreword which are attributed to his Sikhi Sidak: "Having made a mark in public life as an achiever, still he always remains grounded, while drawing inspiration from Sri Guru Granth Sahib. As a true follower of the Sikh Gurus, he lives the concept of 'Kirat Karo, Naam Japo & Vand

Chhako' in his life. The Foreword ends with a famous quote:

**ਮੈਂ ਰਾਹਾਂ ਤੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਤੁਰਦਾ ਮੈਂ ਤੁਰਦਾ ਹਾਂ ਤਾਂ
ਰਾਹ ਬਣਦੇ**

Dr Prabhleen Singh, President, Young Progressive Sikh Forum, writes in his editorial note that Dr Rajinder Singh Raju Chadha, President International Punjab Forum, and Chairman Wave Group encouraged him to publish this book. I wonder how the editor accomplished this herculean task of sorting, reading, vetting, editing, and compiling hundreds of letters, mementoes, awards, and other

documents to prepare this coffee table book without altering its original content and impact. To cover lifetime achievements of Sardar Tarlochan Singh, whose activities cover all domains of human affairs ranging from academics, sports, politics, and as an ambassador of Sikhi, is not an easy task. Despite his hectic lifestyle, Tarlochan Singh has penned down one dozen books concerning Sikh history, politics, current affairs, and his biography.

I find it difficult to classify this book in traditional genres. After reading its pages, I call it 'memorabilia,' as it has some documents (photos and letters) worthy of being used as archival material for future generations of Sikh historians. After a brief introduction by the editor, one can read messages of prominent personalities from different fields from India and abroad. Roopinder Singh, a senior journalist and former Associate Editor of 'The Tribune,' recalls his association with Tarlochan Singh from his childhood as his father, Giani Gurdit Singh's friend. He writes about this book in the following words: "A remarkable story of a person who was not only a witness to history but also someone who helped shape it from time to time."

The most interesting chapter of this book is 'Rashtrapati Bhawan Stories' narrated by Tarlochan Singh in the interview recorded by the editor. It covers the most difficult era of his life spent as Press Secretary to Giani Zail Singh, the then President of India. He tried to maintain decorum of his office as well as cordial relations with PMs, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi. Tarlochan Singh was an eyewitness to many events happening in the Rashtrapati Bhawan during and after Operation Blue Star as well as after the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

I fail to understand why Giani ji was in a tearing hurry to instal Rajiv Gandhi as the next PM? He was advised against this move by some senior Congress leaders and



media persons. Tarlochan Singh reveals: "Normally, the President of India ought to have waited for a formal letter from the ruling party, informing him of the election of Rajiv Gandhi as leader of the majority party in Parliament. The oath ceremony was performed with utter silence. The Congress Parliamentary Board met after two hours and elected Rajiv Gandhi as its leader." It clearly shows that Giani ji, as President of India, did not follow the rules but offered Rajiv, the constitutional office of PM on a platter. Perhaps, the absolute power corrupted him (Rajiv) and as an affront, he evn tried to ignore the President. Tarlochan Singh was removed from his office in Rashtrapati Bhawan on the bidding of PM Indira Gandhi, as his tapes describing the situation after Operation Blue Star were revealed to the national media.

I found Tarlochan Singh's note regarding his transfer from servitude of Punjab government by the then powerful CM of Punjab, Partap Singh Kairon very interesting. It was not owing to some deficiency in the service rendered by Tarlochan Singh as PR officer but on the contrary, the dismissal was owing to political rivalry between the CM and his

Irrigation Minister, Gian Singh Rarewala. He was not removed from service but only transferred to a remote area of Punjab. In later years, Kairon reconciled with Tarlochan and never let him down. This shows the qualities of head and heart that defined Tarlochan Singh and his skill in dealing with politicians of all hues. In my view, he had the best of personal relationship with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, BJP supremo and PM of India, who supported Tarlochan Singh to reach Rajya Sabha as MP from Haryana and nominated him Chairman, Minority Commission of India, a Cabinet rank post.

I was mesmerised by the tribute paid by Professor Balkar Singh of Punjabi University Patiala, a lifelong friend of Sardar Tarlochan Singh, in his short essay, 'Man Who Stood for Panthic Causes.' He writes: "Life endeavours of S. Tarlochan Singh have met with success because he pursued these with unflinching faith and a detached attitude. These qualities of head and heart have helped him in struggling for the chosen causes and succeed in their resolution with aplomb." He goes on to describe Tarlochan Singh's sterling qualities: "He always stood for Panthic causes without becoming a narrow minded fundamentalist.

He, as a humble Sikh, has never been oblivious to Sikh concerns while participating in political activities. Free from the taint of fear and jealousy, he remains in touch with even those who do not see eye to eye with him. At times, he feels sad at the indifference of the Sikhs towards the pressing problems of the community." I also find mention of Tarlochan Singh opposing Jawahar Lal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, at Fatehgarh Sahib, as a member of the Sikh Students Federation for which he suffered imprisonment and torture in jail. He became a popular leader of Sikh youth.

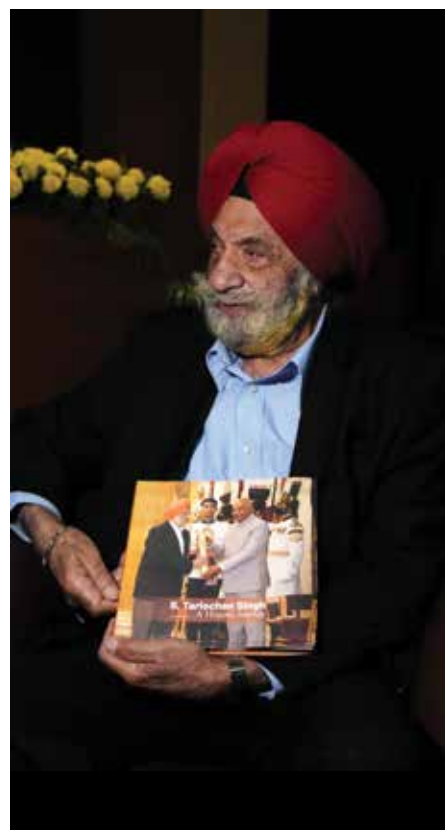
Shubhabrata Bhattacharya, Former Editor, The Sunday Magazine calls Tarlochan Singh: 'The Mosaic of PR Man.' Nikky Guninder Kaur Singh (USA) calls him 'A Bridge with the Past' and pays a glowing tribute to his persona: "There are not many people who inspire others to stay connected with the past while building modern edifices. Tarlochan Singh, the parliamentarian is one of them. With his vast experience in various aspects of public life combined with the warmth and charm of the old world, he stands tall and communicative". Prabhjot Singh calls him 'India's Sports Rattan,' whilst the prolific Khushwant Singh thanks Tarlochan Singh for his help in winning the award of Nishan-E-Khalsa (Order of the Khalsa) from the Punjab Government on Baisakhi of 1999 at Anandpur Sahib and an honorary doctorate from Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar. He further writes: "If there was one person who saved Giani ji from being ostracised by the Sikh community by being declared a tankhaiya by Jathedars, it was Tarlochan Singh."

The chapter entitled 'A Profile of Action' starts with a letter penned by ex-US President George W Bush, followed by other dignitaries from India and abroad, including the Queen of England and the then President of France.

The volume of these documents, both in quality and quantity, defies my imagination as it qualifies the profile of a single individual in such a positive light!

Prof. Manjit Singh of Delhi University covers all aspects of Tarlochan Singh's life and work in his write up 'Face to Face with Tarlochan Singh.' The interview ends with Manjit Singh asking him to share his thoughts after all his achievements, to which Tarlochan Singh replies: "I feel fully contented. Recently, I was awarded the Padma Bhushan in 2021 by the President of India. I have travelled worldwide and received lifetime achievement awards by many national and international organisations. I am a regular contributor to many newspapers and TV channels."

The book concludes with Tarlochan Singh's 'Historic Speech in Parliament,' delivered on 14th December 2009 in the Rajya Sabha during his call attention motion on killing of Sikhs in 1984. (Original Speech is in Hindi). A book on his Parliamentary Speeches in English (translated into Punjabi), edited by Prof. Kehar Singh, has been published by Punjabi University, Patiala, which was reviewed by me. During his tenure as MP of Rajya Sabha, he was instrumental in the implementation of the Anand Marriage (Amendment) Bill. In 2021, he collected speeches of Hukam Singh, Kapur Singh, Khushwant Singh and those delivered by him in the Indian parliament and I got the privilege of compiling these speeches in the form of a book 'Fighting for the Sikh Causes in Indian Parliament.' There is another book on his parliamentary speeches in English (translated into Punjabi), edited by Prof. Kehar Singh that has been published by Punjab University, Patiala, which I had the opportunity of reviewing and those speeches were equally evocative.



I wish Sardar Tarlochan Singh a long innings of successful public life. His critics blame him that he is doing all his actions for personal glorification.

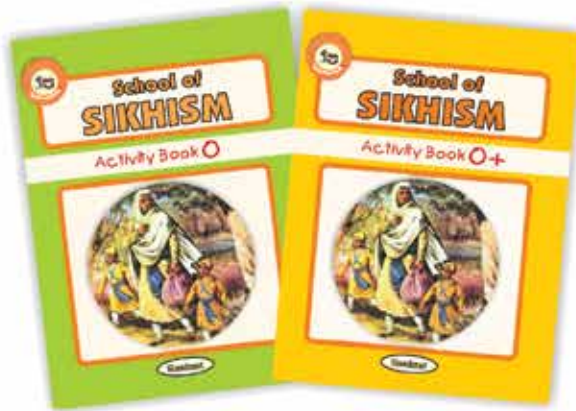
I believe if Tarlochan is fighting for Panthic and Punjab causes, glory will surely kiss his feet. Prabhleen Singh, editor of this memorabilia, deserves all praise for bringing so much archival material under one cover.

The publication of this book is being sponsored by Sarbat da Bhalla Trust headed by Sardar SP Singh Oberoi of Dubai, UAE.

Book edited by: Dr Prabhleen Singh, President, Young Progressive Sikh Forum, Delhi

Professor Virk has authored of 450 research papers, 45 books and 200 articles in Science, Sikh Religion and Literature. He retired from GNDU Amritsar in 2002 and presently serves as Professor of Eminence (Honorary), SGGS World University, Fatehgarh Sahib.

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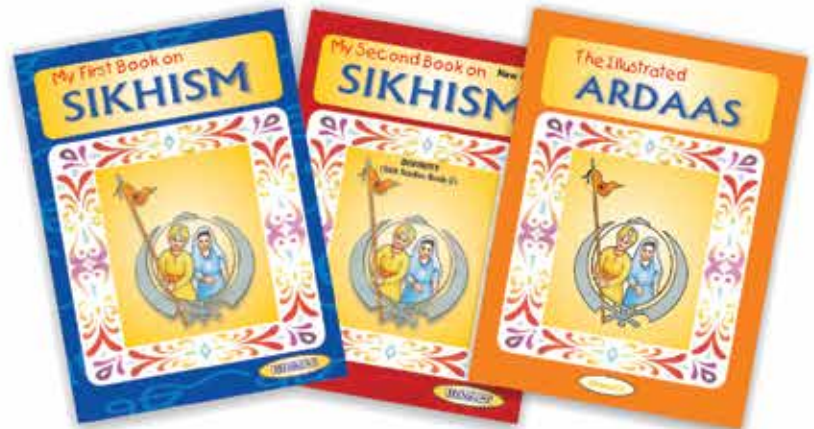
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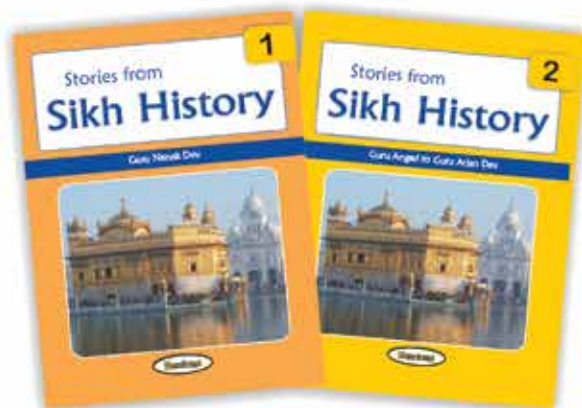
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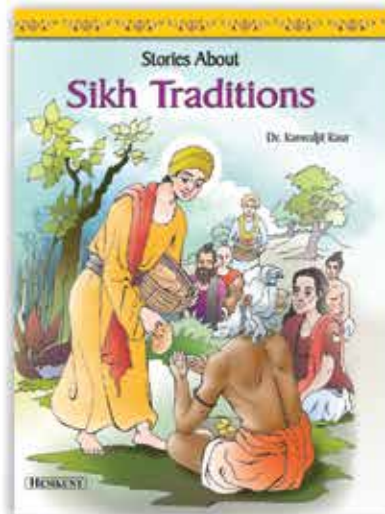
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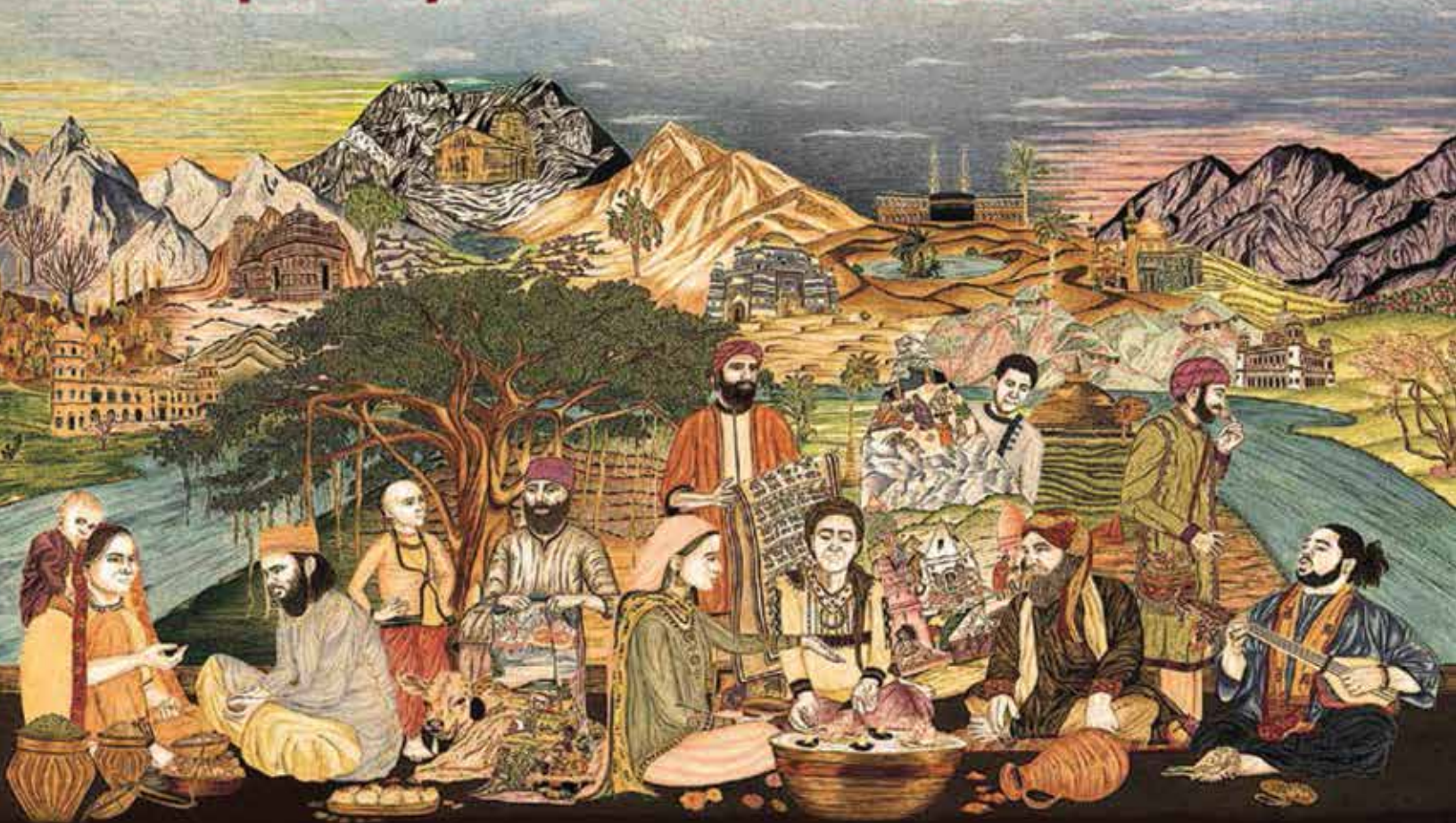


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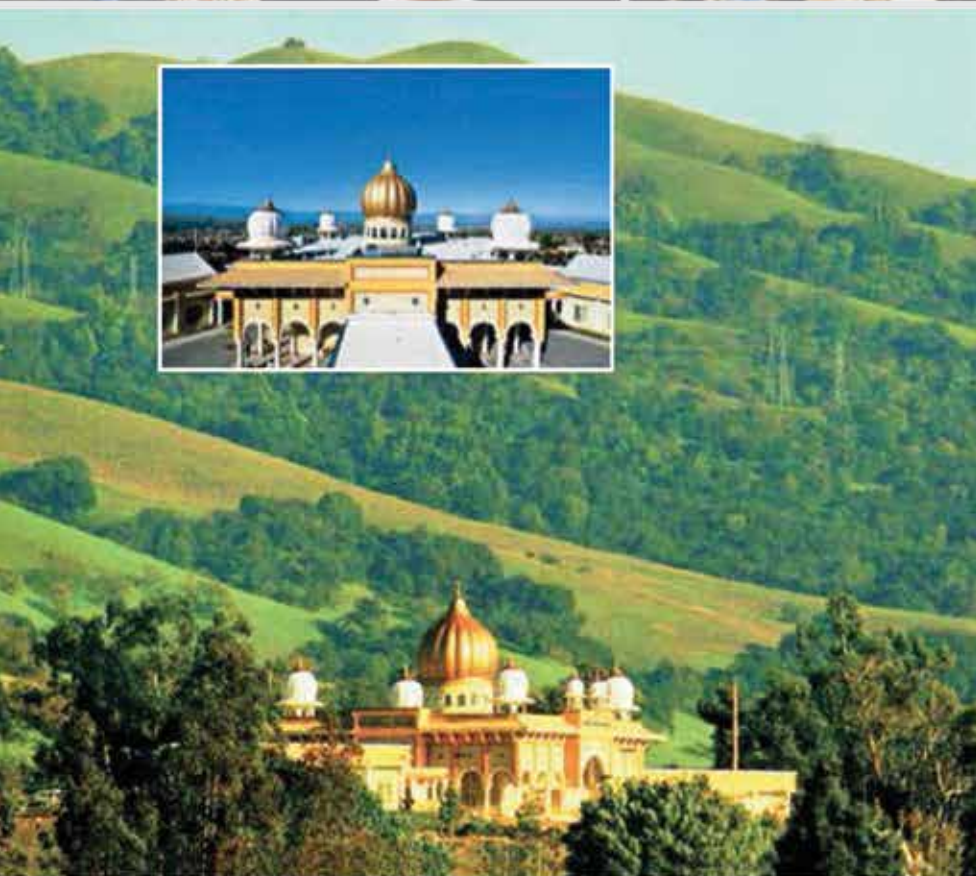
GURU NANAK glided across distant lands for over two decades on an altruistic pursuit. To relate with people of diverse cultures and belief systems, he engaged in philosophical and social dialogue. Through the medium of words and music, he gracefully imparted experiential insights, fearlessly challenged the binary constructs of society, and relentlessly opposed gender, religious, racial and class inequalities.

In the 21st century, geopolitical restrictions and cultural mandates impose immense challenges to trace Guru Nanak's extensive travels. In a 3.5 years effort, a team led by Amardeep Singh and Vininder Kaur have successfully retraced and documented all the geographies and multi-faith sites visited by Guru Nanak.

Guided by Guru Nanak's philosophy and inspired by historical texts, this 24 episode docuseries sequentially presents the life events of Guru Nanak.

The docuseries can be watched freely on the website

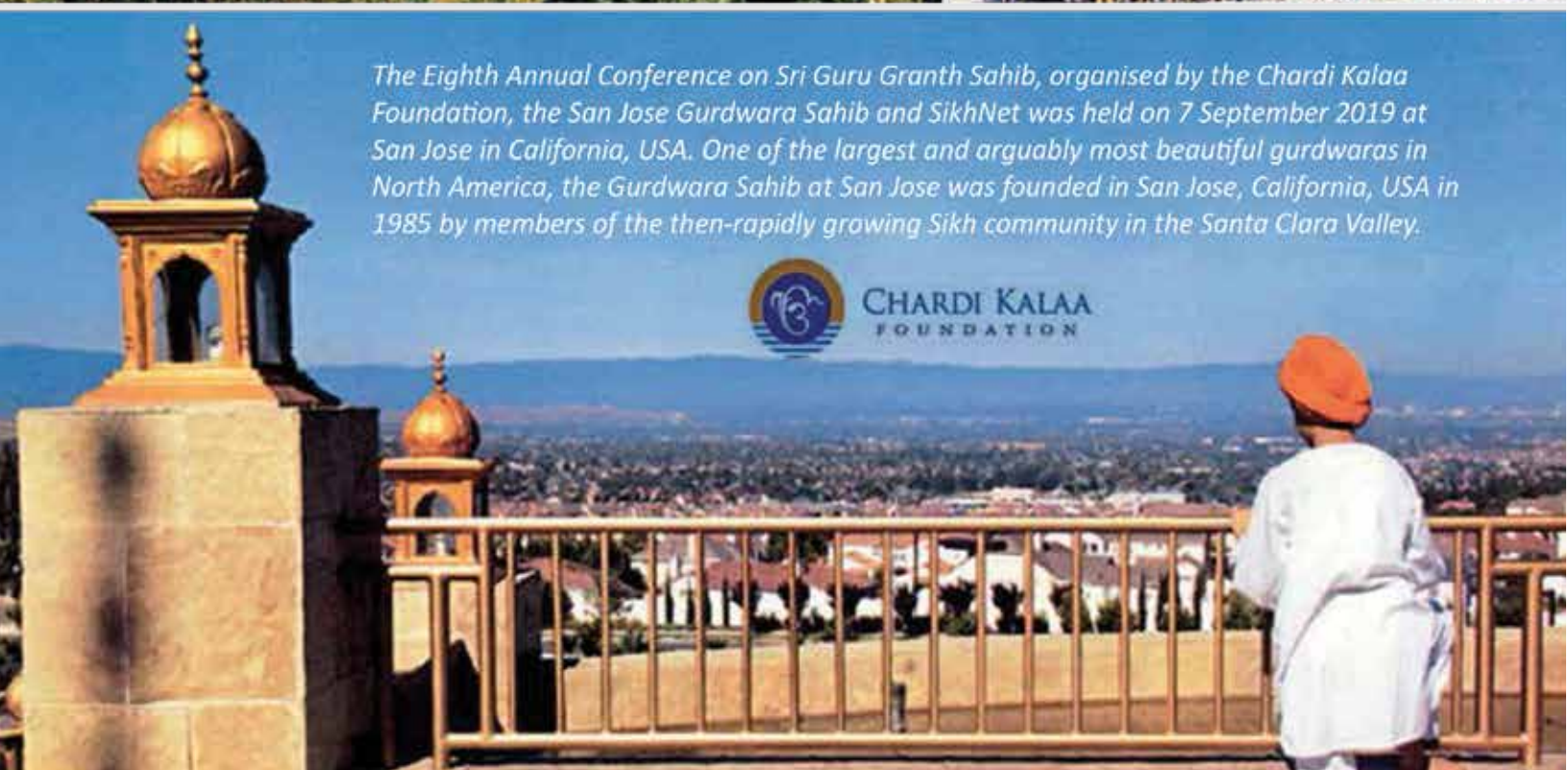
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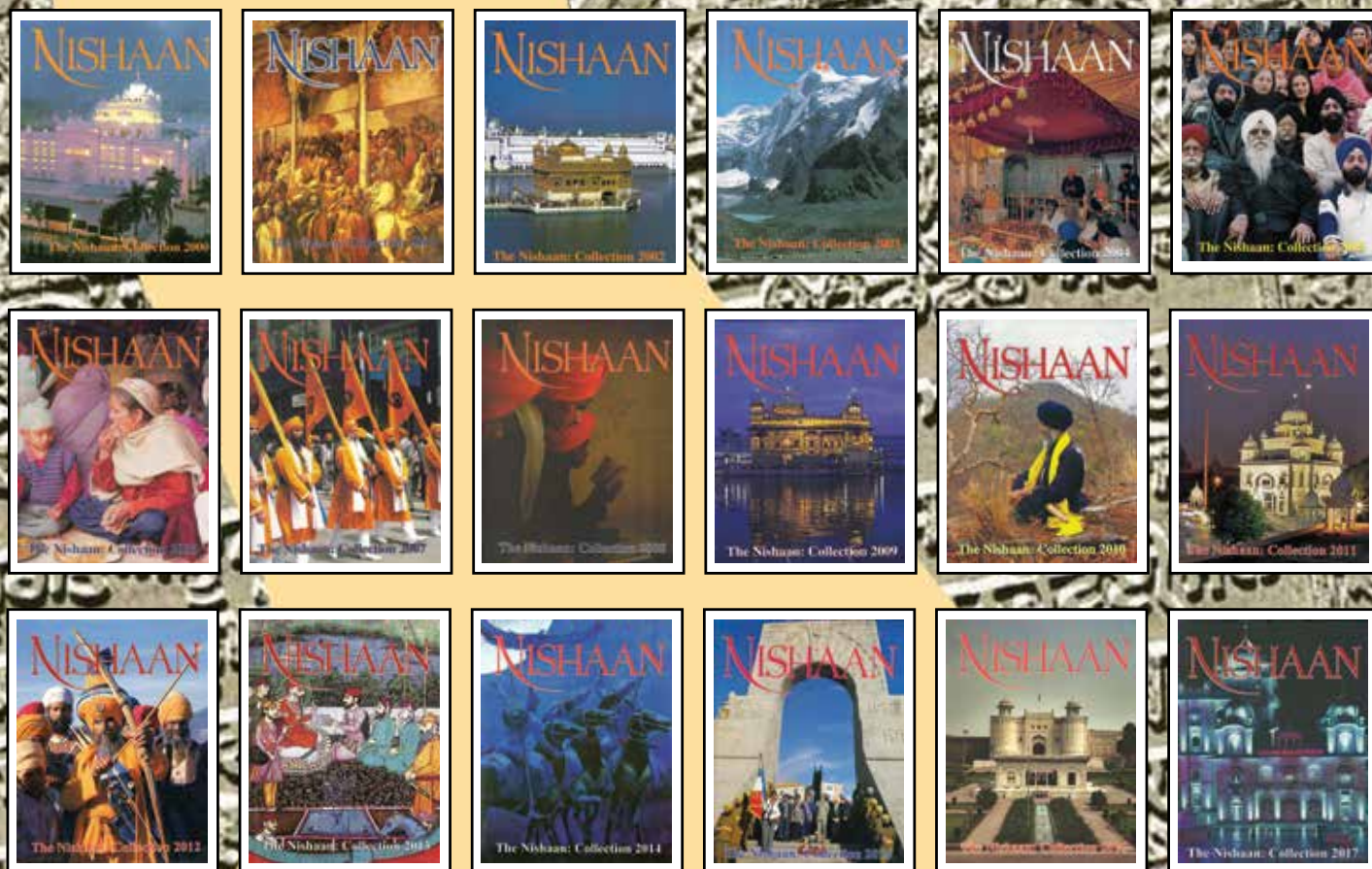


The Eighth Annual Conference on Sri Guru Granth Sahib, organised by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation, the San Jose Gurdwara Sahib and SikhNet was held on 7 September 2019 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose was founded in San Jose, California, USA in 1985 by members of the then-rapidly growing Sikh community in the Santa Clara Valley.

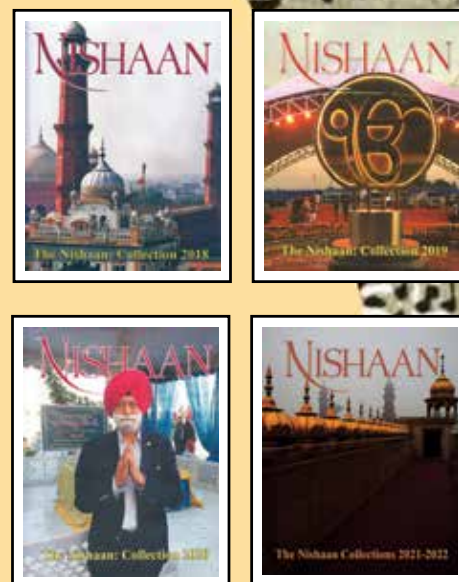


CHARDI KALAA
FOUNDATION





The **Nishaan Collections** for 2000 to 2022 are now available in bound volumes, also including the Premiere Issue of the Journal released in April 1999 at the Tercentenary of the birth of Khalsa. **The Nishaan**, published half yearly, is considered a collector's item, to be read and kept with pride and faith. Published by **The Nagaara Trust**, New Delhi, India.



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