

ISSUE II / 2024

# NISHAAN

NAGAARA



**LAHORE CHALO**

**ARDĀS: THE SIKH CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER**



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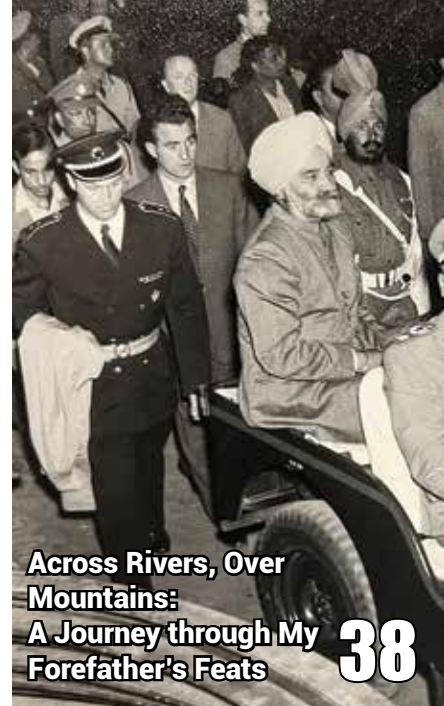
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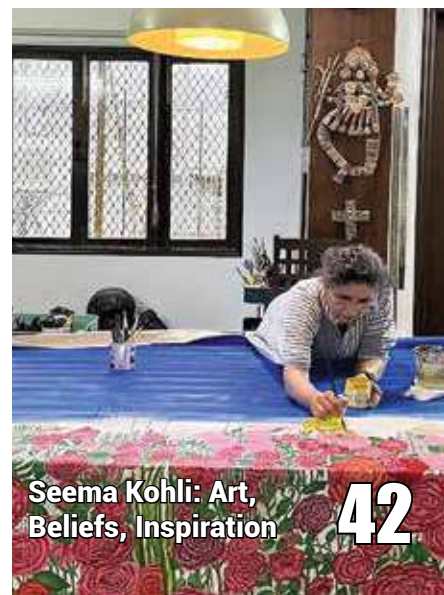
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# EDITORIAL

## GURU & guru: Betwixt & Between

The word “Guru” comes to us from India and its rich traditions. A rough and ready translation would parse the word into two with *Gu* meaning darkness and *Ru* meaning light; a Guru, then, is one who leads one metaphorically from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and awareness. But then, given this literal understanding, a Guru doesn’t have to be a spiritual master, even though this was the traditional meaning of a Guru.

“Guru” has morphed into so many applications that it is now confusing. Common usage equates the word with any expert. Gurus are now dime a dozen. One can be a Guru in the kitchen or in music, in surgery or in style and fashion, even a personal trainer at the spa.

Some may even think of me as the guru—notice it is a lower case guru—of anatomy, since that’s what I have taught for much of my life. Once the Dean at my university and I were talking about how to measure student responses in judging teacher effectiveness. I couldn’t help saying to him: “At any given time, I can line up 20 students who think of me as God’s gift to anatomical sciences, and I can also produce another 20 who would like to see me hanging on the nearest tree – and I reckon that both groups are right.”

The common meaning of guru is a teacher or an expert—a maven. But Sikhi looks at the word “Guru” very differently, most uniquely so. The title is reserved in Sikh scriptural writing and tradition for the Creator God or the ten Gurus in human form, from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, who personally founded, led, and nurtured Sikhi through a good 250 years. Since 1708, the title is singularly reserved for the Guru Granth which is the 1430–page repository of Sikh spiritual heritage. It is the Word that is the Guru Eternal. That’s why Guru Nanak proclaimed: “*Sabd Guru surt dhun chela*” (Guru Granth p.94–3).

A line from Kirtan Sohila that Sikhs read every night comes to mind: “*Chhea ghar chhea gur chhea updes. Gur(u) gur(u) eko ves anek,*” (Guru Granth, p.12), meaning that there are six shastras (Hindu holy books), their six authors and six methods of teachings; But One God alone is the Teacher of teachers, though He manifests Himself in many ways.

“Guru” is not a title to be lightly and carelessly bandied about for any mortal who may be a maven of one human activity or another. “Guru” has a very different application than “guru.”

Ergo, no individual, living or dead, no matter how spiritually refined, is to be honoured by that title in Sikhi. I make this categorical statement even though I know that it is not difficult to find individuals, some well–meaning perhaps, and others who are unmistakably charlatans, running about with the title “Guru” appended to their names. But then business and commercial interests often trump Sikh teaching, doctrine, and its revered, widespread tradition.

If some words have become trite and laden with unnecessary baggage in interpretation, it is good to remember that overuse of words indicates that they have meaning and some heft. The more significant the meaning, the more overused the word becomes in common parlance. The more often it is used, the more quickly it gets relegated to the list of trite and dated expressions. We then tend to forget that becoming trite is an indicator of its power, application, and usefulness over time.

Words become tiresome and phrases become clichés when they are used often, because nothing else conveys the meaning quite so aptly. We may hate them, but can’t do without them either. Their precise meaning, amplified by their overuse, imbues their application with character and heft.

I.J. SINGH

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# Chardi Kalaa Always!

## 53 Year Old Kiwi Sikh Scales Mt Everest



On 19 May 2024, Malkiat Singh achieved a lifelong dream by “reaching the summit of Mount Everest.” This 53 year old Kiwi-Indian’s journey to the top of the world stands as a testament to the power of perseverance and passion. Singh, who resides and works in Auckland, migrated from Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab in 1998 and has always been known for his athleticism.

“I did it,” Malkiat told his family in Auckland during an emotional phone call stating that he scaled Mount Everest standing at an elevation of 8,849 metres, “all the way to the top”.

A senior member of the Supreme Sikh Society for 25 years, Malkiat Singh is a graduate of Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana. Malkiat’s family describes him as a bright academic achiever and an exceptional sportsman.

Malkiat’s elder son Mansimrit Singh, a second lieutenant in the New

Zealand Army, played a crucial role in his father’s achievement. “I helped my father with physical training for about a year,” he said.

Currently, Malkiat is recovering at a monastery after his successful ascent and plans to focus on recovery and inspiring younger generations to pursue their passions and embrace hard work.

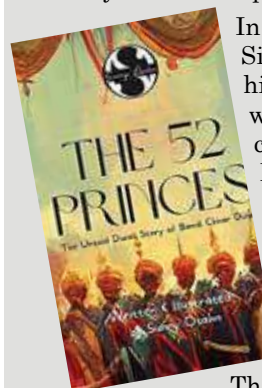
Last year, Malkiat participated in the 14 Peaks Expedition, a high-altitude sports company and one of the world’s largest expedition organisers for mountains above 8,000 metres, including the 14 Peaks and Seven Summits.

Initially, Malkiat’s family was apprehensive about his decision to climb Everest due to the risks involved.

As for what lies ahead, Malkiat plans to focus on recovery and inspiring younger generations to pursue their passions and embrace hard work.

## The 52 Princes: The Untold Diwali Story of Bandi Chhor Divas

Based on a true story, this is a beautiful re-telling of a major historical event in Sikh History, when Guru Hargobind Ji helped free fifty-two Hindu princes.



In this book, Simran teaches his little brother why Sikhs celebrate Bandi Chhor Divas (pronounced ‘Bun-dee’ ‘shore’ ‘div us’) at Diwali.

The book was written and illustrated by Sunny Osahn.

## Trail blazer on the race track

In June 2024, ace sprinter Gurindervir Singh emerged as the fastest man on Indian tracks with a 10.32 second sprint to win the 100m of the 63rd Inter-State Athletics Championships at Panchkula, Haryana.

He possesses the U-20 National Record to his name. He beat the previous record set by Kerala athlete Augustine Yeshudas.

“There were quite a few who had said I was finished in the last two years, that I will not even go below 10.50 seconds, that there was nothing left in me. The celebration was not for the rest of the runners but those doubters,” Gurindervir admitted after the race. “I have been training on my own for a while now in Jalandhar. I have my coach Sarabjit Singh but no training partners. A competition like this is good because it pushes you to do better but getting such competitors in



training is even more important. That is what actually helps get better and that is what I need,” Gurindervir said. The young man from Punjab has demonstrated amazing development and promise. He was hailed as the upcoming star of the racing world. In 2021, Gurindervir came dangerously close to shattering the national record

for the 100 metres. With a time of 10.27 seconds, he had managed to win the 60th National Inter State Athletics Competition, missing the mark by a mere 0.02 seconds.

Given the struggles he had been through to get back on the track, he felt it was only a matter of time before he was back in form.

## California welcomes first Sikh judge: Raj Singh Badhesha

In July 2024, Governor Gavin Newsom announced the appointment of Raj Singh Badhesha to serve as Fresno County Superior Court’s newest judge in California.

City Attorney Andrew Janz stated, “Raj has been instrumental as part

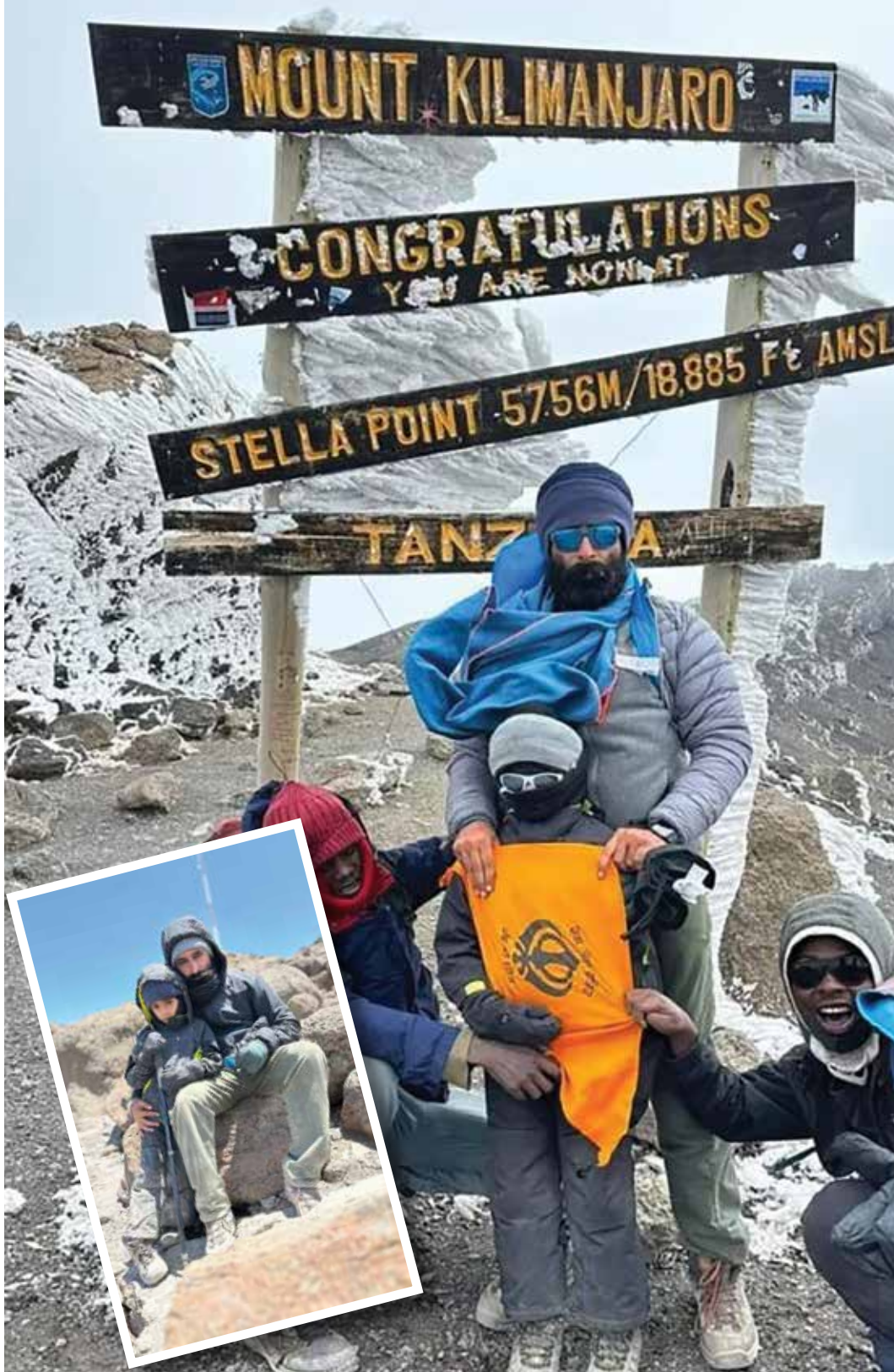
of my management team because of his broad-based knowledge of various aspects of the law and his ability to deal with sensitive situations with tact and poise. When I was appointed City Attorney, he quickly became my closest advisor and made my transition into

this position. Raj has all the qualities one hopes to find in a judge; he is open-minded, thoughtful, deliberate, well researched, and diplomatic. While his broad legal experience and expertise is going to be a big loss to the City of Fresno, there is not a more fitting individual to serve Fresno County and the State of California with honesty and integrity.”

Raj Singh Badhesha released the following statement: “I would like to thank Governor Gavin Newsom for having confidence in my ability to serve as a Fresno County Superior Court judge. After years of dedicated service to the Fresno community, including invaluable experience in the Fresno City Attorney’s Office and extensive volunteer work, I am honoured to be appointed as a Fresno Superior Court. My commitment to justice, coupled with my understanding of the legal system and the needs of our community, have prepared me to serve with integrity, fairness, and compassion.”



# Five year old Punjab boy conquers Mt. Kilimanjaro



In August this year, five year old Teghbir Singh from Ropar in Punjab became the youngest Asian to scale the 5,895 metre Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa located in Tanzania. Teghbir started the climb on August 18 and reached Uhuru peak, the highest point of the mountain, on August 23.

“I knew where I was to reach and finally made it. I have a picture there with my father. I was told to chant ‘Wah Guru’ when it got difficult on the way. It gave me strength and I was able to reach the summit”, an elated Teghbir said after his climb.

With this feat, he equals the world record of conquering Mt Kilimanjaro at the age of five by Serbian boy Ognjen Živković on 6 August 2023. Teghbir attributed his success to his coach, Bikramjit Singh Ghuman, a retired handball coach, and his family.

His father, Sukhinderdeep Singh, who accompanied him, said, “Teghbir started preparing for this feat almost a year ago. He was trained by Ghuman, who coached him with exercises related to increase cardiovascular health and increase lung capacity. He would go on weekly treks with his coach and me to different hilly locations. The temperature dropped with every ascent he made. He walked and stayed in a low oxygen altitude in sub-zero temperatures for almost a week,” the proud father added.



## Sikhs display exemplary courage in flooded Spain

In the wake of unprecedented flooding across Spain in end October 2024, the Sikh community emerged as a beacon of hope and resilience, embodying the principles of Sikhism through selfless service and unwavering solidarity.

As torrential rains and swollen rivers inundated cities and towns causing widespread devastation, local residents found themselves grappling with the immediate aftermath of the disaster. In these challenging times, the Sikhs of Spain stepped forward, mobilising volunteers to assist in the massive cleanup and relief efforts.

The community's swift and extremely thoughtful and well-organised response has garnered much appreciation from Spanish populace and authorities alike. As Sikh volunteers, many from local gurdwaras, tirelessly worked to clear debris, restore infrastructure, and provide essential aid to those affected, they have been lauded for their dedication and compassion.

As a volunteer, Harpreet Singh stated, "This country has given us everything, and it's our duty to help when it's in need." Singh's words resonate deeply within the community, reflecting a profound sense of gratitude and responsibility that drives their involvement. A Spanish resident expressed her gratitude, saying, "The Sikhs have demonstrated exemplary community spirit and have been instrumental in our recovery efforts. Their dedication exemplifies the best of what our society can offer in times of crisis."



## Harvinder Singh wins India's first ever Para-archery gold at Paris

On 5 September 2024, Harvinder Singh, a Sikh paralympic archer, won the much coveted gold in the men's individual recurve open competition, three years after earning India's first Paralympic medal in Para archery in the same discipline.

He made more history by earning the country's first gold in the sport. After the scoreboard showed that he won the final of the men's individual recurve open competition, he took a deep breath and let the victory sink in. As he stated in that moment of euphoria, "The thing that was in my mind was, 'I have done it for India' because at the last Paralympics, I just won a bronze. I had to change the colour and perform well, and these are the things that I have done." Singh won the gold medal in his match against Poland's Lukasz Ciszek in straight sets, shooting the centre of the target four times in the process.

According to Harvinder, "Archery is a game in which you cannot expect anything to happen – everything is unexpected. That is why I focused on each and every arrow, and concentrated on each match without thinking about the colour of the medal. Only then I can move to the next round, and one by one, I went to the final and won gold," he added.

Now that he has realised one of his biggest dreams, Singh is spending time with his family. Then he will start a quest for a gold medal at the World Championships – the only medal missing from his collection now.

"I want to continue playing for India to win medals for my country, making Indians, my coaches and family proud," he said. "That is my goal even now."



# Ardās: The Sikh Congregational Prayer

Ravinder Singh Taneja

Most, if not all, Sikhs are familiar with *Ardās*. It is an essential part of Sikh liturgy, performed twice daily in all Gurdwaras and also part of the private practice of a Sikh. But what is *Ardās*?

Some scholars believe the word *Ardās* to be a derivative of the Persian *Arzdashat*, which means a petition or the presentation of one. Another school of thought maintains that *Ardās* is a Sanskrit compound word made up of *arad-an* and *aas*, implying the act of pleading. The English equivalent of *Ardās* is prayer, which developed from the Latin verb *precari*, meaning “to ask earnestly, beg, entreat,” or that which is obtained by entreaty and given as a gift.

*Ardās* or prayer is the act of pleading or making a petition or request for a gift or favour, particularly in a spiritual or religious context. It is, first and foremost, acknowledgment of a higher power that somebody can entreat. Sikhs call it *Waheguru*, the wondrous Enlightener.

By this reckoning, *Ardās* or prayer is something humans have engaged in for as long as we can remember. But we seem to have taken the more literal and obvious meaning of *Ardās* to heart and perverted it by treating *Waheguru* as some kind of answering service that you can call for a myriad of reasons! Or an online Amazon order delivered with the click of a button. The satirist Ambrose Bierce puts it very aptly: we have likened prayer to “asking that the laws of the universe be annulled on behalf of a single petitioner, confessedly unworthy.” *Ardās* has become a habit and a ritual.

*Ardās* also poses a dilemma. Gurmat teaches us to be self-reliant, to fend

for ourselves, and be accountable for our actions, yet prayer acknowledges dependency on a greater power. How do we square the two? As Sikhs, we are taught to walk in *Hukam* and accept the Divine Will. If so, why petition for intercession? A caring God must surely know our needs better than we do. So why bother with prayer? There is legitimacy to these questions, but the answers are not a straightforward yes or no.

We have to turn to our wisdom and traditions to discover the power and efficacy of *Ardās*.

## The Sikh Congregational Prayer

Sikh tradition tells us that the custom of congregational *Ardās* had already begun during Guru Nanak’s lifetime and was continued with adaptations to reflect changing times by his successor Gurus.

Guru Nanak instructed us to pray to the Satgur, the primal Enlightener with folded hands, stand upright, and ask for union with the Beloved. The Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan, began the practice of *Ardās* facing the *Adi Granth* (then known as *Pothi Sahib*) after inaugurating it as *Guru* in the *Harimandir* in 1604. Guru Gobind Singh authored the first part of the *Ardās*, which begins with an invocation to the Supreme Being followed by a recall of the first nine Gurus – the spiritual guides.

Later additions were made by Sikhs to include Guru Gobind Singh and the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the list of recalls and a recounting of Exemplars of the faith and their martyrdom – a theme that punctuates Sikh history.

Although there is no documentary evidence, *Bhai Mani Singh* is believed to have assembled the *Ardās* in its present form. Shorter forms of the

*Ardās* exist (on paper), which can be traced to Guru Gobind Singh’s time.

The Sikh congregational prayer (*Ardās*) marks a significant shift within the Indian religious landscape. While Hinduism has traditionally emphasised individual spiritual paths, with seekers often retreating into solitude or pilgrimage, faiths like Islam and Christianity emphasised communal worship. Although Hinduism had group rituals, its core remained the individual’s inner journey.

Guru Nanak’s vision transformed this idea by connecting personal spiritual development with community engagement. He taught that pursuing Self-realisation was incomplete without active participation in society. Spiritual growth, therefore, must be lived out within the family and the broader community.

Central to Guru Nanak’s teachings is the principle of *Ik Oankar*, Oneness amidst diversity. This spiritual path requires an internal transformation and a shift towards compassionate action for the benefit of all, *sarbat ka bhala* (the welfare of all). For the Sikh, the spiritual journey is inward, reaching the summit of the mind, and outward, bringing change to the world.

The *Ardās* embodies this vision, breaking away from the caste and geography-based divisions of the time. It presents a universal outlook, visualising a community that transcends borders. This idea is especially relevant today, as many Sikhs live across multiple homelands, often bridging different cultural and geographical spaces.

The *Ardās* outlines three essential pillars for building a global community: *Halemi Raj* (the politics

of compassion), Naam (a unifying spiritual practice), and the Khalsa (the warrior-saint dedicated to justice). Among these, Naam remains the core, as the foundation of a Sikh life.

The creation of a “Compassionate Commonwealth” is central to this vision. Vaclav Havel’s idea that politicians must first be moral human beings resonates with Sikhi’s call to become true Sikhs not by birth, but through initiation into Naam, the all-encompassing way of life that defines the Khalsa. This holistic approach promotes moral, social, and political transformation through discipleship to the Guru.

Building such a compassionate society requires inner virtues like discernment (*bibek*), faith (*visah*), and trust or confidence (*bharosa*). These qualities are essential to sustain a just and compassionate community.

Naam, along with the external and internal *rehat* (codes of conduct), including unshorn hair (*Kesh*) and the 5 Ks, provides the foundation for this ongoing transformation journey.

### The Sikh Ardās: A Transcreation

What follows is a rendition of the Ardās, including a translation—in so far as possible—but also going beyond its literal meaning and attempting to capture the original’s emotional and cultural impact by adapting the message to resonate with the present.

Conventionally, the *Ardās* is viewed as consisting of three parts, of which the first two are fixed and mandatory. The third is structured to allow for time and location-specific flexibility, enabling the community to address situational concerns. This adaptability ensures that the *Ardās* remains relevant and inclusive. The three parts of the *Ardās* can be further subdivided into seven parts—with each part punctuated by Bolo ji, Waheguru! That is the scheme followed in this essay.

The method adopted is to present the original accompanied by a transliteration and followed by a transcreation – a translation and a commentary.

## Part I: The Invocation

ੴ ਵਾਹਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫ਼ਤਹਿ॥

ਸ੍ਰੀ ਭਗੋਤੀ ਜੀ ਸਹਾਇ॥

ਵਾਹ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਭਗੋਤੀ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀ 10॥

*Ik Oankar Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh*

*Sri Bhagauti Ji Sahai*

*Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki Paatshaahi 10*

All Victory be to *Ik Oankar*, the wondrous *Sabad Guru!*

May *Bhagauti*, the primal Sword, be our support.

The Ballad of *Bhagauti* – the tenth Sovereign.

The *Ardās* begins with an affirmation, *Ik Oankar Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh*. It is, first and foremost, an acknowledgment of a superior presence, represented by Guru Nanak’s symbol, *Ik Oankar*. This symbol points to a Reality that defies logic and conceptual description because it is paradoxical: a Oneness that is Many, Existence and Non-Existence, Being and Becoming, Consciousness and Matter simultaneously.

*Ik Oankar* should be viewed as a declarative statement, not a statement of ideology or theology. Born of Guru Nanak’s enlightened and perfect consciousness, it boldly and unequivocally asserts that there is but One Reality—a unified field of Oneness that lies at the root of all Existence. Indeed, it is Existence itself.

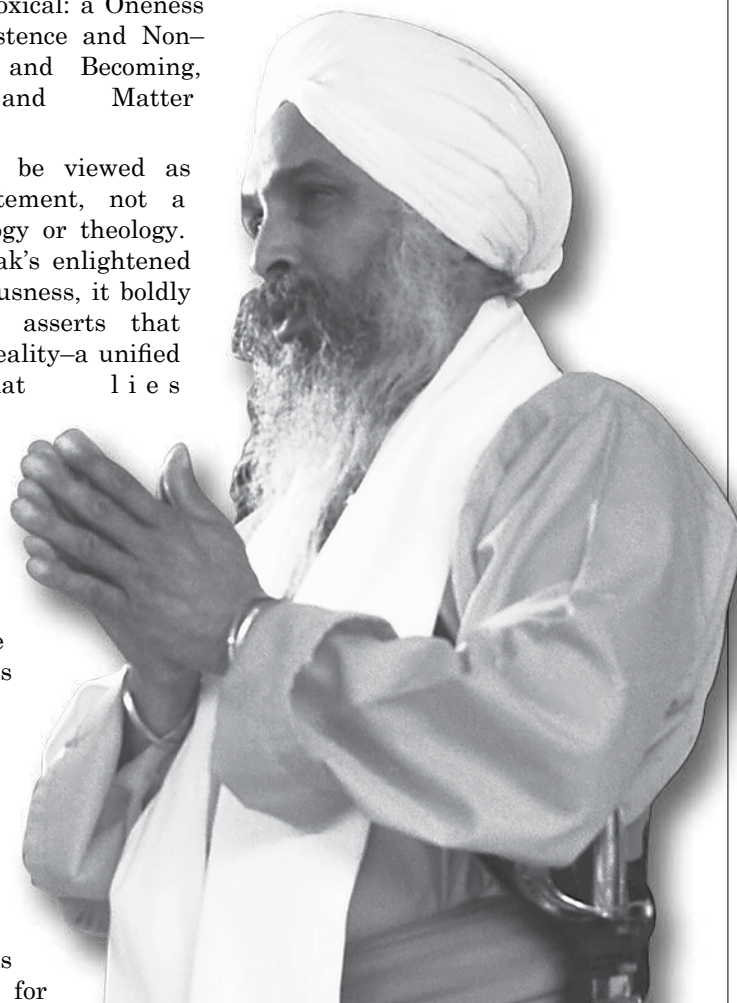
From this field of Oneness (*Ik*), *Oankar* is the Cosmic Syllable that emanates as the Creative Force woven into the Cosmos’s texture and manifests as the the wondrous Enlightener, the *Sabad Guru* (Wah + Guru).

We petition this Supreme Force for

guidance and support in achieving our accomplishment, Fateh!

In *Sri Bhagauti Ki Var*, from where this prefix to the *Ardās* is taken, the term used to denote this Reality is *Bhagauti*, the double-edged primal Sword. In interpreting the legend of the goddess Durga, who killed the three mythological demons, Rakatabij, Dhumralochana, and Mahishasura, Guru Gobind Singh conveys the inner essence of the story: These demons, it turns out, represent our unbridled desires, wild inner nature (anger) and constantly shifting mind – that needs to be creatively shaped with the Sword of Wisdom, *Bhagauti*.

In the Khalsa emblem (Nishan), the double-edged Sword, called the *Khanda*, is the central element contained within a circular *chakra* and two swords on either side. The *chakra*, or circle,



represents the Oneness and timeless nature of the Supreme Being. At the same time, the khanda in the centre signifies the central role of truth, justice, and equality in Sikhi. The presence of two swords, or kirpans, on either side, symbolises both temporal and spiritual sovereignty (Miri and Piri) – they stand for the dual responsibility of Sikhs to uphold justice in worldly and spiritual matters with the Sword of Wisdom.

This is the underpinning of all *Ardās* or prayer. Sikhi urges us to seek the favor of this Supreme Power in all our endeavors, *kira loriye kam ta har pet akhiye*.

## Part II: Commemorating the Spiritual Guides

ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੇ ਭਗੋਤੀ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਕੈ ਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਲਈ  
ਧਿਆਇ॥

ਫਿਰ ਅੰਗਦ ਗੁਰ ਤੇ ਅਮਰਦਾਸੁ ਰਾਮਦਾਸੈ ਹੋਈ  
ਸਹਾਇ॥

ਅਰਜਨ ਹਰਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਨੇ ਸਿਮਰੇ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਹਰਿਰਾਇ॥  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਹਰਿਕ੍ਰਿਸ਼ਨ ਧਿਆਇਐ ਜਿਸ ਡਿਠੈ ਸਭਿ ਦੁਖ  
ਜਾਇ॥

ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸਿਮਰਿਐ ਘਰ ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਆਵੈ  
ਧਾਇ॥ ਸਭ ਥਾਈ ਹੋਇ ਸਹਾਇ॥

ਦਸਵਾਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਹਿਬ  
ਜੀ! ਸਭ ਥਾਈ ਹੋਇ ਸਹਾਇ॥

ਦਸਾਂ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਜੇਤ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ  
ਜੀ ਦੇ ਪਾਠ ਦੀਦਾਰ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰ ਕੇ ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ  
ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ!

*Phir Angad Gur te Amardās,  
Rāmdāsai hoīn sahāe,*

*Arjan Hargobind no simaro Srī  
Harirāe,*

*Srī Harikrishan dhiyāiā jis dithai  
sabh dukh jāe,*

*Tegh Bahādur simariāi ghar nau  
nidhi āvae dhāe, sabh thānī hoī sahāe,*

*Daswān Pātshāh Srī Gurū Gobind  
Singh Sāhib jī! sabh thāin hoī sahāe,*

*Dasān Pātshāhīān dī jot Srī Gurū  
Granth Sāhib jī de pāth dīdār dā  
dhiyān dhar ke bolo jī Vāhigurū!*

Having invoked *Bhagautī*,  
contemplate Nanak the *Gur*.

Then, seek the guidance of Angad,  
Amardas, and Ramdas - the  
successor Gurs,

And Arjan and Hargobind, who  
followed them.

Remember the noble Harirai,  
And meditate on the benevolent  
Harkishan,

Whose sight dispelled all sorrow.  
Recall Tegh Bahadur,  
And prosperity will rush to your home.  
May the Tenth Sovereign, Guru  
Gobind Singh be our armor.  
Concentrate on the Wisdom of the  
ten Gurs embodied in the Guru  
Granth Sahib,  
And call out, “Hail to the wondrous  
Guru!”

## Part III: The Exemplars

ਪੰਜਾਂ ਪਿਆਰਿਆਂ, ਚੌਦਾਂ ਸਾਹਿਬਜ਼ਾਦਿਆਂ, ਚਾਲ੍ਹੀਆਂ  
ਮੁਕਤਿਆਂ, ਹਠੀਆਂ ਜਪੀਆਂ, ਤਪੀਆਂ,

ਜਿਹਨਾਂ ਨਾਮ ਜਪਿਆ, ਵੰਡ ਛਕਿਆ, ਦੇਗ ਚਲਾਈ,  
ਤੇਗ ਵਾਹੀ, ਦੇਖ ਕੇ ਅਣਡਿੱਠ ਕੀਤਾ,

ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਪਿਆਰਿਆਂ, ਸਚਿਆਰਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਦਾ  
ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰ ਕੇ,

ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ! ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ!

*Panjān Piārīān, Chauhān  
Sāhibzādīān, Chālīāi Muktiān,  
Hattīyan Japīān, Tapīān,*

*Jinhān Nām Japiyā, Vand  
Chhakiyā, Deg Chalāi, Teg Vāhī,  
Dekh Ke Andith Kīta,*

*Tinnah Piārīān, Sachīārīān Dī  
Kamāi Dā Dhiyān Dhar Ke,*

*Khālsā Jī! Bolo Jī Vāhigurū!*

[Remember]

The Five Beloved Ones, the Four  
Scions, the Forty Liberated Ones.  
Those who remained resolute, who  
meditated with unshakable faith,  
And remained persistent, in their  
devotion to Reason and Wisdom.  
Shared in charity, sustained the  
cauldron of community kitchens;  
Wielded the sword of Justice, but  
overlooked transgressions.  
With mindful hearts, we recall the  
pure deeds of these beloved, truthful  
souls. O Khalsa! Say with love,  
Waheguru!

The *Ardās* transitions from honoring  
the Ten Gurus and the Guru Granth  
Sahib to celebrating the Exemplars  
of the Guru Panth, such as the Five  
Beloved Ones, the Four Heirs, and  
the Forty Martyrs. Guru Nanak's  
call to “play the Game of Love” was  
dramatically reenacted by Guru  
Gobind Singh at the Vaisakhi  
Assembly in 1699, where the mystical  
rebirth of Sikhs took place. This  
transformation birthed the Khalsa,  
a familial brotherhood symbolising  
the fearless spirit of Sikhi. The Five  
Beloved Ones (panj piare)—Bhai Daya

Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai  
Himmat Singh, Bhai Mokham Singh,  
and Bhai Sahib Singh epitomised the  
essence of Guru Nanak's teachings  
through their courageous offering of  
their heads, becoming living examples  
of fearless devotion.

The formation of the Khalsa marked  
a profound evolution in Sikh  
consciousness, representing a pivotal  
moment in the unfolding of Hukam  
(divine Will) in History. The collective  
leadership model embodied by the  
Khalsa symbolizes the ideal that the  
authority within the Sikh community  
resides not in individuals but in the  
collective, first reflected in Guru  
Nanak submission to Guru Angad.  
The investiture of the Adi Granth as  
Guru in 1604 by Guru Arjan further  
highlighted the diffusion of spiritual  
authority into the larger Panth,  
ensuring that the Guru is always  
mystically present within the Sikh  
community.

The Chaali Mukte (Forty Liberated  
Ones) and the Four Sahibzaadey  
(sons of Guru Gobind Singh) are  
also honored in the *Ardās* for  
demonstrating unwavering faith,  
showing that redemption and  
spiritual resolve transcend age and  
circumstance.

The Gurus redefine the terms  
*Hutthee*, *Juppee*, and *Tuppee*, drawn  
from Indian spiritual traditions.  
In *Gurmat*, *Juppee* represents  
steadfastness in *Nam* (Divine Name),  
*Tuppee* reflects endurance in self-  
surrender through daily life, and  
*Hutthee* embodies resolve without ego.

The Five Beloved Ones, Four Heirs,  
and Forty Martyrs exemplify the  
transformation from *manmukh* (self-  
centeredness) to *gurmukh* (Guru  
centeredness), the ultimate spiritual  
transformation that occurs when one  
overcomes the fear of death. These  
figures, remembered in the *Ardās*,  
guide Sikhs in cultivating Naam,  
Wisdom, and Reason. Naam, through  
meditation and self-reflection, leads  
to the expansive, universal outlook  
that defines the Khalsa.

Key virtues emphasised in Sikh life—  
*Vund Chhukkeyyah* (sharing), *Degh  
Chalaa-ee* (charity through communal

kitchens), and *Tegh Vaahee* (valour)—are highlighted in the *Ardās*. The *Degh* (cauldron) represents generosity through communal service, while the *Tegh* (sword) embodies justice and righteous action, central to the mission of the Khalsa. *Dekh ke un-dith keetaa* calls upon Sikhs to practice forgiveness, reminding them that bravery must be tempered with compassion.

This rich tradition underscores the importance of communal life, service, and moral strength, reflecting the heart of the Sikh worldview

#### Part IV: The Martyrs

ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ ਸਿੰਘਣੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਸੀਸ ਦਿੱਤੇ,  
ਬੰਦ ਬੰਦ ਕਟਾਏ, ਖੋਪਰੀਆਂ ਲੁਹਾਈਆਂ, ਚਰਖੀਆਂ  
ਤੇ ਚੜ੍ਹੇ,

ਆਰਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਚਿਰਾਏ ਗਏ, ਗੁਰਦਵਾਰਿਆਂ ਦੀ  
ਸੇਵਾ ਲਈ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀਆਂ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ,

ਧਰਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਹਾਰਿਆ, ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕੇਸਾਂ ਸੁਆਸਾਂ ਨਾਲ  
ਨਿਬਾਹੀ, ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰ ਕੇ  
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ!

ਬੋਲੇ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ! ਪੰਜਾਂ ਤਖਤਾਂ, ਸਰਬੱਤ  
ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰ ਕੇ ਬੋਲੇ ਜੀ  
ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ!

*Jinhān Singhān Singhnian ne  
dharam het sīs dittē, Band band  
katāē, Khōpriān luhāīān, Charkhīān  
tē charē, Āriān nāl chirāē gaē,  
Gurdwāriān dī sevā laī kurbānīān  
kītīān, Dharam nahīn hāriā, Sikhī  
kēsān suāsān nāl nibāhī, Tinnah dī  
kamāī dā dhiyān dhar ke Khālsā jī!*  
*Bolo jī Vāhigurū!*

*Panjān takhtā, sarbat Gurdwarian  
dā dhi'ān dhar ke bolo jī vāhigurū!*

[Remember the Martyrs of the Faith]

Sikhs – men and women,  
Who offered their heads  
For the love of Dharma.  
Who had their limbs sawed off,  
And their skulls crushed.  
Who were put on wheels of torture  
And sawed apart.  
But remained steadfast.

In serving Gurdwaras,  
And upholding Dharma.  
They preserved their faith  
In their Sikh identity of unshorn hair.  
Reflect on their sacrifices and deeds,  
Khalsa Ji,  
And say out aloud, and with devotion,  
Waheguru – wondrous is the Guru.

With the remembrance of the Five  
Thrones (Takhts),  
And all the Gurdwaras,  
Say out aloud:  
Waheguru – wondrous is the Guru.

This passage is believed to have been added to the *Ardās* in the latter part of the eighteenth century. It is a recall and a commemoration of iconic figures in Sikh history who made the ultimate sacrifice for Dharam, *dharam hayt sees dittay* and serves as a constant reminder of our glorious past and the heroes worthy of our emulation.

Dharam or Dharma, literally meaning ‘that which holds together,’ refers to Hukam as a moral imperative – the notion that one chooses righteous action to uphold the Truth, even at the cost of one’s life. The various modes of torture—the cutting of a limb at every joint, the scalping of heads, the wheel of death, and being sawed alive – that the Mughals used to kill Sikhs are rooted in specific events in history.

The first, *bundh bundh kataa-ey*, refers to Bhai Mani Singh, a close associate of Guru Gobind Singh. The Mughal authorities executed him on trumped-up charges.

*Khopriā-a (n) luhāīā-a (n)*, or being scalped alive, notes the story of Bhai Taru Singh, who gave up his life rather than be coerced into Islam. Traditional accounts describe how the twenty-five-year-old was reciting the Japji as he was being tortured and killed.

The story of the father and son, Bhai Shahbeg Singh and Bhai Shahbaj Singh is the point of remembrance for *Charkhīā-a(n) uttay charhey*. *Aaray-aa(n) naal chirāa-ay gae*, is a reference to the martyrdom of Bhai Mati Das and Bhai Sati Das, who were sawed alive in Guru Tegh Bahadar’s presence, in an attempt to get the latter to waiver from his resolve.

The reference to gurdwaras points to milestones in recent Sikh history: Guru ka Bagh, Jaito and Nankana Sahib.

The list of martyrs in the Sikh *Ardās* is clearly meant to keep us linked to our past, lest we forget. But more importantly, it is also meant to remind us that to stand on principle and lead a life of integrity is an ideal

that should guide the course of our lives even today.

#### Part V: The Will of an Emerging Nation

ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੇ ਸਰਬੱਤ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਅਰਦਾਸ ਹੈ ਜੀ,  
ਸਰਬੱਤ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਕੇ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ, ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ,  
ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਚਿਤ ਆਵੇ, ਚਿੱਤ ਆਵਨ ਕਾ ਸਦਕਾ  
ਸਰਬ ਸੁਖ ਹੋਵੇ। ਜਹਾਂ ਜਹਾਂ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ,  
ਤਹਾਂ ਤਹਾਂ ਰਛਿਆ ਰਿਆਇਤ, ਦੇਗ ਤੇਗ ਫ਼ਤਹ,  
ਬਿਰਦ ਕੀ ਪੈਜ, ਪੰਥ ਕੀ ਜੀਤ, ਸ੍ਰੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ ਸਹਾਇ,  
ਖਾਲਸੇ ਜੀ ਕੇ ਬੋਲ ਬਾਲੇ, ਬੋਲੇ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ!

*Prithme Sarbatt Khalsa Ji Ki  
Ardaas Hai Ji, Sarbatt Khalsa Ji  
Ko Waheguru, Waheguru, Waheguru  
Chit Aave, Chit Aavan Ka Sadka  
Sarv Sukh Hove. Jahaan Jahaan  
Khalsa Ji Sahib, Tahaan Tahaan  
Rachhia Riayat, Deg Teg Fateh,  
Birad Ki Paij, Panth Ki Jeet, Sri  
Sahib Ji Sahay, Khalse Ji Ke Bol  
Baale, Bolo Ji Waheguru!*

O Revered One,

Pray, heed the Khalsa’s petition:  
May the Khalsa remain forever  
guided by Wisdom and Reason.

May Wisdom and Reason be the  
source of all blessings.

Wherever the Khalsa resides,  
May its presence

Assure security and protection for all,  
and the triumph of charity and  
justice.

May the Khalsa remain honorable.  
And victory be to the Panth.

The Sword of Wisdom - be our  
protector!

May the Khalsa always be in *chardi  
kalaa* –

May the voice of the Khalsa resound  
Vāhigurū!

First, the prayer is for the entire Khalsa,  
This passage of the *Ardās*,  
incorporated during the eighteenth  
century, is a prayer of petition, a  
political manifesto, and a reflection of  
the collective consciousness and the  
will of an emerging Sikh nation.

Sarbat Khalsa refers to the annual  
gatherings of Sikhs held during the  
century between the death of Guru  
Gobind Singh and 1805 to address  
matters of common concern. Sikhs  
were the victims of a sustained period  
of genocide during the eighteenth  
century.

Recognised by their unshorn hair,  
they were hunted down and killed for

a bounty offered by the Mughals and their supporters. Their families were killed, and their possessions seized by the State. Adding these lines during such an intensely adverse period speaks to the Chardi Kala of the Panth.

At the very outset, the first blessing sought is the gift of Naam/wisdom because Naam is the source of all happiness.

*Jahaa(n) jahaa(n) Khalsa ji sahib* alludes to the physically scattered Khalsa at the time. But the line also hints at the fact that the entire world is the Khalsa's bailiwick. The Khalsa is not bound by geographical boundaries or wrapped in any political flag; rather, the Khalsa is protected by the *Akal Purakh* while undertaking the work of charity, public welfare and striving for victory of the Panth.

Guru Nanak had a keen sense of mission, as reflected in his writing, which aimed at nothing short of a new civilisation. The institution of the Khalsa can be seen as the logical - and historical - development of Guru Nanak's mission.

## Part VI: The Petition

ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਸਿੱਖੀ ਦਾਨ, ਕੇਸ ਦਾਨ, ਰਹਿਤ ਦਾਨ,  
ਬਿਬੇਕ ਦਾਨ,  
ਵਿਸਾਹ ਦਾਨ, ਭਰੋਸਾ ਦਾਨ, ਦਾਨਾਂ ਸਿਰ ਦਾਨ, ਨਾਮ  
ਦਾਨ  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤਸਰ ਜੀ ਦੇ ਇਸ਼ਨਾਨ, ਚੌਕੀਆਂ, ਝੰਡੇ,  
ਬੁੰਗੇ,  
ਜੁਗੋ ਜੁਗ ਅਟੱਲ ਧਰਮ ਕਾ ਜੈਕਾਰ,  
ਬੋਲੇ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ  
ਸਿੱਖਾਂ ਦਾ ਮਨ ਨੀਵਾਂ, ਮਤ ਉੱਚੀ ਮਤ ਦਾ ਰਾਖਾ  
ਆਪਿ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ।

*Sikhān nūn Sikhī dān, Kes dān,  
Rahit dān, Bibek dān,*

*Visāh dān, Bharosā dān, Dānān sir  
dān, Nām dān,*

*Srī Amritsar ji darshan ishnan  
Chaukīān, jhande, bungē,*

*Jugō jug atall, Dharam kā jaikār,  
Bolo jī Vāhigurū.*

*Sikhān dā man nīvān, mat ūchī,  
mat dā rākha āp vāhigurū.*

[We Pray and Beseech You]

For the boon of Sikhi to all Sikhs,  
For the gift of unshorn hair, the gift  
of righteous conduct; of discernment,

trust, and faith; and above all, for the gift of all gifts. The supreme gift of Wisdom and Reason. May Sikhs behold the sight of Sri Amritsar and grant them a dip in the pool of nectar. May the banner of the Khalsa. Its watch towers, and forts, remain forever established.

May the cause of Truth, Justice, and righteous action - always prevail. Glory is to the wondrous Guru.

The passage also emphasises the importance of institutional well-being, reminding us that Sikhi is not just about the individual. The prayer for Sri Amritsar ji day *darshan isnān* symbolises more than homesickness; it represents Guru Nanak's vision of an inclusive, cooperative society. The *Chau (n)kiaa(n), jha (n) day, bungay*—translated as watches, banners, and centres – symbolise the institutions needed for Sikhi to flourish.

In Sikhi, the Sabad (Word) is the guardian under whose watch Sikhs live their lives. The traditions of wakefulness established by Guru Arjan, such as the *chaunkees* at Harmandir Sahib, continue to this day, emphasising the vigilance required in both internal and external spiritual journeys. The Nishan Sahib (flag) represents Khalsa sovereignty and the balance of secular and religious responsibilities, while the Bungas (dwellings) in Amritsar historically nourished and perpetuated various Panth traditions.

## Part VII: Conclusion

ਹੇ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਆਪਣੇ ਪੰਥ ਦੇ ਸਦਾ ਸਹਾਈ  
ਦਾਤਾਰ ਜੀਓ।  
ਸ੍ਰੀ ਨਨਕਾਣਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ  
ਗੁਰਧਾਮਾਂ ਦੇ,  
ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਤੇ ਪੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਵਿਛੋੜਿਆ ਗਿਆ ਹੈ,  
ਖੁਲ੍ਹੇ ਦਰਸ਼ਨ ਦੀਦਾਰ ਤੇ ਸੇਵਾ ਸੰਭਾਲ ਦਾ ਦਾਨ  
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ਨੂੰ ਬਖਸ਼ੋ।  
ਹੇ ਨਿਮਾਣਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਮਾਣ, ਨਿਤਾਣਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਤਾਣ,  
ਨਿਓਟਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਓਟ,  
ਸੱਚੇ ਪਿਤਾ, ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ! ਆਪ ਦੇ ਹਜ਼ੂਰ ਦੀ ਅਰਦਾਸ  
ਹੈ ਜੀ।  
ਅੱਖਰ ਵਾਧਾ ਘਾਟਾ ਭੁੱਲ ਚੁੱਕ ਮਾਫ ਕਰਨੀ। ਸਰਬੱਤ  
ਦੇ ਕਾਰਜ ਰਾਸ ਕਰਨੇ।  
ਸੇਈ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਮੇਲ, ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਮਿਲਿਆਂ ਤੇਰਾ ਨਾਮ  
ਚਿਤ ਆਵੈ।  
ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਚੜ੍ਹਦੀ ਕਲਾ, ਤੇਰੇ ਭਾਣੇ ਸਰਬੱਤ ਦਾ ਭਲਾ।

*Hey Akaal Purakh, apne Panth de  
sada sahai daataar jee-o!  
Sri Nankana Sahib te hor  
Gurdwareaan Gur Dhaaman de,  
jinhaan to Panth nu vichhoraa gaya  
hai, khulle darshan deedaar te seva  
sambhaal da daan Khalsa jee nu  
bakhsho.*

*He nimaaniaa(n) de maan, nitaanian  
de taan, niottiaan dee oatt, Sachhe  
Pita, Waheguru! Aap de hazoor di  
ardaas hai jee.*

*Akhar vaadhaa ghaataa bhull chukk  
maaf karnee. Sarbat de kaaraj  
raas karne. Sei piaare mel, jinhaan  
miliaan tera naam chit aave. Nanak  
naam chardi kalaa, tere bhaane  
sarbat da bhala.*

O Timeless Being!

The Eternal Benefactor of the Panth!  
Grant us the boon of unrestricted  
access

To Sri Nankana Sahib and other  
Gurdwaras and sacred sites,  
Which have been separated from the  
Panth; And responsibility for their  
care and management.

O Protector of the humble,  
Strength of the weak, Support of the  
fallen, True Father, Wondrous Guru!  
We offer this supplication in Your  
presence.

Forgive our errors and omissions.

Bless the endeavors of all.

Bring us together with those in whose  
company we remember Your Name.

Nanak pleads for Self-knowledge and  
eternal optimism.

By Your Will, may humanity be  
prosperous and well-being.

The concluding passage seeks  
forgiveness for transgressions and  
support for success in every endeavor.

*Ravinder Singh was raised in  
Singapore and Delhi and has lived in  
the United States since 1975, where  
he currently resides in Westerville,  
Ohio. His consuming passion remains  
Sikhs and Sikhi – in all its flavours  
and dimensions. Currently, he is  
fully – and blissfully – immersed  
in an English transcreation of the  
Guru Granth Sahib which is shared  
publicly as A Sabad A Day on social  
media and www.khojgurbani.org.*

# Panj Pyare, Chaar Sahibzade, Chali Mukte: Beyond their mention in the Ardas

(Late) Dr HLS Tandon, Ph.D.



Any person who has listened to the Sikh prayer, *Ardas*, must have heard the integral mention of “*Panj (5) pyare, chaar (4) sahibzade, chali (40) mukte*”, which follows the mention of the names of the Gurus. Here the reference is to the five beloved ones, four sons of Guru Gobind Singh and forty Sikhs who had deserted Guru Gobind Singh, but came back to fight for the Guru. The five beloved ones were those five common folks belonging to different castes and occupations in the congregation who volunteered to lay down their life in response to the call from Guru Gobind Singh that he needed five heads to be sacrificed. As it turned out a little later, the call by the 33-year old Guru was only a test of courage to search for the truly courageous, brave and devoted ones who were to form the nucleus of the new Khalsa order he wanted to establish. This happened at Anandpur Sahib in Punjab on the Baisakhi day in the year 1699. The forty Muktas refer to those forty martyrs who fought for the Guru

against the Mughals near the village called as Khirdana and died in 1705.

This article briefly describes information of the above forty nine Sikhs, some of which are lesser known personalities. Forty seven of them sacrificed their lives for the sake of their religion while fighting against the tyrannical and oppressive enemy. The aim of this article is to acquaint the youth with these protectors of the Sikh faith who despite heavy odds remained steadfast to the faith.

## ***The Panj Pyare (Five Loved Ones)***

Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa order with the five beloved ones as the nucleus and he outlined a code of conduct and appearance for this spirited community. These are the five kakars or Ks which include: (i) keeping unshorn Kesh/hair (ii) keeping Kanga/comb to keep the hair well-groomed (iii) wearing tight underpants/ Kachhehra, possibly for greater manoeuvrability during combat (iv) keeping a sword-like Kirpan/dagger and (v) wearing an

iron Kara/bracelet. He guided them as their father and Mata Sahib Devan was called the Mother of the Khalsa. A common surname of ‘Singh’ was given to them, abolishing the age old caste-based affiliations and they were woven into a thread of commonality and a strong bond was established amongst them.

*Bhai Daya Singh* or Daya Ram’s father was Bhai Sudha and mother was Mai Diali. He was born at Lahore in 1661 and he breathed his last in 1708. He belonged to Sobti Khatri clan and as profession, was a shopkeeper in Lahore. Gurdwara Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh in Nanded near Takhat Sachkhand Sri Hazur Sahib commemorates his memory.

*Bhai Dharam Singh* belonged to village Saifpur–Karamchandpur in Hastinapur, Meerut District, U.P. He was born in 1666 and passed away in 1708 at Nanded, Maharashtra. Gurdwara Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh, Nanded commemorates his memory. He had accompanied Bhai Daya Singh to South India with Guru’s

letter, Zafarnama to be delivered to Aurangzeb. Another gurdwara in his memory is at his own native place Saifpur nearly 2.5 kilometres away from Hastinapur close to Meerut.

*Bhai Himmat Singh*, third of the Panj Pyaras, was a resident of Jagannath Puri in Orissa. He was born on 18 January 1661 and in 1705, he met his last at Chamkaur Sahib, Punjab. His father was Bhai Gulzaree and mother's name was Mata Dhanno. Gurdwara Bhai Himmat Singh in Pahar Ganj, New Delhi is named after his memory.

*Bhai Mukham Singh* spent his early life at Dwarka in Gujarat. He was born on 6th June 1663, and he died at Chamkaur Sahib in Punjab in 1705. His father was called as Tirath Chand and his mother was Devi Bai. Bhai Mohkam Singh Ji Gurdwara Panj Payara is built at Dwarka which commemorates his eternal memory.

*Bhai Sahib Singh* was born on 17 June 1663 at Bidar in Karnataka. He breathed his last at Chamkaur Sahib in Punjab in 1705. Bhai Guru Narayana was his father and Ankamma Bai or Bishan Devi was his mother. Along with Bhai Himmat Singh and Bhai Mukham Singh, he was martyred at the garhi of Chamkaur in a fierce battle. In Bidar, a Gurdwara has been established in his memory. However, it is generally assumed that he was born in Hoshiarpur, Punjab.

#### Four Sahibzadas

Guru Gobind Singh's all four sons sacrificed their lives for the sake of religion and righteousness. Two elder Sahibzadas were martyred at Chamkaur Sahib in an uneven battle while the younger two were bricked alive inhumanely by Nawab Wazir Khan after they refused to change their religion to embrace Islamic faith.

Guru Sahib's eldest son, *Sahibzada Ajit Singh* was born on 26 January 1687 in Paonta Sahib, HP. Mata Sundri ji was his mother. At Anandpur Sahib, he was given all-round education in the religious texts, history, philosophy etc., and he was imparted practical skills like, riding, archery and swordsmanship. He fought many battles. In 1702, he along with the Sikh army fought battles at Nirmohgard, Basoli and

Bassi Kalan in which the Mughal army was defeated. At the garhi of Chamkaur Sahib, he fought bravely and was martyred and Gurdwara Katalgarh marks that very sacred spot where he laid down his life.

On 14 March 1691, *Sahibzada Jujhar Singh* was born at Anandpur Sahib and breathed his last at Chamkaur Sahib in 1705. He is said to be born to Mata Jito ji. He was also imparted knowledge of the religious literature and given training in the martial arts like, Gatka. After his elder brother

“**The Chalis Muktey were the Sikhs who had deserted Guru Gobind Singh earlier during the siege of Anandpur but returned back and fought bravely in the battle of Muktsar and were martyred. These forty belonged to the Sidhu clan.**”

was martyred, despite being very young, he sought the permission of Guru Gobind Singh to fight. He fought bravely and was martyred in the battle on 22 December 1705.

Guru Gobind Singh's third son, *Sahibzada Zorawar Singh* was born on 17 November 1696 at Anandpur Sahib and he was bricked alive and met his last at Sirhind in Punjab in 1705. The Mughals chased the Guru and his family after they had to leave the fort of Anandpur.

The youngest Sahibzada, *Sahibzada Fateh Singh's* birth was on 12

December 1699 at Anandpur Sahib and in 1705, he was also martyred at Sirhind, Punjab. Even at the young age of six years, he bravely resisted all the malevolent attempts of Nawab Wazir Khan to get them converted into Islam and along with elder brother, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh, he too was martyred and bricked inside a wall.

The two younger Sahibzadas, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh along with their grandmother, Mata Gujri ji was sent under the protection of their trusted cook, Gangu. They proceeded to Gangu's native village of Sahedi but he got greedy and accepting the bribe offered by the Mughals, he handed them to the faujdar of Morinda who presented them before Nawab Wazir Khan. Wazir Khan offered them to accept Islam but both the young Sahibzadas did not succumb to any pressure and so full of anger and revenge, he bricked them alive and then they were decapitated.

#### The Chali Muktey (The Forty Liberated Ones)

The *Chali Muktey* were the Sikhs who had deserted Guru Gobind Singh earlier during the siege of Anandpur but returned and fought bravely in the battle of Muktsar and were martyred. These forty belonged to the Sidhu clan. Bhai Mahan Singh was their leader and they wrote letters to Guru Gobind Singh of *bedava'* (abandonment of a Sikh from his Guru). But when they reached Jhabal village, Mai Bhago motivated them and changed their mind.

They were repentant of their act and went back under the protection of Guru Sahib. Mai Bhago and the forty deserters joined Guru Gobind Singh at *Khidrane Dee Dhab* where the battle preparations against the Mughals were going on. They fought a brave battle but were killed. Guru Gobind Singh met Mahan Singh who was wounded and breathing his last breaths. Guru Sahib tore their letters of *bedava*, forgave them and showered his blessings, thereby liberating them. This place was later renamed Muktsar, literally meaning *The Pool of Liberation*. From that time onwards, these forty Sikhs attained a special place in the Sikh history and find their mention in Ardas.



# Commemoration of Guru Amar Das' Life Legacy

## Bhupinder 'Bo' Singh

Guru Amar Das Ji's spiritual journey started late in his life with a quest for Guru, the spiritual Master, and it culminated in his becoming a Guru himself. A journey that started with a quest for Guru was fulfilled with *Waheguru's* grace, then with Guru's grace he experienced *Waheguru-Truth* (ਸਚ). The beauty of his life's journey was that his Guru Angad, saw his spiritual development then made him his own successor Guru. It was truly a spectacular journey of dedication, obedience, service, humility, firm faith, patience, constant awareness, and surrender. As we celebrate the 450th anniversary of his merger back into the Supreme Being, let us look into his life, achievements, and contributions.

### Brief life

Guru Amar Das Ji was born on 5th May 1479. As per his biological age he was only ten years younger than the Guru Nanak Dev Ji. He succeeded Guru Angad Ji at Khadur Sahib becoming the third Guru at the age of 73, on March 29, 1552. He was the oldest of the ten Gurus to take

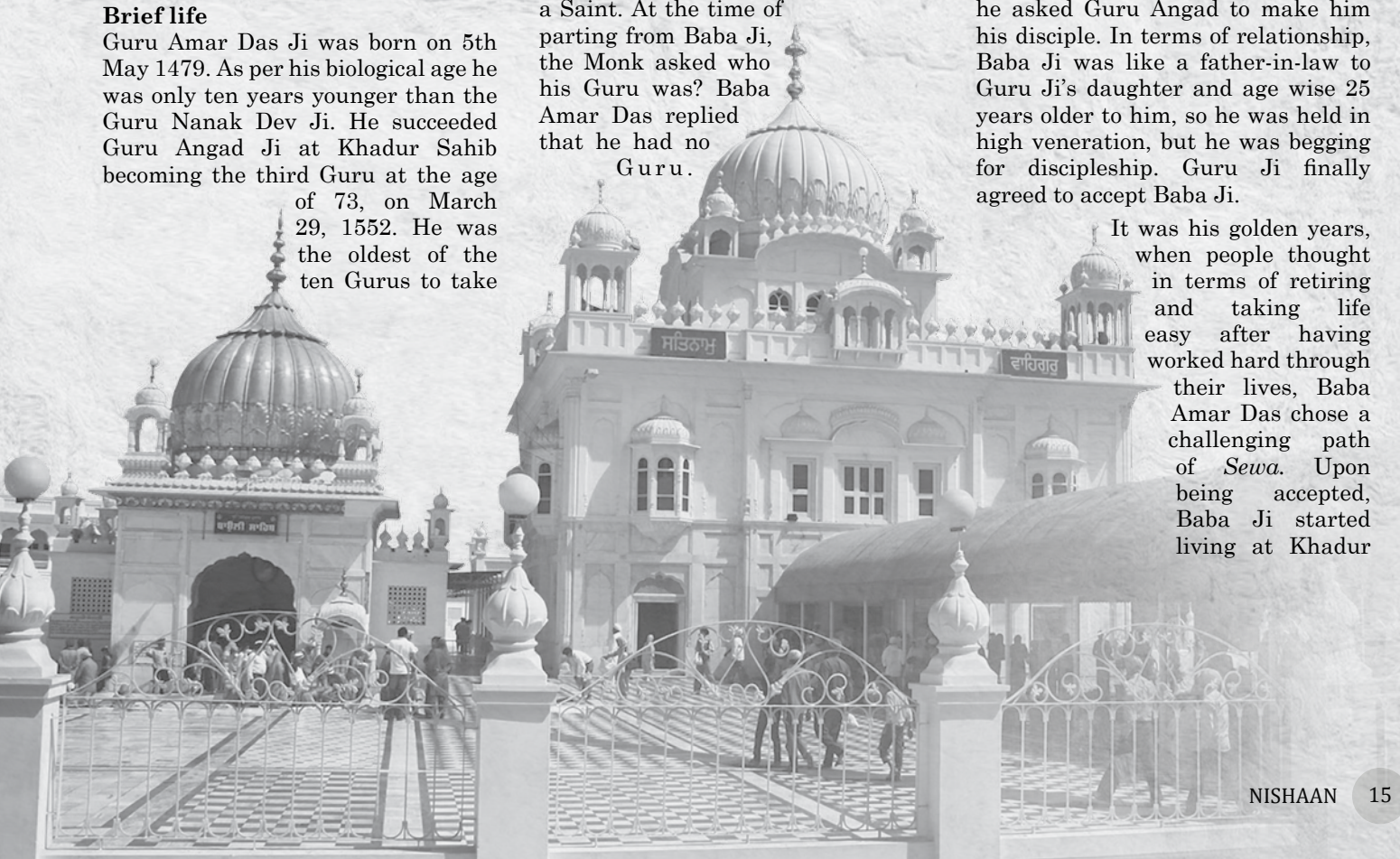
the mantle at such an advanced age and was the oldest to shoulder the responsibility till the age of 95. He merged into the Supreme Being on 1st September 1574.

During his adult life, he was engaged in the trade business and because of his staunch religious upbringing, he made regular pilgrimages to the Sacred Ganga (Ganges) river at Haridwar. He would go there bare footed, singing hymns, giving alms to the poor, as a part of his pilgrimage activities. While returning from his twenty-first visit, he spent a night at the village of Maeharae accompanied by a Vaishav monk, who had become very close to him during their journey. This monk was so impressed by saintly qualities in Baba Amar Das, that he presumed that Baba Ji was a Saint. At the time of parting from Baba Ji, the Monk asked who his Guru was? Baba Amar Das replied that he had no Guru.

Shocked beyond words, he regretted his time spent with him, adding that he had committed a sin by eating food prepared by Baba Ji. The response shook Baba Ji to the core, left a deep imprint on his mind, giving birth to the quest for a Guru.

One early morning Baba Amar Das Ji heard some hymns of Guru Nanak Dev Ji from Bibi Amro Ji, wife of his nephew and daughter of Guru Angad Dev Ji. Baba Ji was so drawn by the words that he requested her to take him to meet its author. Bibi Amro shared with Baba Ji that the composition was by Guru Nanak, who had anointed her father at Khadur as his successor at the time of his departure. Then he requested her to take him to Khadur. Upon meeting Guru Ji, he was so mesmerized, that he asked Guru Angad to make him his disciple. In terms of relationship, Baba Ji was like a father-in-law to Guru Ji's daughter and age wise 25 years older to him, so he was held in high veneration, but he was begging for discipleship. Guru Ji finally agreed to accept Baba Ji.

It was his golden years, when people thought in terms of retiring and taking life easy after having worked hard through their lives, Baba Amar Das chose a challenging path of *Sewa*. Upon being accepted, Baba Ji started living at Khadur



Sahib to serve Guru Angad. First, he was engaged in quiet meditation and would only come out for meals in the Langar Hall. Soon he realised that the austerity practiced in Guru's house was in essence selfless service. So, he started serving water to the thirsty. Later, he expanded his role by cleaning soiled dishes, carrying bricks for construction, mixing mortar, hand grinding of grains, manual fanning, fetching wood fuel, giving massages and helping people with their bath. One day a thought occurred to him that Guru Angad bathes in the early morning, why not get fresh water from the river Beas for him. Soon, with permission from the Guru Ji, it became his daily early morning routine. Every morning, he carried water in a metal pitcher from the river Beas about 5 km. away for Guru Angad's bath. He couldn't bear turning his back to the Guru, so he would walk backwards on his way to the river. Upon return he would go to the forest to gather fuel wood for cooking. During the rest of the day, he would help other devotees and serve in the langar. Even after the evening meal he would come to attend on Guru Angad. Despite his advanced age and a strenuous daily regimen, he was always fully enthusiastic and ready to serve everyone. The words, "I am tired and need some rest" never entered his vocabulary. His own personal comfort was willingly sacrificed for the sake of the Guru, in a reverential act.

Shortly after he had moved to Khadur, his family folks visited him to plead with him to return. His younger brother shared that the business was suffering in his absence, as the family was financially struggling, and needed his stewardship. But Baba Ji replied that he does not have any family anymore. In desperation they approached Guru Angad Ji and asked him to make Baba Ji change his mind. But Baba Ji told Guru Angad that they don't know his state of mind, so don't pay any attention to their pleadings. Baba Ji stayed back in Khadur carrying on his *Sewa* without any slack.

Because of his life's approach, others treated him as a spent old man without any zest of life. They started calling him "Amru-Nithavan"

by using a derogatory moniker. "Nithavan" meaning without an abode or homeless, it is a moniker that he earned for his dedicated service at his daughter-in-law's parents place, which was considered as below dignity by the prevalent social norms. The twelve years of dedicated service from 1541 was also a period of progressive spiritual growth in him. He later shared about serving the Guru in these words:

ਰਹਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਸੇਵੀ ਆਪਣਾ ਇਕ ਮਨਿ ਇਕ ਚਿਤਿ  
ਭਾਇ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਮਨ ਕਾਮਨਾ ਤੀਰਥੁ ਹੈ ਜਿਸ ਨੇ  
ਦੇਇ ਬੁਝਾਇ ॥

*"Hau satgur sevee aapanaa ik  
mun ik chit bhai. Satigur mun  
kaamanaa teerath hai jis no dhei  
bujhai."*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 26)

**Translation:** I serve my True Guru with single-minded devotion, and lovingly focus my consciousness on Him. The True Guru is the mind's desire and the sacred shrine of pilgrimage, for those on to whom He has given this understanding.

One day, Guru Angad instructed Baba Amar Das to go to Goindwal, to spearhead the setting up of a new township there. He took the orders accepting the *Sewa* by bowing to his Guru. The township was inaugurated by Baba Amar Das, which later evolved into first pilgrimage place of the Sikhs. Bhai Gurdas has described in his Vaar 1.46 that setting up of Goindwal was a tremendous feat.

### Contributions and Achievements

One morning Baba Ji was returning from Beas River with water for Guru Ji's bath. Because of the whole night's heavy downpour, and poor visibility, he accidentally stumbled on the wooden peg of the weaver's loom. He fell and rolled down into the weaver's pit. The weaver heard the sound from his bed, and he shouted out who was there. His wife responded who else it could be, besides homeless Amru. Baba Ji overheard her words and remarked that she was crazy as he was not homeless, rather had found the right Guru's house. Soon the news reached Guru Ji, who called and embraced Baba Ji, recalled his 12 years of dedicated service then declared him as the most eligible successor, and anointing him as the

third Guru Nanak in March 1552 at the age of 73. At the time of anointing Guru Angad blessed the designate Guru with twelve blessings which included: Honor of the humble (ਨਿਮਾਣਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਮਾਣ / *Nimanian dae maan*) and Power of the weakling (ਨਿਤਾਣਿਆਂ ਦੇ ਤਾਣ / *Nitanian dae taan*) etc. These were the blessings of his Guru, who had been enraptured by his dedicated services, obedience, humility and devotion. While he found his own two sons lacking in those qualities that responsibility entailed. He told them that Baba Amar Das came to Khadur to give up his own ego and selfhood. Bhai Gurdas has painted a realistic picture of the aura of Guru Amar Das Ji, who had received blessing from Guru Angad in these words:

ਲਹਣੇ ਪਾਈ ਨਾਨਕੇ ਦੇਣੀ ਅਮਰਦਾਸਿ ਘਰਿ ਆਈ।  
ਗੁਰੁ ਬੈਠਾ ਅਮਰੁ ਸਰੂਪੁ ਹੋਇ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਪਾਈ ਦਾਤਿ  
ਇਲਾਹੀ।

*"Lahane paiee naanako dhenee  
amaradhaas ghar aaiee.*

*Gur baiThaa amar saroop hoi  
gurmukh paiee dhaat ilaahee."*

(Bhai Gurdas, Vaar 1.46)

**Translation:** Whatever Lahina (Guru Angad) got from Guru Nanak was passed on to the house of (Guru) Amar Das.

Having received the celestial gifts from Guru Angad, the Guru, in the form of Amar Das assumed the seat.

Guru Amar Das's achievements were extremely admirable, his dedication and enthusiasm were legendary, while his physical stamina was untiring, his mental strength was like a highest summit. After anointing Guru Amar Das as his successor, Guru Angad instructed him to establish his headquarters in the newly built township of Goindwal. Thus, Guru Amar Das spent a total of 33 years of his life in Goindwal.

Upon assuming the responsibilities of Guru, he furthered the development of the Sikhi movement, by providing the nascent community with a structured organization, and developing the first religious axis of Goindwal. He further strengthened the tradition of free kitchen (*Guru Ka Langar*) established by the earlier two Gurus. He issued an injunction saying *Pehle Pangat*

*Phir Sangat'* implying that anyone wishing to have an audience with him, must partake in the *Langar* first. Guru Ji's intended purpose was that such a practice was to remove caste restrictions along with the associated segregation practices. Many people were engaged in preparation, serving and cleaning in the *Langar*, thus it became an incubator further helping in the idea of serving as well demolishing the social caste walls, with everyone jointly involved in all the activities without any caste discrimination. When emperor Akbar came to see Guru Ji in 1566, he had to eat the coarse rice in the *Langar*, before he could have an audience with Guru Ji. Akbar was impressed by this practice and expressed his desire to grant some royal property for '*Guru ka Langar*'. But Guru Ji politely declined the offer saying that this institution is run by contributions of the common man, and not dependent on state largesse.

He propagated the Sikh faith in a very planned manner by dividing the Sikh Sangat areas into 22 preaching centres (*Manjis*), each under the charge of a devout Sikh. Further in 1558, he personally undertook tour of famous pilgrim centres in the east. Additionally he also sent out Sikh missionaries to different parts of India to propagate Sikhism.

Upon returning, to Goindwal from the preaching tour he noticed that the number of visitors there had grown tremendously. So, he purchased some land there and laid the foundation of a Bawli in 1559 – a step well to mitigate water shortage. Sikhs in large number joined in the digging of the well efforts. There were eighty-four steps leading down to the water level. Thus, Goindwal became the first pilgrimage center with a designated annual fair on the occasion of Vaisakhi.

For our understanding and inspiration, let us look into what Guru Ji has said and written about the significance of altruistic service.

ਹਰਿ ਕੀ ਤੁਮ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਹੁ ਦੁਜੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਕਰਹੁ ਨ  
ਕੋਇ ਜੀ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਕੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਤੇ ਮਨਹੁ ਚੀਦਿਆ ਫਲੁ  
ਪਾਈਐ ਦੁਜੀ ਸੇਵਾ ਜਨਮੁ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਜਾਇ ਜੀ ॥੧॥

*“Har kee tum sevaa karahu  
dhoojee sevaa karahu na koi jee.*

*Har kee sevaa te manahu chi(n)  
dhiaa fal paieeaaai dhoojee sevaa  
janam birathaa jai jee. 1.”*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 490)

Translation: Serve (and worship) the Lord alone; do not serve anyone else (lesser gods, goddess, or human beings). Serving the Lord, you shall obtain the fruits of your heart's desires; (while) serving other your life shall pass away in vain. ||1||

Guru Ji has even shared how service has to be carried out:

ਗੁਰੁ ਕੀ ਕਾਰ ਕਮਾਵਣੀ ਭਾਈ ਆਪੁ ਛੋਡਿ ਚਿਤੁ  
ਲਾਇ ॥

ਸਦਾ ਸਹਜੁ ਫਿਰਿ ਦੁਖੁ ਨ ਲਗਈ ਭਾਈ ਹਰਿ ਆਪਿ  
ਵਸੈ ਮਨਿ ਆਇ ॥੨॥

*“Gur kee kaar kamaavane  
bhaiee aap chhodd chit lai.*

*Sadhaa sahaj fir dhukh na lagiee  
bhaiee har aap vasai man aai. 2.”*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 639)

Translation: Work to serve the Guru, O Siblings of Destiny; abandon self-conceit, and focus your consciousness.

You shall be in peace forever, and you shall not suffer in pain any longer, O Siblings of Destiny; the Lord Himself shall come and abide in your mind. ||2||

Guru Amar Das shared the essentiality of spiritual development by saying:

ਏਸ ਨਉ ਹੋਰੁ ਥਾਉ ਨਾਹੀ ਸਬਦਿ ਲਾਗਿ ਸਵਾਰੀਆ ॥

*“Es nau hor thaaun naahee  
sabadh laag savaareea.”*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 917)

Translation: For the self, there is no other shelter worth seeking, it can be made noble by devotion to the Holy Word.

Guru Ji asked to serve none other than the Creator (for him Guru and Creator were one), simultaneously he pointed out the futility of serving others, totally based on his own personal experiences. The outcome of such a service has been defined by Guru Ji as fulfillment of the heart's true inner quest:

ਜਿਚਰੁ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਸਾਸੁ ਤਿਚਰੁ ਸੇਵਾ ਕੀਚੈ ਜਾਇ  
ਮਿਲੀਐ ਰਾਮ ਮੁਰਾਰੀ ॥੨੫॥

*“Jichar a(n) dhar saas tichar  
sevaa keechai jai mileeaaai raam  
Muraaree. 25.”*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 911)

Translation: As long as there is breath within you, so long you should serve the Lord; then, you will go and meet the Lord. ||25||

Guru Ji continued to actively promote the call to service till the very end at the ripe age of 95, along with providing leadership and direction to the community. His own words define that biological age does not leave its physical impairment imprint on the Guru oriented. As they get that mental strength which invigorates their physical body:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬੁਢੇ ਕਦੇ ਨਾਹੀ ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾ ਅੰਤਰਿ ਸੁਰਤਿ  
ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥

*“Gurmukh budde kadhe naahee  
jin(h)aa a(n)tar surat giaan.”*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 1418)

Translation: The Gurmukhs never grow old; within them is intuitive understanding and spiritual wisdom of One Divine Power.

## Conclusion

The occasion of the 450th anniversary of Guru Amar Das' merger into the Supreme Being is an inspiration to all of us, that age is not a bar for embarking on spiritual journey. Dedication and commitment can bring about inner transformation even at a later age. Inspired by his life let us try to inculcate Guru Ji's advice in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* to mold our life. Guru Ji has defined the prerequisite of becoming a true Sewak is to become free of ego in these words:

ਨਾਨਕ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਸੋਈ ਆਖੀਐ ਜੇ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰੇ ਉਤਾਰਿ ॥

*“Nanak sevak soiee aakheeaai jo  
sir dhare utaar.”*

(SGGS, Pg. No. 1247)

Translation: O Nanak, he alone is called a selfless servant, who does a complete surrender to the Lord.

Let us try to emulate the example set by Guru Amar Das Ji to mold our life.

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

# Bhatt Bani in The Guru Granth Sahib

Prithipal Singh

All spiritual events at the Harmandir Sahib (as well as in all Gurudwaras) are focused on the Bani in the Guru Granth Sahib. This “Eternal Guru” is unique amongst the world’s major religious scriptures in several aspects. One of the important features of the Guru Granth Sahib is the prominent diversity of the contributors to this scripture. There is ideological affinity in the compositions of the contributors, and this is focused around the spiritual understanding of Naam. Thus, the scripture includes the writings of six Guru Sahibans, fifteen Bhakts, eleven Bhattas, and four Gursikhs. The contributions of the Bhakts were discussed in an article in two parts: “Bhagat Bani in Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Part-1): Nishaan I/2022 pp 18-23 and (Part-2): Nishaan II/2022 pp 26-31. In the following paragraphs, some aspects of the contributions referred to as “Bhatt Bani” are analysed.

The Harmandir Sahib (Amritsar) presents an interesting spiritual and serene scene every morning at “Amritvela”. The recitation of Gurbani compositions begin at 2.30 am, followed by regular presentation of the “Asa-di-Var” from 3.30 am. Then, between 4.30 am, and 5.00 am., the recitation of the kirtan is paused. During this “ambrosial hour”, the “Prakash” of the Guru Granth Sahib is carried out. Accompanying the procedure of the “Amritvela Prakash”, we observe several minstrels reciting “Sawaiyas”. This tradition has been followed regularly. (After the Prakash, the “First Hukamnama” of the day is read out.) The Sawaiyas recited in the morning are referred to as “Bhatt Bani” in the Guru Granth Sahib. It would, therefore be interesting to know about the composers of these

Sawaiyas, who have been referred to as “Bhattas” in the Scripture.

Bhattas were poets (bards) having personal experience and vision of the spirituality of the Guru Sahibans. The word “Bhatt” refers to a scholar in Sanskrit. These scholars are said to have originally lived on the banks of the river “Sarasvati”; and they were called “Sarasvat”, or learned Brahmans (having a lot of knowledge). Some of them were residents of Sultanpur Lodhi [where Guru Nanak served as the Modi (person-in-charge) of the “Modi Khana” (civil supplies store) for 13 years]. Some historians suggest that the community of Bhattas is now widespread in different parts of India.

A “Bhatt” or Bard is defined as “a composer and presenter of honorific verses”. The Bhattas “recite their verses on those whom they hold in high esteem and on their deeds.” In the light of this definition, the Sawaiyas of the Bhattas in the Guru Granth Sahib offer their observations on five Guru Sahibans (Guru Nanak to Guru Arjan Dev Ji). “The Sawaiyas composed by the Bhattas are unique in the sense that they are testimony to the spiritual heights of Gurbani.”

It is important to mention that Bards were commonly employed by the noble/rich individuals to entertain them, and they received gifts in different forms. But these Bhattas were not mercenaries whose words were written only to please their employers. The compositions (Sawaiyas) of the Bhattas were genuine expressions of their love and regard for the Guru Sahibans. As mentioned above, “these compositions were focused around the spiritual understanding of Naam”. The Bhattas were dedicated followers of the Gurus

and their poetry was the spontaneous articulation of their sincere respect towards the Guru Sahibans.

Historians record the fact that 11 Bhattas under the leadership of Bhatt Kalshar met Guru Arjan Dev Ji at Goindwal Sahib in 1581. During this interaction, they were greatly impressed by observing the virtues of the young Guru Sahib (who was only 18 years old). This led them to recite “Sawaiyas” in honour of the first five Guru Sahibans (Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amardas, Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan Dev Ji). These compositions (Sawaiyas) were incorporated in “The Adi Granth” compiled by Guru Arjan Dev Ji and installed in the Harmandir Sahib in 1604. In these verses (on Angs 1389 to 1409), the Bhattas begin with Guru Nanak and state that all the successive Guru Sahibans were carriers of the same “jot” (light) as Guru Nanak, indicating that the same philosophy of Guru Nanak was continued by his successors. Thus, the main theme of the Sawaiyas recited by the Bhattas was “the oneness of the spirit of the Gurus”. The verses are rich in language (Brajbhasha and Sanskrit), full of poetic imagery and packed with elegant decorative vocabulary.

The 11 Bhattas (sons and nephews of Bhatt Bhikha) contributed a total of 123 Sawaiyas. They were Bhatt Ji, Nalh Ji, Mathura Ji, Jaalap Ji, Kalh Sahaar Ji, Balh Ji, Salh Ji, Bhikha Ji, Gayand Ji, Keerat Ji, and Harbans Ji. Bhatt Kalshar Ji (also known as Kalh or Talh) alone contributed 54 Sawaiyas eulogizing Five Guru Sahibans as follows: Guru Nanak Dev–10 Sawaiyas; Guru Angad Dev –10; Guru Amar Das–9; Guru Ram Das–13; and Guru Arjan Dev–12.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Pehilae Kae 1  
Bhatt Kal (Ang 1389)*

*“Eik Man Purakh Dhhiaae  
Baradhaathaa //*

*Santh Sehaar Sadhaa Bikhiaathaa //  
Thaas Charan Lae Ridhai Basaavo //  
Tho Param Guroo Naanak Gun  
Gaavo //1//”*

This is translated as follows:  
“Meditate single-mindedly on the Primal Lord God, the Bestower of Blessings. He is the Helper and Support of the Saints, manifest forever, Grasp His Feet and enshrine them in your heart. Then, let us sing the Glorious Praises of the most exalted Guru Nanak.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Pehilae Kae 1  
Bhatt Kal (Ang 1390)*

*“Sathajug Thai Maaniou Shhaliou  
Bal Baavan Bhaaeiou //  
Thraethai Thai Maaniou Raam  
Raghuvans Kehaeiou //  
Dhuaapur Kirasan Muraar Kans  
Kirathaarathh Keeou //*

*Ougrasain Ko Raaj Abhai Bhagatheh  
Jan Dheou //*

*Kalijug Pramaan Naanak Gur  
Angadh Amar Kehaeiou //*

*Sree Guroo Raaj Abichal Attal Aadh  
Purakh Furamaaeiou //*

“In the Golden Age of *Sat Yuga*, You were pleased to deceive Baal the King, in the form of a dwarf. In the Silver Age of *Traytaa Yuga*, You were called Raam of the Raghu dynasty. In the Brass Age of *Dwaapur Yuga*, You were Krishna; You killed Mur the demon and saved Kans. You blessed Ugrasain with a kingdom, and You blessed Your humble devotees with fearlessness.

In the Iron Age, the Dark Age of *Kali Yuga*, You are known and accepted as Guru Nanak, Guru Angad and Guru Amar Das. The sovereign rule of the Great Guru is unchanging and permanent, according to the Command of the Primal Lord God.”

In this Sawaiya, Bhat Kalshar narrates the succession from Guru Nanak to Guru Angad and then to Guru Amar Das Ji.

*Sawaiya Mehalae Dhoojae Kae 2  
Bhatt Kal (Ang 1391)*

*“Soee Purakh Dhhann Karathaa*

*Kaaran Karathaar Karan  
Samarthho //*

*Sathiguroo Dhhann Naanak  
Masathak Thum Dhhariou Jin  
Hathho //*

“Blessed is the Primal Lord God, the Creator, the All-powerful Cause of causes. Blessed is the True Guru Nanak, who placed His hand upon Your forehead.”

Bhat Kalshar narrates the anointment of Bhai Lehna Ji as His successor by Guru Nanak.

*Sawaiya Mehalae Theejae Kae 3  
Bhatt Kal (Ang 1392)*

*“Kav Jan Kaly Subudhhee Keerath  
Jan Amaradhaas Bistreeya //*

*Keerath Rav Kiran Pragatt  
Sansaareh Saakh Tharovar  
Mavalasaraa //*

“So speaks Kal the poet: the glory of the wise, sublime and humble Amar Das is spread throughout the world. His Praises radiate throughout the world, like the rays of the sun, and the branches of the maular (fragrant) tree.”

This composition very brilliantly describes the exquisite qualities of Guru Amar Das Ji.

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 4  
Bhatt Kal (Ang 1406)*

*“Gur Ramdas Sach Saly Bhan Thoo  
Attal Raaj Abhag Dhal //*

*Thoo Sathigur Chahu Jugee Aap  
Aapae Paramaesar //*

“So speaks Sall the poet: O Guru Ram Das, Your sovereign power is eternal and unbreakable; Your army is invincible. You are the True Guru, throughout the four ages; You Yourself” are the Transcendent Lord.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Panjavae Kae 5  
Bhatt Kal (Ang 1407)*

*“Gur Arajun Gun Sehaj Bichaaran //  
Gur Raamadhaas Ghar Keeao  
Pragaasaa //*

*Sagal Manorathh Pooree Aasaa //  
Thai Janamath Guramath Braham  
Pashhaaniou //*

“With intuitive peace and poise, I contemplate the Glorious Virtues of Guru Arjan. He was revealed in the House of Guru Ram Das. And all hopes and desires were fulfilled.

From birth, He realized God through the Guru’s Teachings.”

Besides the above Sawaiyas of Bhat Kalshar, the Sawaiyas of the other Bhattas are equally significant. In all the compositions, the different Bards have described the spiritual qualities of the Guru Sahibans.

**Their compositions are as follows:**

Bhatt Bhal Ji (1)  
Bhatt Nalh Ji (16)  
Bhatt Mathura Ji (14)  
Bhatt Jaalap Ji (5)  
Bhatt Balh Ji (5)  
Bhatt Salh Ji (3)  
Bhatt Bhikha Ji (2)  
Bhatt Gayand Ji (13)  
Bhatt Keerat Ji (11)  
Bhatt Harbans Ji (2)

A few of the compositions of the Bhatt Sahibans may be referred to here.

Bhatt Nalh studied the Bani of Guru Ram Das and followed it. He wrote 16 Sawaiyas on the praise of God and Guru Ram Das Ji.

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 4  
Bhatt Nal (Ang 1399)*

*“Raaj Jog Thakhath Dheean Gur  
Raamadhaas //*

*Prathamae Nanak Chandh Jagath  
Bhayo Anandh Thaarann Manukhay  
Jan Keeao Pragaas //*

*Gur Angadh Dheean Nidhaan  
Akathh Kathhaa Giaan Panch Bhoot  
Bas Keenae Jamat N Thraas //*

*Gur Amar Guroo Sree Sath Kalijug  
Raakhee Path Aghanh Dhaekhath  
Gath Charan Kaval Jaas //*

*Sabh Bidhh Maaniyo Man Thab Hee  
Bhayo Prasann Raaj Jog Thakhath  
Dheean Gur Raamadhaas //*

“Guru Ram Das was blessed with the Throne of *Raja Yoga*. First, Guru Nanak illuminated the world, like the full moon, and filled it with bliss. To carry humanity across, He bestowed His Radiance. He blessed Guru Angad with the treasure of spiritual wisdom, and the Unspoken Speech. He overcame the five demons and the fear of the Messenger of Death. The Great and True Guru, Guru Amar Das, has preserved honor in this Dark Age of *Kali Yuga*. Seeing His Lotus feet, sin and evil are destroyed.

When His mind was totally satisfied in every way, when He was totally pleased, He bestowed Guru Ram Das the Throne of Raja Yoga.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 4  
Bhatt Nal (Ang 1400)*

*“Samarathh Guroo Sir Hathh  
Dhharyo //*

*Gur Keenee Kirappa Har Naam  
Dheeo Jis Dhaekh Charann Aghann  
Haryo //”*

“The all-powerful Guru placed His hand upon my head. The Guru was kind, and blessed me with the Lord’s Name. Gazing upon His Feet, my sins were dispelled.”

Bhatt Kirat was a Gaur Brahmin poet in the court of Guru Arjan Dev. He was the son of Bhatt Bhikha. Two of his brothers, Bhatt Mathura and Bhatt Jalap also served the Guru Sahibans. Eight Sawaiyas of Bhatt Kirat are enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib. Bhatt Bhikha Ji contributed 2 Sawaiyas, while Bhatt Mathura contributed 14 Sawaiyas, and Bhatt Jalap 5.

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 3  
Bhatt Bhikkha (Ang 1395)*

*“Gur Giaan Ar Dhhiaan Thath Sio  
Thath Milaavai //*

*Sach Sach Jaaneeai Eik Chithehi Liv  
Laavai // Kaam Krodhh Vas Karai  
Pavan Ouddanth N Dhaavai //*

*Nirankar Kai Vasai Dhaes Hukam  
Bujh Beechaar Paavai //”*

“In deep meditation, and the spiritual wisdom of the Guru, one’s essence merges with the essence of reality. In truth, the True Lord is recognised and realised, when one is lovingly attuned to Him, with one-pointed consciousness. Lust and anger are brought under control, when the breath does not fly around, wandering restlessly. Dwelling in the land of the Formless Lord, realizing the Hukam of His Command, His contemplative wisdom is achieved.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 4  
Bhatt Keerat (Ang 1406)*

*“Eik Outham Panthh Suniou Gur  
Sangath Thih Milanth Jam Thraas  
Mittaae // Eik Aradhaas Bhatt  
Keerath Kee Gur Ramadhaas  
Raakhahu Saranae //”*

“I have heard that the most exalted Path of all is the Sangat, the Guru’s Congregation. Joining it, the fear of death is taken away. Keerat the poet offers this one prayer: O Guru Ram Das, save me! Take me into your Sanctuary.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Panjavae Kae 5  
Bhatt Mathura (Ang 1409)*

*“Dhharan Gagan Nav Khandd Mehi  
Joth Svaroopee Rehiou Bhar //*

*Bhan Mathhuraa Kashh Bhaedh  
Nehee Gur Arajun Parathakhy Har //”*

“He is totally pervading the earth, the sky and nine regions of the planet, He is the Embodiment of the Light of God. So speaks Mathura: there is no difference between God and Guru; Guru Arjan is the Personification of the Lord Himself.”

Bhatt Jalap contributed five hymns to the Guru Granth Sahib. Bhatt Jalap was a true devotee of Guru Amar Das Ji, and he preached complete submission to Him in the following Sawaiya:

*Sawaiya Mehalae Teejaa Kae 3 Bhatt  
Jalap (Ang 1394)*

*“Charan Th Par Sakayathh Charan  
Gur Amar Paval Ray //*

*Hathh Th Par Sakayathh Hathh  
Lagehi Gur Amar Pay //*

“Supremely fruitful are the feet which walk with upon the path of Guru Amar Das. Supremely fruitful are the hands which touch the feet of Guru Amar Das.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Theejae Kae 3  
Bhatt Jalap (Ang 1395)*

*“Eik Binn Dhugan J Tho Rehai Jaa  
Sumanthr Maanavehi Lehi //*

*Jaalapaa Padhaarathh Eitharrae  
Gur Amaradhaas Ddithai Milehi’*

“Realizing the One Lord, love of duality ceases, and one comes to accept the Sublime Mantra of the Guru. So speaks Jaalap: countless treasures are obtained, by the sight of Guru Amar Das.”

Bhatt Gayand, a Saraswat Brahmin became a Gurmukh after listening to the wisdom of truth from the Fifth Guru – Guru Arjan Dev Ji. He was the one who introduced the word “Waheguru” in his poetry. His impressive maiden presentation later became the mainstay of Sikh ethos.

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 4  
Bhatt Gayand (Ang 1401)*

*“Gur Nanak Nikhatt Basai  
Banavaaree //*

*Thin Lehanaa Thhaap Joth Jag  
Dhhaaree //*

*Lehana Panthh Dharam Kaa Keeaa //*

*Amaradhaas Bhalae Ko Dheea //*

*Thin Sree Raamdhaas Sodhee Thhir  
Thhapyo //”*

“Guru Nanak dwells near the Creator Lord. He established Lehnaa as Guru, and enshrined His Light in the World. Lehnaa established the path of righteousness and Dharma. Which He passed on to Guru Amar Dass, of the Bhalla dynasty. Then, He firmly established the Great Ram Das of the Sodhi dynasty.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 4  
Bhatt Gayand (Ang 1402)*

*“Siree Guroo Saahib Sabh Oopar Man  
Bach Kranm Saeveeai Sachaa //  
Vaahiguroo Vaahiguroo Vaahiguroo  
Vaahi Jeeo //”*

“The Supreme Guru is The Lord and Master over all; so serve the True Guru, in thought, word and deed. Waahay Guru. Waahay Guru, Waahay Guru, Waahay Guru Waahay Jee-o.”

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 4  
Bhatt Gayand (Ang 1403)*

*“Sewak Kai Bharapoor Jug  
Jug Vaahaguroo Thaeraa Sabh  
Sadhaka //”*

“Your servants are totally fulfilled, throughout the ages; O Waheguru, it is all You, forever.”

Bhatt Salh (Salhay) was a devotee bard and mystic. He was a protagonist of Gurmat philosophy. In his 3 hymns, he explained the way the soul could control its inner vices and move forward through the path of Dharma. He also admired and explained how Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das carry across to the other side of the world. His three hymns covered the whole Gurmat philosophy in brief.

*Sawaiya Mehalae Chouthhae Kae 4  
Bhatt Salh (Ang 1406)*

*“Thoo Sathigur Chahu Jugee Aap  
Aapae Paramaesar //*

*Sur Nar Saadhik Sidh Sikh  
Saevanth Dhhureh Dhhur //*

*Aadh Jugaadh Anaadh Kalaa  
Dhhaaree Thrihu Loah //*

*Agam Nigam Oudhharan Jaraa  
Janmihi Aaroah //*

*Gur Amaradhaas Thhir Thhpiao  
Paragaamee Thaarana Tharan //*

*Agh Anthak Badhai N Saly Kav Gur  
Raamadhaas Thaaree Saran //*

“You are the True Guru, throughout the four ages; You Yourself are the Transcendent Lord. The angelic beings, seekers, Siddhas and Sikhs have served You, since the very beginning of time. You are the Primal Lord God, from the very beginning, and throughout the ages; Your Power supports the three worlds.

You are inaccessible; You are the Saving Grace of the Vedas. You have conquered old age and death. Guru Amar Das has permanently established You; You are the Emancipator, to carry all across to the other side. So speaks Sall the poet; O Guru Ram Das, You are the Destroyer of sins; I seek Your Sanctuary.”

Bhatt Haribans was an ascetic known for renunciation and meditation. He accepted the Sikh faith at the hands of Guru Arjan Dev. Bhatt Haribans served as the head of the Sikh Dharamsala at Agra. He would recite Gurbani every morning and serve the travellers with devotion and humility. He had the privilege of witnessing the celestial congregations of Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev. There are only 2 Sawaiyas composed by Bhatt Haribans in the Guru Granth Sahib.

*Sawaiya Mehalae Panjavae Kae 5  
Bhatt Haribans (Ang 1409)*

*“Ajai Gang Jal Attal Sikh Sangath  
Sabh Naavai //*

*Nith Puraan Baacheehi Baedh  
Brehamaa Mukh Gaavai //*

*Ajai Chavar Sir Dtulai Naam  
Anmrith Mukh Leeao //*

*Gur Arajun Sir Shhathra Aap  
Paramaesar Dheao //*

*Mil Nanak Angadh Amar Gur Gur  
Raamadhaas Har Pehi Gayo //*

*Haribans Jagath Jas Sancharyo S  
Kavan Kehai Sree Gur Muyo //*

“The stream of the Lord’s Name flows like the Ganges, invincible and unstoppable. The Sikhs of the Sangat all bathe in it. It appears as if the holy texts like the Puraanaas are being recited there and Brahma himself sings the Vedas.

The invincible chauri, the fly-brush, waves over His head, with His mouth He drinks in the Ambrosial Nectar of the Naam. The transcendent Lord Himself has placed the royal canopy over the head of Guru Arjun. Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das met together before the Lord. So speaks Haribans: Their Praises echo and resound all over the world; who can possibly say that the Great Gurus are dead?”

*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.*

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# A Poet Remembers

Featured by Artika Aurora Bakshi

Every eye glistens when Sarbjot Singh Behl recites his poetry. In a day and age where everything is fast-paced, his words slow down time, emotionally bonding the listener with the poet's deepest thoughts. A known face in Amritsar and Punjab, Professor Behl enthralled the literati at the well-known Jaipur Literary Festival. The featured poem was written in 2019, the centenary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre. "After making a visit to the Bagh, and seeing all the political mileage around the event, I wondered what we had really learnt from history," says Prof. Behl.

“ਤੇ ਕੀ ਦਰਦ ਨਾ ਆਇਆ”

ਮੈਂ ਜਲਿਆਂਵਾਲੇ ਬਾਗ ਦੀ ਖੱਬੀ ਨੁੱਕਰੇ ਲੱਗੇ  
ਖੂਹ ਦੀ ਕੰਧ ਚ ਚਿਣੀ, ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਇੱਟ ਤੇ ਵੱਜੀ ਗੋਲੀ ਹਾਂ  
ਮੈਂ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਬੰਦੂਕ ਦੀ ਨਾਲ 'ਚੋਂ ਨਿਕਲੀ  
ਕਿਸ ਹੁਕਮ ਦੇ ਗੋਲੇ ਘੋੜਾ ਦੱਬਿਆ, ਮੈਨੂੰ ਯਾਦ ਨਹੀ  
ਪਰ ਯਾਦ ਹੈ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਇਕ ਤੰਗ ਗਲੀ ਨੂੰ ਡੱਕ ਕੇ ਖਲੋਤਾ  
ਤੰਗ-ਦਿਲ ਹਾਕਮ ਡਾਇਰ  
'ਤੇ ਉਹਦੇ ਹਲਕ 'ਚੋਂ ਨਿਕਲਿਆ  
ਨਾਦਰਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਫਰਮਾਨ 'ਫਾਇਰ'  
ਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਦਾਗੀ ਗਈ  
ਨਿਹੱਥਿਆਂ, ਨਿਰਦੇਸ਼ਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਨਿਗੂਣਿਆਂ ਵੱਲ  
ਹਰ ਗੋਲੀ ਦੀ ਨੇਕ 'ਤੇ ਇਕ ਨਾਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ  
ਅਣਜਾਣਿਆ, ਅਣਬੁਝਿਆ 'ਤੇ ਅਣਮਿਥਿਆ  
ਹਰ ਗੋਲੀ ਦੇ ਸੀਨੇ 'ਚ ਇਕ ਸਿਰਨਾਵਾਂ ਹੁੰਦਾ ਹੈ  
ਜਾਣਿਆ, ਬੁਝਿਆ, ਮਿੱਥਿਆ - 'ਮੈਤ'  
'ਤੇ ਮੈਂ ਕਰਮਾਂਵਾਲੀ ਕਰ ਕਾਰਤੂਸ ਨੂੰ ਖਾਲੀ  
ਬਚਦੀ ਬਚਾਉਂਦੀ ਚੋੜੀਆਂ ਹਿੱਕਾਂ ਤੇ, ਕੂਲੀਆਂ ਛਾਤੀਆਂ ਤੇ,  
ਕੰਬਦੀਆਂ ਕੁੱਖਾਂ ਤੇ ਤੇ ਰੋਸ਼ਨ ਮੱਥਿਆਂ ਤੇ -  
ਜਾ ਵੱਜੀ ਜਲਿਆਂਵਾਲੇਬਾਗ ਦੀ ਖੱਬੀ ਨੁੱਕਰੇ ਖੂਹ ਦੀ ਕੰਧ ਚ  
ਮੈਂ ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਇੱਟ ਨਾਲ ਟਕਰਾਈ  
ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹ ਫਕੀਰ ਦੀ ਅਵਾਜ਼ ਆਈ  
ਤੇ ਕੀ ਦਰਦ ਨਾ ਆਇਆ

ਮੈਂ ਕਿਹਾ ਬਾਬਾ ਮੈਂ ਤਾਂ ਗੋਲੀ ਹਾਂ  
ਅੰਨੀ, ਗੂੰਗੀ, ਬੋਲੀ ਹਾਂ  
ਮੈਨੂੰ ਦਾਗਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਨੇ ਤੇਰੀ ਹੀ ਧਰਤ ਦੇ ਜਾਏ  
ਰਾਜੇ ਸੀਹ ਮੁਕੱਦਮ ਕੁੱਤੇ ਹਲਕਾਏ  
ਬਾਬੇ ਦੇ ਬੋਲ ਗੋਲੀਆਂ ਦੀ ਗੂੰਜ 'ਚ ਅਣਗੋਲੇ ਰਹਿ ਗਏ  
ਬੰਦੇ ਕੁਝ ਹਜ਼ਾਰ ਸਨ, ਗੋਲੀਆਂ ਬੇਸ਼ੁਮਾਰ ਸਨ

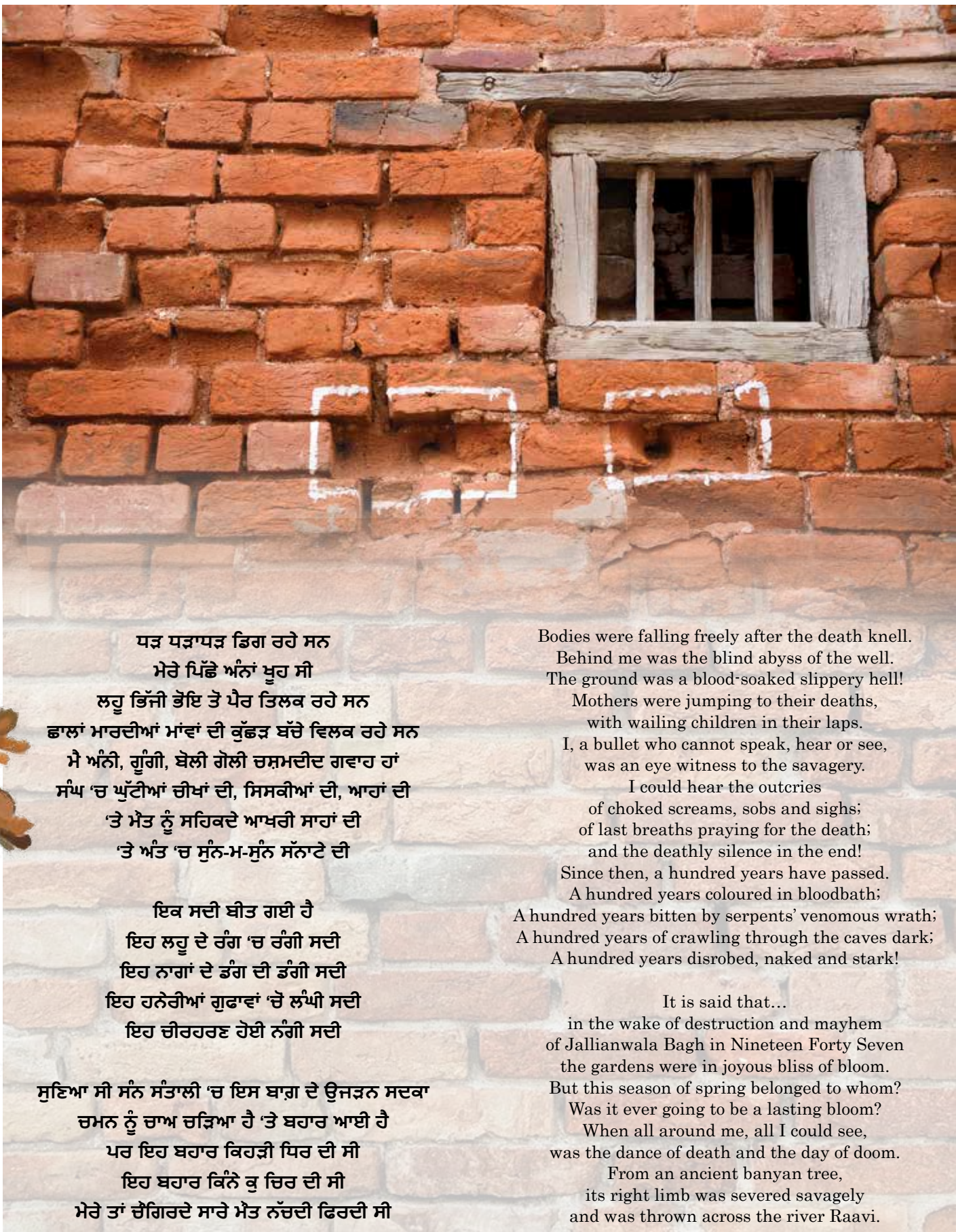
“Did you not feel the pain?”

Translated by: Jeena Singh

I am that bullet when hit  
got embedded in the wall of the well  
built with nanakshahi bricks.  
The well which was there  
in the left corner of an accursed place  
Jallianwala Bagh it was named.  
I don't remember the face of the slave  
in the garb of a soldier who  
pressed the trigger and sealed my fate.  
But I do remember that narrow lane  
barricaded by stone-hearted Dyer,  
reminiscent of Nadir Shah  
barking the orders "FIRE"!  
And I got propelled in the trajectory  
towards folks unarmed, innocent and ordinary.  
The tip of every bullet has a name engraved;  
unfathomed, unmarked and unnamed.  
The heart of every bullet carries an address,  
known, fathomed and marked with "DEATH".  
But I was the one blessed,  
ejecting the cartridge case,  
dodging broad chests and soft breasts,  
trembling wombs and shining foreheads,  
I hit the the wall of the well  
in the left corner of Jallianwala bagh.  
As I struck the Nanakshahi brick,  
Nanakshah's bereaved voice  
ricocheted with the quest:  
"Did you not feel the pain of the dead?"  
And I said: "O Great Seer!

I am but a bullet mere. I cannot hear,  
speak or see; but the ones who triggered me,  
are the sons of the soil who belonged to the land of thee.  
They are kings like hungry lions  
and their commissars like rabid hounds."  
Seer's voice got drowned  
in the bullets' deafening sound.  
There were a few thousand men,  
but the bullets were far more than them.





ਧੜ ਧੜਾਧੜ ਡਿਗ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ  
 ਮੇਰੇ ਪਿੱਛੇ ਅੰਨਾਂ ਖੂਹ ਸੀ  
 ਲਹੂ ਭਿੱਜੀ ਭੋਇ ਤੇ ਪੈਰ ਤਿਲਕ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ  
 ਛਾਲਾਂ ਮਾਰਦੀਆਂ ਮਾਂਵਾਂ ਦੀ ਕੁੱਛੜ ਬੱਚੇ ਵਿਲਕ ਰਹੇ ਸਨ  
 ਮੈ ਅੰਨੀ, ਗੁੰਗੀ, ਬੋਲੀ ਗੋਲੀ ਚਸਮਦੀਦ ਗਵਾਰ ਹਾਂ  
 ਸੰਘ 'ਚ ਘੁੱਟੀਆਂ ਚੀਖਾਂ ਦੀ, ਸਿਸਕੀਆਂ ਦੀ, ਆਹਾਂ ਦੀ  
 'ਤੇ ਮੌਤ ਨੂੰ ਸਹਿਕਦੇ ਆਖਰੀ ਸਾਹਾਂ ਦੀ  
 'ਤੇ ਅੰਤ 'ਚ ਸੁੰਨ-ਮ-ਸੁੰਨ ਸੱਨਾਟੇ ਦੀ

ਇਕ ਸਦੀ ਬੀਤ ਗਈ ਹੈ  
 ਇਹ ਲਹੂ ਦੇ ਰੰਗ 'ਚ ਰੰਗੀ ਸਦੀ  
 ਇਹ ਨਾਗਾਂ ਦੇ ਡੰਗ ਦੀ ਡੰਗੀ ਸਦੀ  
 ਇਹ ਹਨੇਰੀਆਂ ਗੁਫਾਵਾਂ 'ਚੋਂ ਲੰਘੀ ਸਦੀ  
 ਇਹ ਚੀਰਹਰਣ ਹੋਈ ਨੰਗੀ ਸਦੀ

ਸੁਣਿਆ ਸੀ ਸੰਨ ਸੰਤਾਲੀ 'ਚ ਇਸ ਬਾਗ ਦੇ ਉਜੜਨ ਸਦਕਾ  
 ਚਮਨ ਨੂੰ ਚਾਅ ਚੜਿਆ ਹੈ 'ਤੇ ਬਹਾਰ ਆਈ ਹੈ  
 ਪਰ ਇਹ ਬਹਾਰ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਧਿਰ ਦੀ ਸੀ  
 ਇਹ ਬਹਾਰ ਕਿੰਨੇ ਕੁ ਚਿਰ ਦੀ ਸੀ  
 ਮੇਰੇ ਤਾਂ ਚੋਗਿਰਦੇ ਸਾਰੇ ਮੌਤ ਨੱਚਦੀ ਫਿਰਦੀ ਸੀ

Bodies were falling freely after the death knell.  
 Behind me was the blind abyss of the well.  
 The ground was a blood-soaked slippery hell!  
 Mothers were jumping to their deaths,  
 with wailing children in their laps.  
 I, a bullet who cannot speak, hear or see,  
 was an eye witness to the savagery.  
 I could hear the outcries  
 of choked screams, sobs and sighs;  
 of last breaths praying for the death;  
 and the deathly silence in the end!  
 Since then, a hundred years have passed.  
 A hundred years coloured in bloodbath;  
 A hundred years bitten by serpents' venomous wrath;  
 A hundred years of crawling through the caves dark;  
 A hundred years disrobed, naked and stark!

It is said that...  
 in the wake of destruction and mayhem  
 of Jallianwala Bagh in Nineteen Forty Seven  
 the gardens were in joyous bliss of bloom.  
 But this season of spring belonged to whom?  
 Was it ever going to be a lasting bloom?  
 When all around me, all I could see,  
 was the dance of death and the day of doom.  
 From an ancient banyan tree,  
 its right limb was severed savagely  
 and was thrown across the river Raavi.

ਇਕ ਕਦੀਮ ਬੋਹੜ ਨਾਲੋਂ  
 ਉਸਦਾ ਸੱਜਾ ਮੁੱਢ ਮੁੱਢੇ ਵੱਡ ਕੇ ਲਾਹ ਸੁੱਟਿਆ  
 'ਤੇ ਰਾਵੀ ਤੇ ਪਰਾਂ ਵਗਾਹ ਸੁੱਟਿਆ  
 ਦੇ ਟੋਟੇ ਹੇ ਗਏ, ਧਰਮ ਈਮਾਨ ਖੋਟੇ ਹੇ ਗਏ  
 ਝੱਖੜ ਝੁੱਲ ਗਏ, ਲੱਖਾਂ ਕੱਖਾਂ ਵਾਂਗ ਰੁਲ ਗਏ  
 'ਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਲਹੂ ਦੇ ਤਿਰਹਾਏ ਸਾਰੇ ਭੁੱਲ ਗਏ  
 ਕਿ ਜਲਿਆਂ ਵਾਲੇ ਬਾਗ਼ 'ਚ  
 ਰਾਮਦਾਸ, ਗੁਲਾਮ ਰਸੂਲ ਅਤੇ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਸਿੰਘ ਦਾ ਜੋ ਡੁੱਲਿਆ ਸੀ  
 ਉਸ ਲਹੂ ਦਾ ਰੰਗ ਇਕੋ ਜਿਹਾ ਸੀ  
 'ਤੇ ਖੂਹ ਦੀ ਖੋਹ ਨੂੰ ਪਤਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਲੱਗਾ  
 ਕਿ ਨੈਣਾਂ, ਸੁਰੈਣਾ 'ਤੇ ਬਿੱਸੇ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ  
 ਕਿਸ ਦਾ ਅੰਤਿਮ ਸਾਹ ਸੀ ਤੇ ਕਿਸ ਦੀ ਆਖਰੀ ਸਿਸਕੀ ਸੀ  
 'ਤੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਸਾਰੇ ਭੁੱਲ ਗਏ ਕਿ ਜਲਿਆਂ ਵਾਲੇ ਦੇ ਜੱਲਾਦ ਦੇ ਖ਼ਿਲਾਫ਼  
 ਜਿਹਾਦ ਕਰਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਦਾ ਨਾਂ ਰਾਮ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਅਜ਼ਾਦ ਸੀ  
 ਹੁਣ ਰਾਮ ਰਸੂਲ ਨਾਲ ਟਕਰਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਸੀ  
 ਖੰਜਰ ਤਿਸੂਲ ਨਾਲ ਟਕਰਾ ਰਿਹਾ ਸੀ

ਮੈਂ ਅੰਨੀ, ਗੁੰਗੀ, ਬੋਲੀ ਗੋਲੀ ਚਸ਼ਮਦੀਦ ਗਵਾਹ ਹਾਂ  
 ਜਲਿਆਂ ਵਾਲੇ ਬਾਗ਼ ਦੇ ਖੱਬੀ ਨੁੱਕਰੇ ਲੱਗੇ ਖੂਹ ਦੀ ਕੰਧ 'ਚ  
 ਜਿੱਥੇ ਮੈਂ ਜਾ ਵੱਜੀ ਸਾਂ,  
 ਸੰਨ ਸੰਤਾਲੀ ਦੀ ਸਿਤੰਬਰ ਦੀ ਮੌਸਮ ਵਾਲੀ ਰਾਤ ਨੂੰ  
 ਉਸ ਦੇ ਓਹਲੇ ਖੁਦਾਬਖਸ਼ ਆ ਲੁਕਿਆ ਸੀ  
 'ਤੇ ਕੜੇ ਵਾਲੇ ਦੇ ਹੱਥਾਂ ਨੇ ਉਸਨੂੰ ਧੂ ਕੇ ਬਾਹਰ ਕੱਢਿਆ  
 'ਤੇ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਲਹੂ ਦੇ ਛਿੱਟਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ  
 ਮੇਰਾ ਚੱਪਾ ਕੁ ਸਦੀ ਦਾ ਜੰਗਲ ਧੁਰ ਤੱਕ ਹੰਗਾਲਿਆ ਗਿਆ  
 'ਤੇ ਰੱਤ ਰੱਤੀ ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਇੱਟ 'ਚੋਂ ਫੇਰ ਅਵਾਜ਼ ਆਈ  
 ਤੈ ਕੀ ਦਰਦ ਨਾ ਆਇਆ  
 ਜਵਾਬ ਮਿਲਿਆ- ਖੂਨ ਕਾ ਬਦਲਾ ਖੂਨ ਸੇ  
 ਇਹ ਰੁੱਤ ਰੱਤ ਦੀ ਸੀ  
 ਇਹ ਰੁੱਤ ਉਜੜਦੀ ਮਾਂਗ ਦੀ ਸੀ  
 ਇਹ ਰੁੱਤ ਲੁੱਟਦੀ ਪੱਤ ਦੀ ਸੀ

ਵਕਤ ਦੀ ਵਹਿਸ਼ੀ ਨਦੀ ਵਹਿੰਦੀ ਰਹੀ  
 ਇਹ ਧਰਤ ਹਰ ਜੁਲਮ, ਜਬਰ, ਜਿਨਾਹ ਚੁੱਪ-ਚਾਪ ਸਹਿੰਦੀ ਰਹੀ  
 ਸਿਰਫ਼ ਵਕਤ, ਜਗਾ, ਹੁਕਮਰਾਨ 'ਤੇ ਫ਼ਰਮਾਨ ਬਦਲੇ ਜਾਂਦੇ ਰਹੇ  
 ਲੇਖਾਂ ਤੇ ਲੇਖਾਂ ਡਿਗਦੀਆਂ ਰਹੀਆਂ, ਸਿਰਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਗਿੱਧ ਮੰਡਰਾਂਦੇ ਰਹੇ  
 67 ਚ ਹੱਤੀਆ ਦੀਆਂ ਹਤਿਆਵਾਂ  
 69 ਚ ਗੁਜਰਾਤ ਦੀ ਕਾਲੀ ਰਾਤ  
 74 ਚ ਵਰਲੀ ਦੇ ਵਿਰਲਾਪ  
 80 ਚ ਮੁਰਾਦਾਬਾਦ ਦੀਆਂ ਮੋਤਾਂ  
 84 ਚ ਦਿੱਲੀ 'ਚੋਂ ਓਠੀਆਂ ਦਿਲ ਦਹਿਲਾਂਉਦੀਆਂ ਚੀਖਾਂ  
 ਨਾ ਕੋਈ ਡਾਇਰ, ਨਾ ਕੋਈ ਫਾਇਰ

As those who were once ONE,  
 got bifurcated and parted.  
 Beliefs were corrupted  
 and faiths turned coldhearted.  
 In the tornado of hate,  
 hundreds of thousands were displaced.  
 And baying for blood,  
 we all forgot, that in Jallianwala Bagh  
 the blood that was shed  
 of Ramdas, Ghulam Rasool and Kartar Singh, was  
 of the same colour red.

And the well in its depths  
 could not even distinguish,  
 was it Naina's, Suraina's or Bisso's last breath  
 or the last cry of anguish!  
 And we all forgot  
 that the one who took revenge  
 from the butcher of Jallianwala Bagh,  
 was none other than named Ram Mohammad Singh  
 Azad.

Now Ram was confronting Rasool,  
 with dagger pitted against trishul.  
 I, a bullet, deaf, mute and blind,  
 bear witness to that dreadful time,  
 in September of '47, on a moonless night.  
 Khudabaksh hid behind  
 the wall of the well shaken with fright.  
 Hands wearing guru's sacred bracelets,  
 dragged him out enjoying his plight.  
 And the stains of his blood,  
 washed away to its core,  
 a quarter of century's rust.

From the blood splattered  
 Nanakshahi brick a lament was heard,  
 with the same refrain:  
 "Did you not feel the pain?"  
 And there was the retort...  
 "It is blood avenging blood!"

It was the season of shedding blood.  
 It was the season of vermilion getting scrubbed.  
 It was the season of rape with vengeful lust.  
 And thus, kept flowing the savage river of time.  
 The earth suffering silently each barbaric crime.  
 With times rulers, diktats and places were changed.  
 But corpses kept falling all the same.  
 And vultures circled overhead  
 waiting to prey on the dead.  
 Shrieks reaching heavens after killings of Hatiya in '67;  
 Shaking to the core, slaughter of Worli in '74;  
 Death dancing with gaiety in Moradabad in 1980;  
 And from Delhi, screams emanating so harrowing,  
 such was the violent gore, never seen or heard before - 1984!

There was no Dyer, who could order to fire.  
 Those who together belonged, garlanded their own

ਆਪਣੇ ਹੀ ਹਮਵਤਨ ਪਾ ਗਏ ਗਲਾਂ 'ਚ ਬੋਲਦੇ ਟਾਇਰ  
 92 ਚ ਬੰਬ ਦੇ ਬੰਬ ਧਮਾਕੇ  
 2002 'ਚ ਫੇਰ ਗੁਜਰਾਤ ਦੀ ਕਤਲੇ ਗਾਰਤ  
 13 ਚ ਮੁਜਫਰਨਗਰ ਦੀ ਮਾਰ ਕਾਟ  
 ਦੰਗੇ, ਲੁੱਟ-ਖਸੁੱਟਾਂ 'ਤੇ ਡਾਕੇ  
 ਇਸ ਸਦੀ ਦੇ ਦਾਮਨ ਤੇ ਕਿੰਨੇ ਦਾਗ ਹੀ ਦਾਗ ਨੇ  
 ਇਸ ਸਰਾਪੀ ਧਰਤ ਦੇ ਚੱਪੇ ਚੱਪੇ ਤੇ ਕਿੰਨੇ ਜਲਿਆਂਵਾਲੇ ਬਾਗ਼ ਨੇ

'ਤੇ ਹੁਣ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਹੇੜਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਹੇੜਾਂ ਆਉਂਦੇ ਹੋ,  
 ਇਸ ਬਾਗ਼ ਦਾ ਗੋੜਾ ਲਾਉਂਦੇ ਹੋ, ਫੋਟੋ ਖਿਚਾਉਂਦੇ ਹੋ  
 ਚੁੰਨੀਆਂ ਪੱਗਾਂ ਜੁਲਫਾਂ ਸੰਵਾਰਦੇ ਹੋ  
 ਇਥੇ ਖਿੜੇ ਵੰਨ ਸੁਵੰਨੇ ਫੁੱਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਿਹਾਰਦੇ ਹੋ  
 ਪਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾਣਦੇ  
 ਕਿ ਇਥੇ ਹਰ ਗੁਲਾਬ ਦੇ ਫੁੱਲ 'ਚ  
 ਕਿਸੇ ਨਿਰਦੋਸ਼ ਦਾ ਲਹੂ ਨੁੱਚੜ ਆਇਆ ਹੈ  
 ਕਿ ਇਥੇ ਹਰ ਗੁਲਦੇਈ ਵਿੱਚ  
 ਕਿਸੇ ਮਾਂ ਦੀਆਂ ਛਾਤੀਆਂ ਦਾ ਦੁੱਧ ਸਿੰਮ ਰਿਹਾ ਹੈ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਆਪਣੀਆਂ ਕਜਰਾਈਆਂ ਅੱਖਾਂ ਨਾਲ  
 ਨਾਪਦੇ ਹੋ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਖੂਹ ਦੀ ਗਹਿਰਾਈ ਨੂੰ  
 ਪਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਹਨੇਰੇ ਤਲ ਤੇ ਪਥਰਾਈਆਂ ਅੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਨਹੀਂ ਵੇਖਦੇ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਤੱਕਦੇ ਹੋ ਬੜੇ ਗਹੂ ਨਾਲ ਮੈਨੂੰ, ਤੇ ਮੇਰੇ ਵਰਗੀਆਂ  
 ਕੰਧ ਚ ਲਗੀਆਂ ਗੋਲੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਨਿਸ਼ਾਨਾਂ ਨੂੰ  
 ਪਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਗੋਲੀਆਂ ਬਾਰੇ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੋਚਦੇ  
 ਜਿਹੜੀਆਂ ਕੰਧ ਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਸਨ ਵੱਜੀਆਂ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਕਟਕ ਤੱਕਦੇ ਹੋ  
 ਪੱਥਰ ਚ ਢਲੀ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਲਾਟ ਦੇ ਮੁਜੱਸਮੇ ਨੂੰ  
 ਪਰ ਜੋਤਾਂ ਤੇ ਲਾਟਾਂ ਪੱਥਰਾਂ ਚ ਨਹੀਂ ਢਲਦੀਆਂ  
 ਇਹ ਤਾਂ ਦਿਲਾਂ ਤੇ ਦਿਮਾਗਾਂ ਚ ਬਲਦੀਆਂ ਨੇ  
 ਨੀ ਚੂੜੇ ਵਾਲੀਏ ਇਸ ਭੇਇੰ ਤੇ ਪੱਥ ਪੇਲਾ ਧਰੀ  
 ਤੇਰੇ ਹਰ ਕਦਮ ਹੇਠਾਂ  
 ਕੋਈ ਸਿਸਕੀ, ਕੋਈ ਕੁਰਲਾਹਟ, ਕੋਈ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀ ਹੈ  
 ਵੇ ਚੀਰੇ ਵਾਲਿਆ ਰੱਤਾ ਹੋਲੀ ਤੁਰੀ,  
 ਤੇਰੀ ਹਰ ਅੱਡੀ ਥੱਲੇ  
 ਕੋਈ ਸਿਸਕਦਾ ਬਚਪਨ, ਕੋਈ ਰੁਲਿਆ ਬੁੜੇਪਾ,  
 ਕੋਈ ਸਹਿਕਦੀ ਜਵਾਨੀ ਹੈ

ਮੈਨੂੰ ਪਤਾ ਹੈ, ਤਰਕਾਲਾਂ ਪੈ ਰਹੀਆਂ ਹਨ  
 ਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਚੋਂ ਹਰ ਕੋਈ ਵਾਹਗਾ ਬਾਰਡਰ ਜਾਣ ਲਈ ਬੇਕਰਾਰ ਹੈ  
 ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਨਫ਼ਸ ਨੂੰ ਹਾਲੇ ਵੀ ਨਫ਼ਰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਅੱਗ ਦਰਕਾਰ ਹੈ  
 ਤੇ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਧਿੰਗ ਤਿਸ਼ਨਾ ਲਈ  
 ਉਥੇ ਤਮਾਸ਼ਾ ਵੀ ਤਿਆਰ ਬਰ ਤਿਆਰ ਹੈ  
 ਉਹ ਸਰਕਸ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਪਲਾਂ ਚ ਭੁਲਾ ਦੇਵੇਗੀ

with burning tyres!  
 The bomb blasts of Bombay in '92;  
 Savagery of Gujarat of 2002;  
 Carnage in Muzzafarnagar seen in 2013;  
 Rioting, looting and attacks,  
 cloak of this century is stained black.  
 This cursed land is scarred  
 every inch with so many Jallianwala Baghs.  
 And now you visit in crowds;  
 strolling leisurely, talking aloud.  
 You take photographs, adjusting your turbans and scarfs.  
 Making sure you look your best, no hair out of place.

You admire the beautiful flowers,  
 standing under the cool bowers.  
 But you don't fathom that every rose coloured red,  
 is watered with the blood of an innocent.  
 That every chrysanthemum white,  
 is dripping with the breastmilk of a mother who died.  
 You stare deep down into the martyrs' well  
 with your kohled eyes you try  
 to measure its depth.

But what you do not see  
 are the stone-cold eyes of the dead,  
 staring back from the bottomless pit, full of dread.  
 You inspect intently the marks of me,  
 and other bullets of my kind,  
 in the nanakshahi bricks forever enshrined.  
 But the bullets, which did not hit the wall,  
 never cross your mind.  
 Your focussed gaze lays upon  
 the martyrs' flame sculpted in stone.  
 But in bricks and mortar, flames cannot be cast.

These are the fires which burn  
 in the minds and in the hearts!  
 Hey! The bride newly wed!  
 Do softly tread, lest you forget,  
 that beneath your every step,  
 lies a sob, a sacrifice and tears shed.  
 Hey! The groom newly wed!  
 Do slowly tread, lest you forget,  
 that beneath your every step,  
 there lies a childhood nipped in the bud,  
 a ruined old age and youth cruelly crushed.  
 I understand...

As the evening shadows lengthen,  
 they make you hasten,  
 to go to a place—Wagah border!  
 To stoke the fires of hate  
 burning still in your soul and in your headspace.  
 The circus at the border for your entertainment,  
 will make you forget in no time,  
 that in the old city there is a narrow lane leading  
 to the martyrs' memorial shrine.  
 You will forget the sobs and the sighs,

ਕਿ ਅੰਦਰੂਨ ਸ਼ਹਿਰ ਦੇ ਅੰਦਰ  
 ਤੰਗ ਗਲੀ ਲੰਘ ਕੇ ਕਿਹੜੀ ਯਾਦਗਾਰ ਹੈ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਓਗੇ ਸਿਸਕੀਆਂ ਤੇ ਆਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ  
 ਜਦੋਂ ਛੇ ਫੁੱਟੇ ਜਵਾਨ ਅਪਣੀ ਬੁਲੰਦ ਅਵਾਜ਼ ਨਾਲ  
 ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਦਿਲਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਦਹਿਲਾਉਣਗੇ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਓਗੇ ਸਹਿਕਦੇ ਸਾਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ  
 ਜਦੋਂ ਉਹਨਾਂ ਦੇ ਹਉਮੈ ਦੇ ਤੁਰਲੇ ਹਵਾ ਦੇ ਵਿੱਚ ਲਹਿਰਾਉਣਗੇ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਓਗੇ ਪਥਰਾਈਆਂ ਹੋਈਆਂ ਅੱਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ  
 ਜਦੋਂ ਉਹ ਘੂਰੀਆਂ ਵੱਟ ਕੇ ਦੀਦਿਆਂ ਚ ਦੀਦੇ ਪਾਉਣਗੇ  
 ਉਹ ਮੁੱਛਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਤਾਅ ਦੇਣਗੇ,  
 ਬੂਟਾਂ ਦੇ ਖੜਾਕ ਨਾਲ ਧਰਤੀ ਹਿਲਾ ਦੇਣਗੇ

ਤੁਸੀਂ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਓਗੇ  
 ਕਿ ਗੋਲੀ ਸਿਰਫ ਜਿਸਮਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਠੰਡਾ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ  
 ਨਫ਼ਰਤਾਂ ਦੀ ਅੱਗ ਨੂੰ ਨਹੀਂ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਓਗੇ  
 ਜਲਿਆਂਵਾਲੇ ਬਾਗ਼ ਦੀ  
 ਖੱਬੀ ਨੁੱਕਰੇ ਲੱਗੇ ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਖੂਹ ਦੀ  
 ਕੰਧ ਚ ਚਿਣੀ ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ ਇੱਟ ਤੇ ਵੱਜੀ  
 ਗੋਲੀ ਦੀ ਅਮਿਟਵੀ ਛਾਪ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਓਗੇ ਵਹਿਸ਼ਤ, ਵੈਣ ਤੇ ਵਿਰਲਾਪ  
 ਤੁਸੀਂ ਭੁੱਲ ਜਾਓਗੇ ਇੱਕ ਪੂਰੀ ਸਦੀ ਦਾ ਭੋਗਿਆ ਹੋਇਆ ਸੰਤਾਪ

ਪਰ ਮੈਂ ਅੰਨੀ ਗੂੰਗੀ ਬੋਲੀ ਗੋਲੀ ਚਸ਼ਮਦੀਦ ਗਵਾਹ ਰਵਾਂਗੀ  
 ਇਸ ਸਦੀਵੀ ਯਾਦ ਦੀ  
 ਕਿਉਂਕਿ ਸਾਰਾ ਜੱਗ ਜਦੋਂ ਹੰਭ ਕੇ ਸੈਂ ਜਾਉਦਾ ਹੈ  
 ਰਾਤ ਦੇ ਅਧਵਾਟੇ ਸੁੰਨ-ਮ-ਸੁੰਨ ਸੱਨਾਟੇ ਵਿੱਚ  
 ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ ਖੂਹ ਚੋਂ ਕਾਲਜੇ ਨੂੰ ਖੋਹ ਪਾਉਂਦੀ  
 ਇਕ ਸਿਸਕੀ ਉਭਰਦੀ ਹੈ  
 ਤੇ ਮੈਨੂੰ ਸਹਿਮਿਆ ਜਿਹਾ ਸਵਾਲ ਕਰਦੀ ਹੈ  
 ਤੈਂ ਕੀ ਦਰਦ ਨਾ ਆਇਆ

when towering soldiers from both the sides,  
 in their thunderous voices let out war cries  
 You shall forget the gasping breaths,  
 smitten by the preening soldiers  
 marching left and right,  
 infusing in the air a false pride.  
 You shall forget those stone cold eyes,  
 when soldiers from both the sides  
 shall engage in a mock fight.

Glaring in each other's eyes;  
 Twirling their moustaches;  
 Shaking the ground beneath  
 with thumping their boots,  
 while being in total cahoots.  
 You shall forget that a bullet  
 may extinguish a life.  
 But it cannot extinguish fire of hatred burning bright.  
 You shall forget that  
 in Jallianwala Bagh,  
 there is a well to the left;  
 The walls of which were built with Nanakshahi bricks.  
 Bricks which forever got marked  
 by the bullets they were hit with.  
 You shall forget savagery, screams and tyranny.  
 You shall forget  
 a whole century having suffered untold agony.

But  
 I who cannot speak, hear or see,  
 shall always bear witness  
 to this eternal memory.  
 Because when the whole world  
 goes to sleep  
 tired and fatigued,  
 from the bottomless pit  
 of the martyrs' well,  
 a heart wrenching sob swells.  
 In a frightened echo it asks me again...  
 "Did you not feel the pain?"



*Sarbjot Singh Behl is an academic and an architect. He also writes passionately about the challenges facing humanity, in the wake of conflicts among castes, classes, genders, religions, and nations. Poetry is the medium through which he expresses his visceral self. During the farmers' protest in 2020, many of his poems and songs were hailed as an awakening call for masses.*



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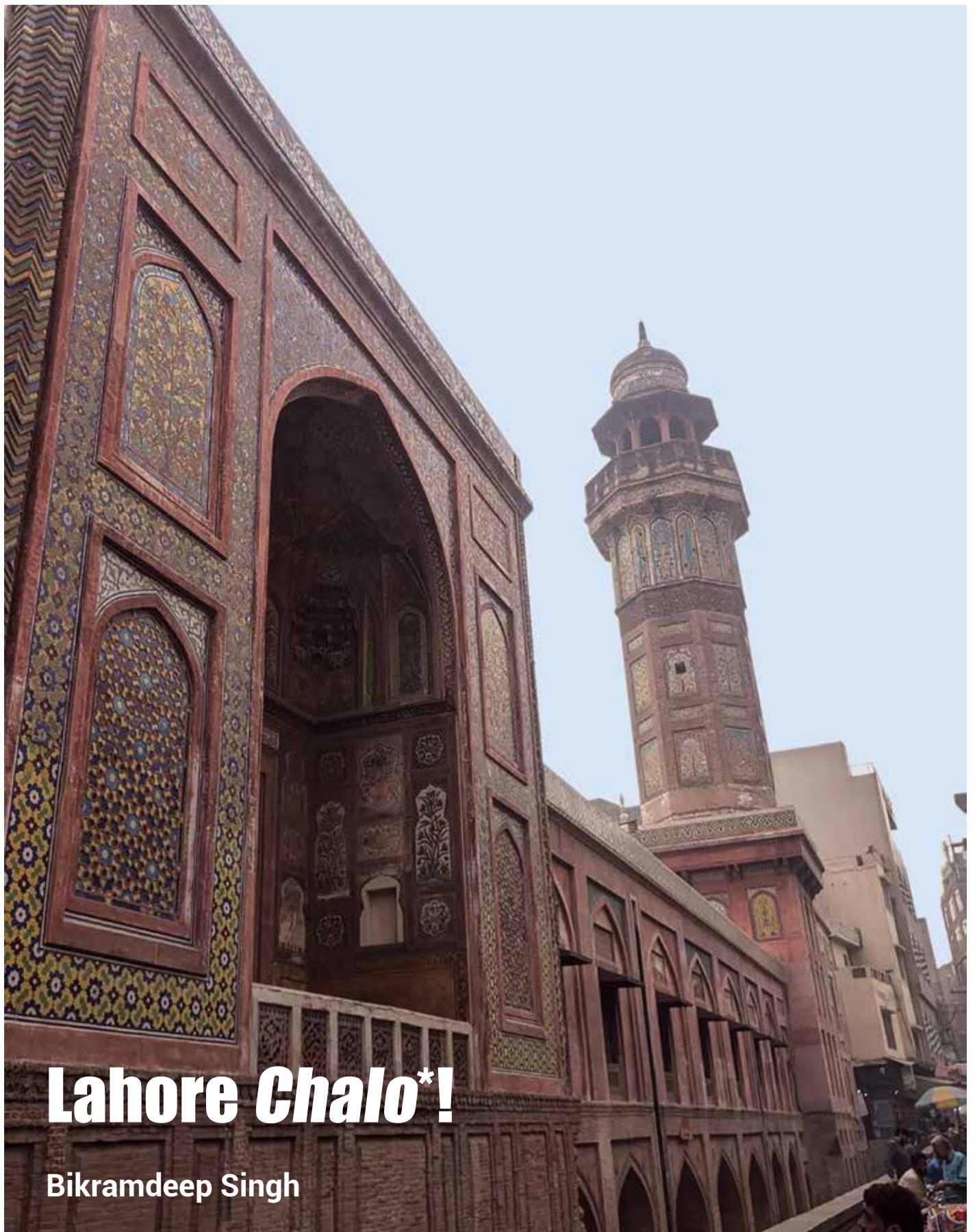
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# Lahore *Chalo\**!

Bikramdeep Singh

**O**n my second trip to Pakistan, I wanted to build upon my first visit with my father which was in 2020. Unfortunately in between these two visits, my father had passed away and I had to carry on with the family legacy of four generations visiting Pakistan post-Partition. Fortunately, I was lucky enough to be able to bring my wife and children with me on this visit to keep the family tradition alive, making five generations come

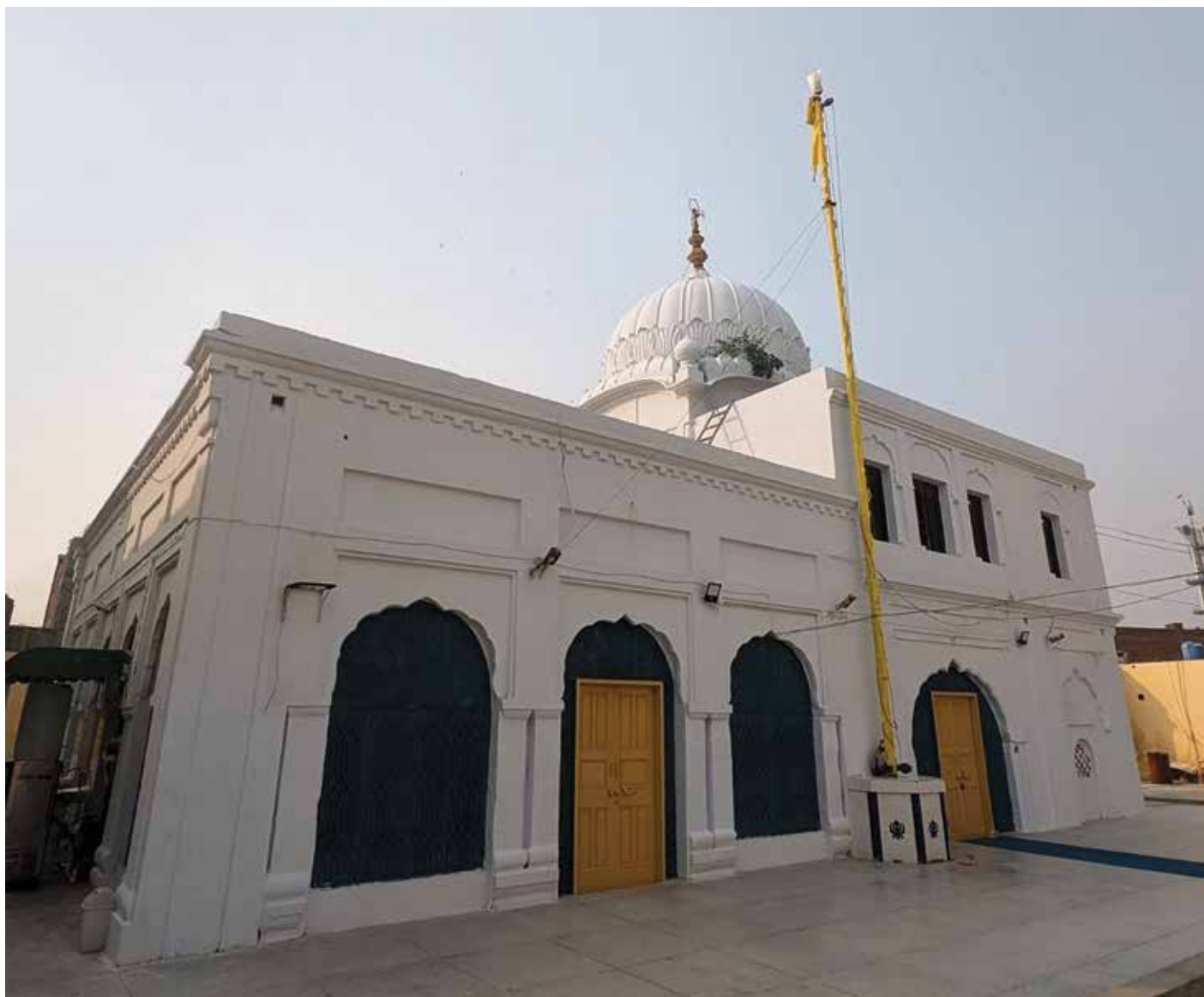
together on a visit to the land of Guru Nanak's birthplace.

I already rate trips to Pakistan very highly, but the experience of seeing my wife and children enjoy the trip just as much as me was beyond what words can explain.

First of all, it was good to break down some of the prejudices which exist regarding tourism in Pakistan.

Travelling in Panjab in Pakistan also makes you realise the

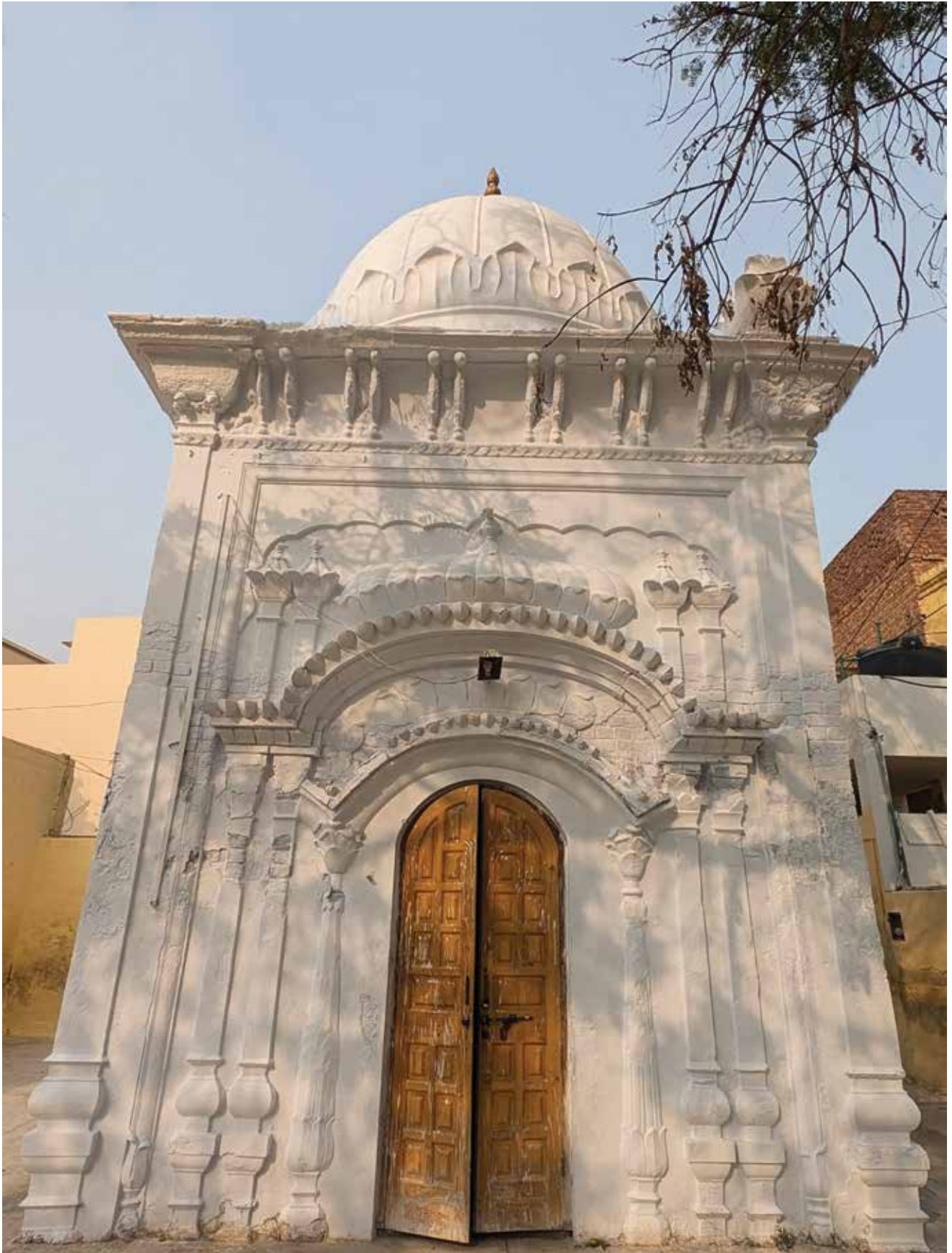
vastness and diversity of Panjab, which is so much more than Majha, Malwa and Doaba of Indian Punjab. Punjabiya is alive and highly present in West Panjab as well. The dialects of Panjabi found in Pakistan are unique and distinctive, enriching the Panjabi language. The love and respect from the locals was overwhelming and made the whole experience even better. Above all, it's the people who made our trip a memorable one.



*Gurdwara Patti Sahib. This Gurdwara has two buildings from two different periods: this building structure is from the time of Gurdwara Sudhar Lehar in the 1920s.*

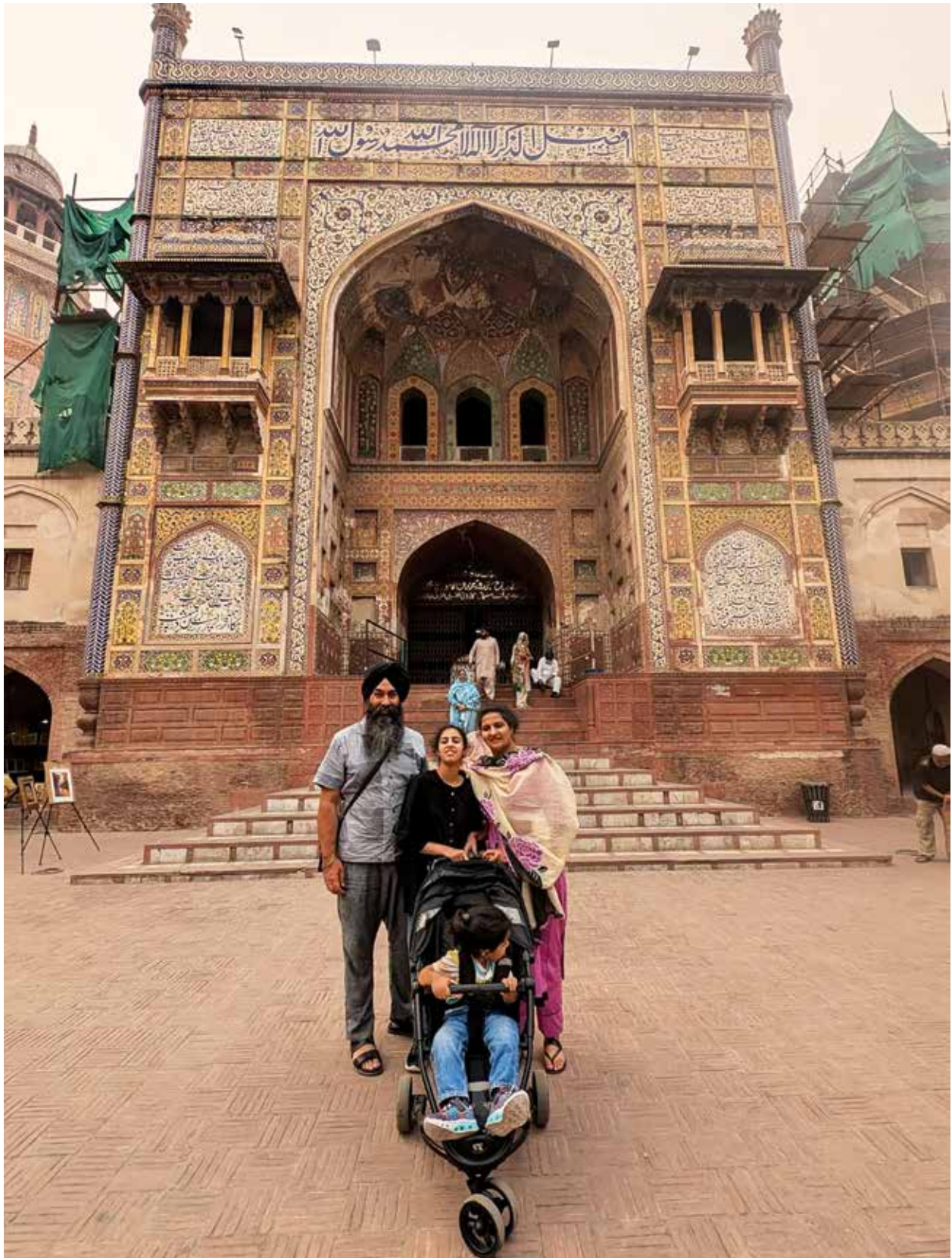
*\*Let's go.*

*Left: Wazir Khan Mosque*



*Gurdwara Patti Sahib. This building structure is thought to be from the time of the Khalsa Raj.*





*The Wazir Khan Mosque is a 17th-century Mughal masjid located in the city of Lahore, Pakistan. The mosque was commissioned during the reign of the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan as a part of an ensemble of buildings that also included the nearby Shahi Hammam baths. Construction of Wazir Khan Mosque began in 1634 C.E., and was completed in 1641. It is on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List.*



*Gurudwara Dera Sahib, Shaheedi Asthan of Guru Arjan Dev ji, is a gurudwara in Lahore, Pakistan, which commemorates the spot where the 5th Sikh Guru Arjan Dev, was martyred in 1606. The gurudwara is located just outside the Walled City of Lahore, and is part of an ensemble of monuments which includes the Lahore Fort, Samadhi of Ranjit Singh, Hazuri Bagh quadrangle, Roshnai Gate, and the Badshahi Mosque.*



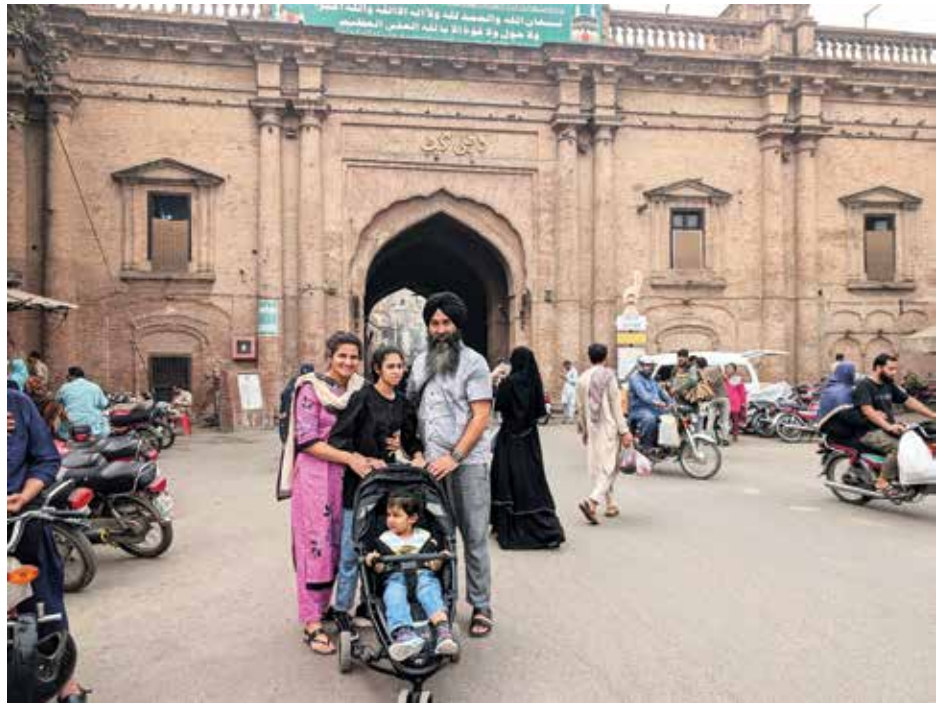
*Gurdwara Sri Janam Asthan Guru Ram Das is situated inside Delhi Darwaza, near Purani Kotwali Chowk in Chuna Mandi. Sri Guru Ram Das Ji was born at Chuna Mandi Bazaar at the site of Gurdwara Sri Janam Asthan Guru Ram Das on 24th September 1534 AD and spent the first seven years of his life here.*





***Gurdwara Panja Sahib** is a famous gurdwara located in Hasan Abdal, Pakistan. The shrine is considered to be particularly important as the handprint of the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, is believed to be imprinted on a boulder at the gurdwara.*

*The Delhi Gate, Lahore was once part of Lahore's city walls, which were torn down by the East India Company after the Mutiny of 1857, but was reconstructed under the British Raj. The gate was named Delhi as it opened east, in the general direction of Delhi. During the Mughal era, the gate served as the main gateway from Delhi to Lahore, and its doors were shut every evening.*



*Pakistan is home to many Sikh Gurdwaras but some of them are more important including Baba Guru Nanak's birthplace in Nankana Sahib district, Darbar Sahib the final resting place of Baba Guru Nanak in Kartarpur Sahib, and the Panja Sahib Gurdwara in the city of Hasan Abdal, where Guru Nanak's handprint is stamped on a stone. Gurdwara Panja Sahib was established in the era of Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780–1839). It was made by Hari Singh Nalwa, the most famous Commander-in-chief of Ranjit Singh. It was named after Baba Guru Nanak's 'Panja' or hand-print, which can be seen on a boulder nearby.*



*Gurdwara Kiara Sahib at Nankana Sahib is located at the place where Guru Nanak rested under a tree while grazing his cattle and the cattle ended up ruining the crops of a farmer. The farmer went to the local landlord, Rai Bular Bhatti, to complain about the incident, but when they went to inspect the fields they were greener than ever before. This Gurdwara is one of the few left in Nankana Sahib which retains its old structure. The Gurdwara is surrounded by walls and a gate. There is also an empty sarovar which has been without water for quite some time now.*



# Across Rivers, Over Mountains: A Journey through My Forefather's Feats

## Nanki Kaur

The road twisted and turned, weaving itself into the serpentine landscape of rivers and mountains, much like it had for the past few hours. But this particular bend was different—not because of the stunning view it revealed, but because of what stood at its edge: the Kurseong Railway Station.

In the spring of 2024, my family and I set off on a holiday to Sikkim, the sacred land of Kanchendzonga. We were eager to immerse ourselves in the state's serene beauty and savour its captivating cuisine. Little did we know that this journey would take us across bridges and rail routes that were not just part of the landscape, but part of my family's history—built by my great-grandfather, Sardar Bahadur Karnail Singh, as part of the Assam Rail Link Project (ARLP).

The Assam Rail Link Project was a monumental undertaking by the newly independent Indian nation to connect Assam with the rest of India after the brutal Partition of 1947. The partition had left Assam cut off from the mainland, and previous attempts to link the rugged terrain of northern Bengal and Assam had failed. Early British surveyors deemed bridging the rivers Teesta and Torsa nearly impossible. Yet, despite the challenges, the British had laid down segments of a larger rail network, including the Assam-Bengal Railway, which was completed between 1892 and 1904.

This line connected Dibrugarh and Chittagong, enabling the transportation of materials, personnel, and tea—one of British India's most valuable commodities. However, the ARLP was not just another railway project; it was vital to ensuring Assam's survival as an integral part of independent India. Leading this project was my great-



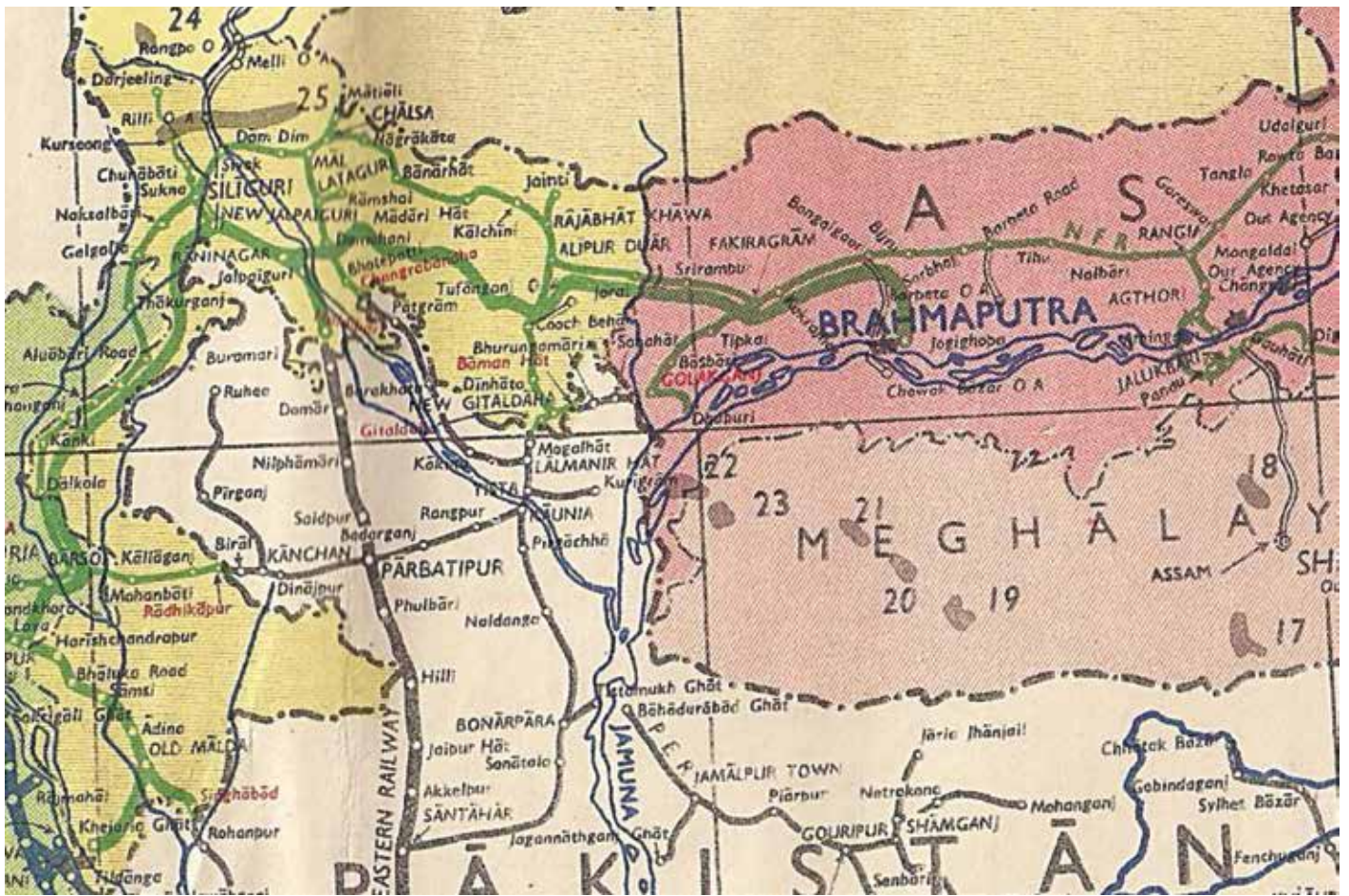
*(Top) Visit of Marshal Tito to the Chittaranjan Locomotive Works in 1955 under the supervision of Sardar Bahadur Karnail Singh*

*(Right Top) Map of the railway networks in the North eastern region of India*

*(Below) Sardar Bahadur Karnail Singh on a visit to Japan with the Japanese National Railways in 1960*







grandfather, Sardar Bahadur Karnail Singh, the Engineer-in-Chief.

Born in 1904 in Chhajjalwadi, a small village near Amritsar, Karnail Singh overcame immense odds to educate himself, first at Khalsa College, Amritsar, and then at Thomson Engineering College, Roorkee. He found his passion in bridge engineering and began his career with the North Western Railways, part of the Government-controlled Indian Peninsula Railway Company.

After extensive training across India, Karnail Singh was stationed in Lahore, where he settled with his family in the Railway Colony at Mayo Gardens. His life seemed set until the Partition of 1947 turned everything upside down. As chaos ensued, his family fled to Shimla, while he stayed behind in Amritsar to oversee the safe transfer of government employees and their families from Lahore to Delhi.

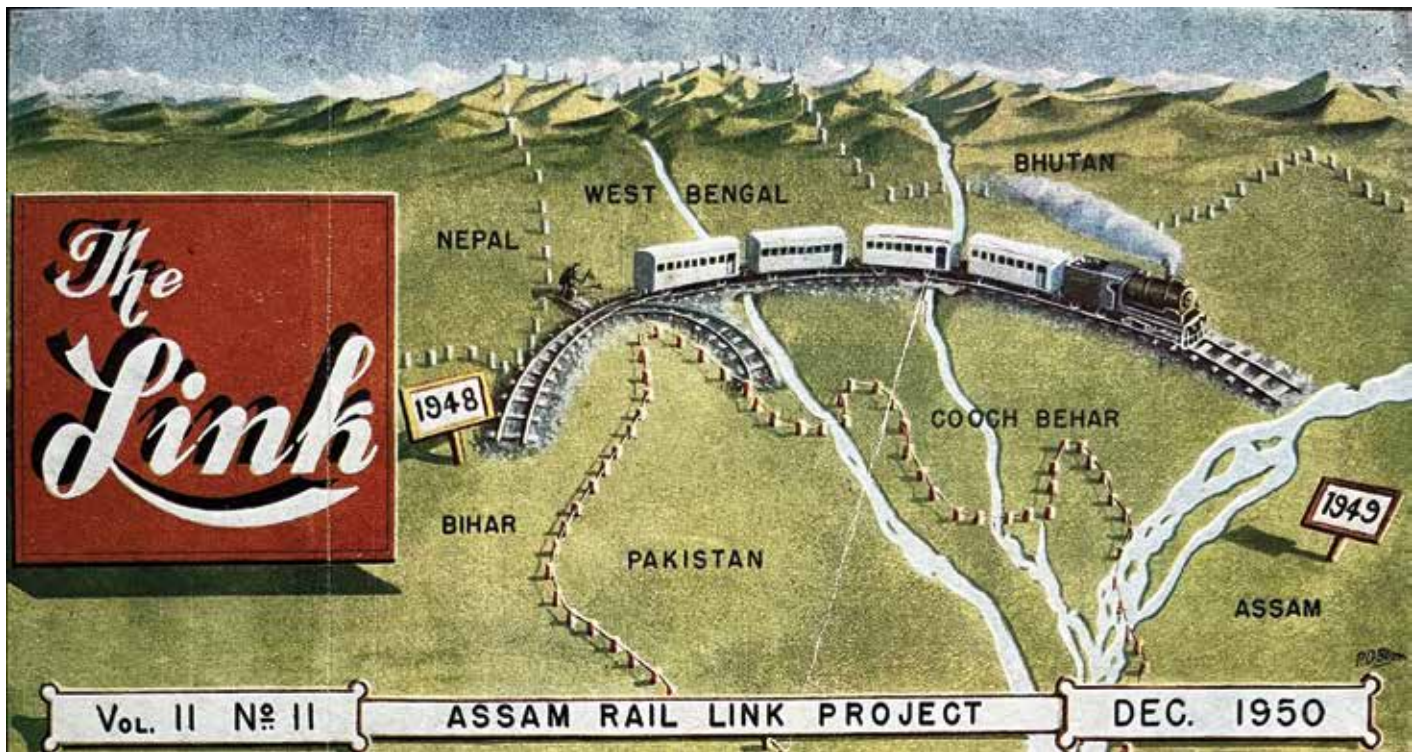
After completing his duties at the western border, Karnail Singh

was sent east by Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel to work on the Assam Rail Link Project, formally launched on November 8, 1947. To plan the rail link, he needed access to surveys conducted by the British. Ingeniously, he managed to acquire these documents through a golf game with Colonel Rodgers at the Forest Research Institute in Dehradun. Armed with the necessary information, he began the arduous task of constructing the rail link.

The challenges were immense. Engineers and labourers battled not only the rugged terrain and severe monsoons but also opposition from skeptical tea estate owners. The pressure to complete the project in record time weighed heavily on Karnail Singh, impacting both his work and his family life. His sons recall how the stress of those years turned his hair almost completely gray.

Despite these challenges, Karnail Singh's efforts culminated in success. On December 9, 1949, just over two

years after construction began, the 250-kilometer Assam Rail Link was opened for goods traffic. Passenger services followed on January 26, 1950. His achievement was widely recognised, with commendations pouring in from leaders and newspapers across India and even from the United States. The headquarters in Kurseong were graced by dignitaries like Dr. K.N. Katju, the Governor of Bengal, K. Santhanam, the Minister of State for Railways, and the Governor of Assam, Sri Prakasa. Karnail Singh's work on the ARLP and other projects eventually led to his appointment as Chairman of the Railway Board in 1960, a position he held for two years. The Assam Rail Link not only connected West Bengal and Assam, fortifying India's northeastern border, but it remains a vital link in the region, including for the state of Sikkim. The Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, now a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was incorporated into the ARLP in 1948.



Today, the railways Karnail Singh helped build are the only significant railway connections in the Northeast, a testament to his engineering brilliance.

Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel once said, "This [Assam Rail Link Project] is a most remarkable railway achievement with immense potentialities for the future. We shall have drawn Assam closer to us and the opening up of this communication would, I am sure, form a very vital link in the consolidation of our country."

The Economic Weekly, in April 1953, echoed this sentiment: "Of the engineering projects completed during the post-war period, none has been so remarkable as the ARLP."

Its completion in record time provided the vital link between Assam and the rest of India, which was suddenly snapped by the Partition."

Lt. Gen. Thakur Nathu Singh, then C.O.C-in-Chief of the Eastern Command, added, "My heartfelt congratulations to Sardar Karnail Singh and his staff for linking Assam to India in record time. India owes a lot to all who have worked on the Link."

Kurseong, a town in the Darjeeling district of West Bengal, was the

headquarters for the Assam Rail Link Project and a place where my great-grandfather spent much time turning the ARLP from a vision into reality.

The name Kurseong became familiar to me as a child, scribbled across dozens of letters I found one summer in my grandmother's home. As I stood at the Kurseong Railway Station, the culmination of years of curiosity

and research, I was overwhelmed with emotion. This station, so central to my family's history, deepened my connection to my roots and to the incredible legacy of my great-grandfather.

As a heritage professional, I work to create awareness of and preserve our national and global heritage. Through my experiences with numerous



*Bridge over Teesta River (2024)*

## Sardar Bahadur Karnail Singh

Sardar Bahadur Karnail Singh created history and shaped political boundaries of the country in the east after partition, when he accomplished 250 km. Assam Rail link (a dream of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru) connecting West Bengal with Assam, in less than three years, which was otherwise thought next to impossible by senior British engineers due to the indispensable requirement of bridging more than half a dozen major West Bengal rivers rushing from the Himalayas with big rocks. Nothing of this sort of feat was ever heard about in respect to any other bridge engineer.

After partition, India lost its link with Assam due to separation of East Bengal. It was most essential to have rail links with Assam to keep its integration intact with the country. S. Karnail Singh created a miracle which belied the then prevailing impression amongst senior British engineers that such a line could not be constructed at all, due to uncontrollable rivers flowing from Himalayas to West Bengal. Had it not been for him, it would have been difficult to keep Assam intact with India.

A bridge engineer par excellence, S. Karnail Singh, born in 1904 in Amritsar distt., linked remote parts of the country for the Indian Railways. An alumni of Khalsa College, Amritsar and Thomson Engineering College, Roorkee, he joined N.W. Railways (now in Pakistan) in 1928 and rose to the posts of chairman of the railway board in 1960 and principal secretary to government of India, before his retirement in 1962.



*Congressman Dalip Singh Saund with his brother Sardar Bahadur Karnail Singh, who was the first Sikh chairperson of the Railway Board, at the Capitol Hill in Washington DC.*



*Sardar Bahadur Karnail Singh on a special train to Hakone with the Japanese National Railways in 1960*

heritage institutions and monuments, both in India and abroad, I have come to realise the profound impact of such legacies.

This journey along the Assam Rail Link, across rivers and over mountains, has made me appreciate even more the indelible mark my great-grandfather left on our nation's history.

*Nanki Kaur is a heritage professional committed to preserving and promoting both national and global heritage. She has worked with various heritage institutions and monuments across Europe, Egypt, and India, including the Partition Museum in Amritsar and HECS, INTACH. Nanki currently focuses on heritage education, engaging with the youth of India to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of cultural heritage.*

# SEEMA KOHLI: Art, Beliefs, Inspiration

Interviewed by: Artika Aurora Bakshi



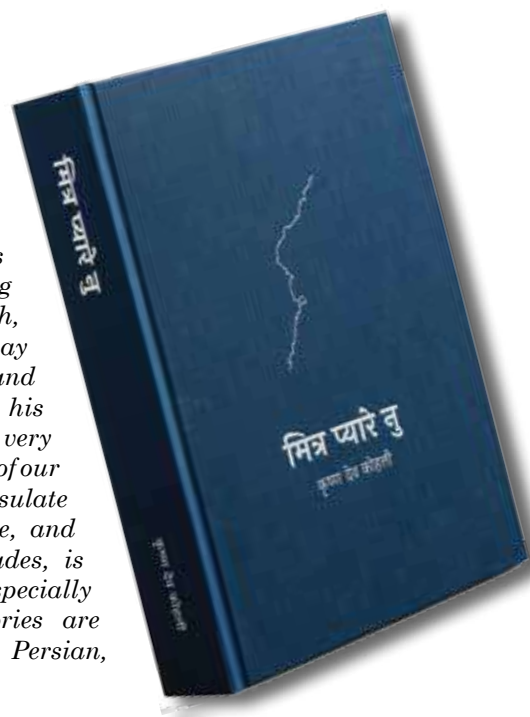
## The Journey Begins...

*I was always fascinated by the whole idea of ancestors coming from some place. In my family, there was a lot of reverence in knowing about their ancestors, their land, the place they belonged to. There was no malice at any point of time. I had heard about this faraway place from my grandfather and my father, and how they remembered that place, that home. I knew they wanted to write about this home, and I kept reminding my father. Many years later, when he was in his sixties, he decided that he would write everything down. But again, for many reasons, it got postponed. Then in his eighties, finally, I managed to convince him to put his thoughts and memories down. I wanted him to use this process as a catharsis. Since he was not in a position to spend hours on a computer or with a notebook, I got someone who would write for him as he spoke.*

*Myth and fable apart, Seema Kohli's canvases are layered with many, many stories rooted as much in philosophy as in knowledge gained in modern times, a parable of tales both imagined and real, till one can no longer tell the real from the imagined. Look closely at her canvases and the tapestry of motifs unravels into more legends; turn voyeur and the epics are but a background to the unfolding melodramas of daily lives turned epic. She serves up the Upanishads and newspaper headlines in doses of caffeine. It is this that gives her canvases credible status as a chronicler of narratives past and present, Indian in their essence but universal in their context. "I am a mirror," she says. "When I paint, you see not what I have made but what you want to see." "I," Seema Kohli, painter and teller of stories, "am both myth and reality. Pick the one you want, but remember, the mirror distorts, and so the myth might be reality, and reality myth."*

*Kishore Singh (Art Writer)*

*There were endless moments of going back and forth, because his way of expressing, and the nuances of his language, were very different from those of our age. To truly encapsulate the lived experience, and that too after decades, is a daunting task, especially when those memories are multilingual, with Persian, Urdu, and Punjabi.*



*It was during this that I came to know so much more about his land of birth, our ancestral lands, temperaments, and our culture, and that's what gave birth to Project Home, and Mitr Pyaare Nu. The name was chosen by my father, because of the reverence he has for the Sikh gurus and their baanis. His autobiography is a lament to the land that he had left behind, even the cow that they had left behind. The title is based on Guru Gobind Singh Ji's shabad.*

#### **Down Memory Lane...**

*One of the distinct memories I have of my grandfather is that he used to give us gulkand when we were kids, and it's the memory of that gulkand that took my father back to his time when he travelled through Choha Saidan Shah, near Rawalpindi, which were known for the cultivation of roses, which were then used for various purposes, including medicinal. He spoke of endless rows of rose bushes, so vast, that the fragrance reached the travellers, long before they sighted the fields. Some of my installations honour my grandfather, who was a well known Unani Hakim, from a family which can trace their professional lineage to almost eight generations, from the pre-colonial era. Such was the reverence given to Unani Hakims, that they were bestowed with titles, horses, and land.*

*During the British period too, they were recognised and felicitated for their services. My grandfather used to talk about travelling to see patients, being paid in kind, as the barter system was still quite predominant, especially in the areas which were further away from the main cities and towns. Money had very little significance in their lives, with importance placed on professional ethics, gratitude, and respect, which then passed down the generations. The respect I have for skills and art stems from what I observed as a child, which in turn influences my work.*

*While we were working on my father's autobiography, he gave me a bundle of books that had belonged to my grandfather. These books were on Unani Hikmat, which were written in Urdu and Farsi, and some in Arabic. These books had drawings of the herbs that he had used, the human anatomy, and about medicinal practices. There is also a mention of the introduction of Western allopathic*



**“We can't cut off our roots. That would be violent. what we can do, and should do, is take the essence and fragrance of our past, and move forward into the future.”**

*medicine, which goes to show how things had started changing. All that I learnt during this period can be seen in my series Project Home.*

#### **Where is Punjab? Where is Home?**

*The fascination for home, and what the idea of home is, was the main reason I started working on Project Home. Home is a concept that connects everyone. During the time when I was working on this, and while my father was working on his autobiography about home, I went to the U.S. and gave lectures on what home meant, and how my art captured the essence of home.*

*In Yuba City, California, which is referred to as 'Mini Punjab', I met many Sikhs and Punjabis, whose families had been taken to North America during the nineteenth century as slaves, having worked their way up to now owning large areas of agricultural lands.*

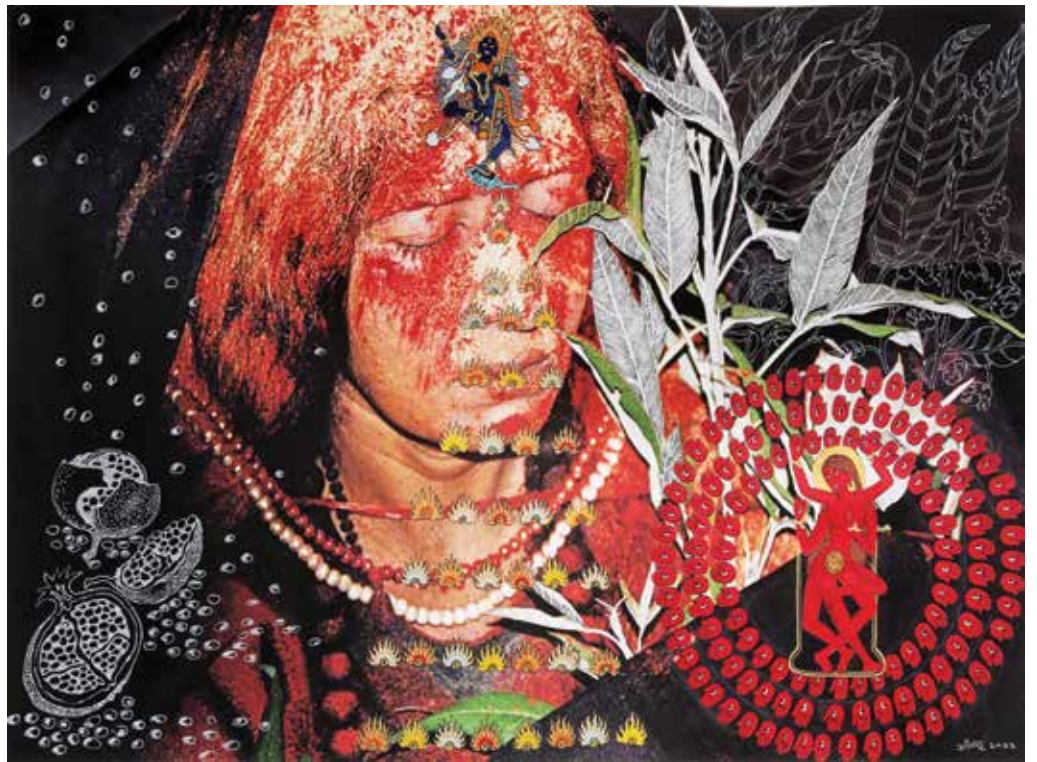
*Their story is similar to that of my ancestors moving to India after the Partition. When I asked them if they missed the land that their ancestors had left, one of them very clearly said that even though they missed the land, 'Punjab was wherever there were Punjabis'. This is exactly what home is all about, an idea that I have showcased in the installations of Project Home.*

*I have never been to Pind Dadan Khan, but there is a special affiliation that I carry within me, a sense of belonging. It isn't the same as what my grandfather or my father felt, but it's what makes me who I am. That's what home does, even many years after.*

*"I have met many people from my grandfather's and father's generation, with absolute grit and determination, the ones who moved to India with memories of the homes they had left behind. Instead of being bitter about their experiences, these people had a steadfast resolve to help build India, and a new home for themselves."*

**Finding Inspiration...**

*"While it seems as if I am taking one person's story as an inspiration for my art, the idea is much bigger. It's about a time when the same thing happened with millions. Tragedy struck, but many of them beautifully transformed their lives into something new. My art speaks of the beauty of old memories, about resilience, and about building something new."*



*“I grew up in an environment that flourished in the appreciation of art and literature. My grandfather was well versed in the kaafis of the Sufi saints. He was bestowed with the title Hafiz Quran, because he had studied the Quran Sharif, as he had the Guru Granth Sahib. Literary discussion was encouraged, which brought an openness into our mindsets, giving us the confidence to express ourselves, with my mode of expression being art, not the written word.”*

**The Power Within...**

*The Goddess series was born out of my fascination with the feminine form, and how it creates new life. In a world where things are camouflaged, I try to be open and showcase how my thoughts originate and what I believe in. All my themes are inspired by life. The themes have stayed the same for the last thirty five years, but with every body of work, there is a different aspect that gets showcased. The Tree of Life is inspired by trees, which are revered in all religions and cultures, and it's the same trees that we are taking for granted and destroying. Through my work I interpret the theme as I see it, in an attempt to send a message out to people, and create awareness. Ideas flow into each other, and all my work connects deeply with me.*



**“Home is within you. Home is where love is.”**



Seema Kohli is a multidisciplinary artist living and working in New Delhi, India. Her practice conjoins spheres of cosmology and ecology with a focus on Shakti, or divine feminine energy and its relation to forces of creation and destruction. From this vantage point, her work offers a critical feminist view of spiritual and mythological lineages from South Asia, including Bhakti, Vedic and Sufi schools of thought. Spanning over five decades of experiments in form and language, Kohli’s works live in museums and institutional collections all over the world. ([www.seemakohli.com](http://www.seemakohli.com))

Seema Kohli will be exhibiting her work under the title, **Khula Aasman**–16 January–15 February 2025 at the Partition Museum at Dara Shikoh Library, Ambedkar University, New Delhi, and from 18 January–18 February at the Seema Kohli Studio, B 85, Pocket X, Okhla Phase II, New Delhi.

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# The Tale of a Brave Adivasi Sikh Woman: Jarnail Kaur

Amrit Virdee

When the Punjab farmers' protest was going on in full swing at Delhi's borders in 2021, a diminutive Adivasi woman was seen with the farmers at Singhu border. This Adivasi woman was none other than Tarika from a village in Raigarh district of the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh.

Tarika was also a farmer leader of her village. When she was leading a farmers' protest in her area against the anti-farmer policies of the government, she alleged that several government officials and industrialists from various states were hand-in-glove in illegal mining operations in Chhattisgarh.

Furthermore, poor and innocent Adivasis were being killed by the police for raising their voice against these nefarious activities. According to her, the Adivasis brutally killed by the police were later portrayed as Naxalites.

Since she led a protest march at her area, an FIR was filed against her when she was in Delhi with her lawyer, who advised her not to return to her native village anytime soon. As she heard about the farmers' agitation at Delhi's Singhu borders, she went to meet the Sikh farmers. Upon discovering she was from Chhattisgarh, some farmers immediately asked her whether she was a Naxalite. Quite astonished at this, Tarika then asked them if they were Khalistanis.

When tempers cooled down, the Sikh farmers told her that their struggle was against the union government's three farm acts which were against the interests of farmers and they would either win or die.

The strong determination of the Sikh farmers impressed Tarika immensely. She really liked the Sikh notion of *Ik Ongkar*; she was fascinated by the Sikh concept of unifying the people instead of dividing them. She learnt about Guru Tegh Bahadur and several other Sikh martyrs who had made the supreme sacrifice for the cause of religious freedom for all without any discrimination on the basis of one's religion and how brave Sikh soldiers' attacked Mughal soldiers to liberate Hindu women who were abducted. She was quite impressed to know that the Sikhs, who were merely 2% of India's population, had contributed greatly for India's freedom movement; 80% of those hanged by the Britishers were patriotic Sikhs.



*Jarnail Kaur being interviewed by Amrit Virdee*

Tarika used to listen attentively to Gurbani Kirtan. The Sikh realistic concept of '*Sura So Pehchaniye Jo Lare Deen Ke Het*' made a deep impact on her. She started feeling that Sikhism was the ideal religion for her. Hence, she approached Baba Charat Singh of Taruna Dal and expressed her desire to embrace Sikhism. When Babaji asked her whether her family would accept her as a Sikh after her return to her village, Tarika suggested that Babaji should first make a video call and talk with her family members. Accordingly, Babaji spoke to Tarika's husband and children who told him that they would also happily adopt the Sikh faith. Thus, Tarika became Jarnail Kaur.

Baba Charat Singh went to her village in Chhattisgarh and stayed there for about ten days to ensure that Jarnail Kaur remained a devout Sikh. At present, she is enthusiastically learning Punjabi. Baba Charat Singh's son Baba Rajat Singh accepted Jarnail Kaur as his sister. Hence, as a family member, Jarnail Kaur frequently goes to Punjab to attend Babaji's family functions.

Earlier, there was no Nishan Sahib, gurdwara or Sikh school in Tarika's village and surrounding areas. But now Jarnail Kaur's home is the first place in the entire region where a Nishan Sahib can be seen fluttering. Also, a gurdwara and a Miri Piri School are presently coming up at her village. Now the Adivasis' views about the Sikhs have fully changed. They are no more viewed as terrorists or Khalistanis. Also, many villagers are now coming forward to know more about Sikhs and Sikhism.

# The Assamese Sikhs

Santokh Singh Bains



**W**ho is an Assamese Sikh? Manjit Singh, a well-known Assamese Sikh poet and writer, has provided the following definition: “An Assamese Sikh is one whose family has lived in Assam for generations or one who is born in Assam and is a permanent resident here, whose mother tongue is Assamese, who practices the Sikh religion but has wholeheartedly embraced Assamese culture, and considers Assam as his motherland.”

Dr. Nagen Saikia, erstwhile professor of Dibrugarh University in Assam writes: “From the very first generation, the Assamese Sikhs were born Assamese, not only by language and culture, but also by blood. Naturally, therefore, the mental structure and character of the first-generation Sikhs was built up on the line of the Assamese.”

“We have never felt that we are not a part of the Assamese society and, at the same time, we have been faithful

to our Sikh religion,” opines S. K. Singh, President of the Assam Sikh Association.

## Origin of the Assamese Sikhs

The Ahoms had been ruling Assam since the thirteenth century. During 1820s, Ahom king Chandra Kanta Singha used to face brutal attacks by the Burmese invaders. After receiving a distress signal from the Ahom king, Maharaja Ranjit Singh dispatched a contingent of Sikh soldiers under the command of General Chaitanya Singh to fight for the cause of Assam during the third Burmese invasion of 1820. The Sikh General as well as his soldiers fought valiantly on the battlefield of Hadirachaki. Ultimately, however, Chaitanya Singh and most of his soldiers attained martyrdom.

Chaitanya Singh’s wife also fought courageously and killed many Burmese invaders. But following the

loss of her husband in the thick of battle, she, along with a few wounded and exhausted Sikh soldiers, decided to leave the battlefield.

They went upstream traversing the Brahmaputra river, meandered through Kapili river and finally reached Chaparmukh after braving dense forests, dangerous animals and inclement weather. They had carried with them two hand-written Sikh scriptures, two cannons, two Kirpans, and one Atta Chakki.

## Gurdwara Mataji at Chaparmukh, Assam

Chaitanya Singh’s wife (generally known as Mataji) set up a prayer house at Chaparmukh which, in due course, came to be known as Gurdwara Mataji. This is now the second most important historical gurdwara in Assam. The original items brought by Mataji and the

surviving Sikh soldiers have been preserved meticulously at Gurdwara Mataji. (Dhubri Sahib Gurdwara is the first and most important historical gurdwara in Assam because Guru Tegh Bahadur had brought about reconciliation between the Mughal forces and the Ahom forces at this site a very long time ago).

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's few surviving Sikh soldiers, who had initially settled at Chaparmukh, later moved to various other villages like Borkala, Lanka, and Hatipara (all in Nagaon district of Assam). They subsequently married Assamese women from various castes like Koch, Tiwa, Kalita and Brahmin. Their descendants came to be known as the Assamese Sikhs.

### Sikhs from Punjab

It would not be out of place to mention that several Sikhs from different places of Punjab had arrived at Lanka village from 1906 to 1926. Most of these migrants had come in connection with their service or business.

In his informative Assamese article titled *Lankar Sikhsakolor Chamu Itihas*, Hari Singh, a Lanka-based Assamese Sikh, has provided interesting information about the early Sikh settlers at Lanka. Hailing from a remote village of Amritsar

district, Gurudatta Singh, his wife Harnam Kaur, and their son Trailokya Singh arrived at Lanka in 1906. They were probably the first Sikhs from Punjab to settle at Lanka. Bel Singh, a contemporary of Gurudatta Singh, married Karan Kaur from Borkala.

In 1914, Jiban Singh from Balachowk village of Amritsar district arrived at Lanka. He donated a plot of land where the first gurdwara of Lanka was established in 1930.

Originally from Taran Taran, Subedar Sundar Singh reached Lanka in 1922. Hailing from Pardhani village of Amritsar district, Amar Singh Chetri and Phula Singh came to Lanka through Chaparmukh in 1924. Thereafter, in 1926, Thakur Singh and Harnam Singh (two brothers) set their feet in Lanka.

All the Sikhs who converged in Lanka from Punjab assimilated themselves in the local culture and became Assamese Sikhs for all practical purposes. Now, there are about 140 such families in Lanka and the adjoining areas.

The present population of the Assamese Sikhs is estimated to be around 5000. Assamese Sikhs have settled in different villages, towns and cities throughout Assam, and also in some neighbouring

states. Besides, the four villages of Chaparmukh, Borkala, Lanka and Hatipara, some of them are now settled at various places like Dhubri, Dandua, Raha, Diphu, Nagaon, Dharamtul, Madhupur, Tokoubari, Helem, Lakhimpur, Sonitpur, Tangla, Mangoldai, Rampur, Guwahati, Hojai, Haflong, Goalpara, Palasbari, Dibrugarh, and Tinsukia.

### Farming and the Assamese Sikh Community

In many villages of Assam, the Assamese Sikh farmers are held in high esteem by the mainstream Assamese cultivators. It is pertinent to note that Waryam Singh was elected as Gaon Buddha (Sarpanch) of Lanka village, Lalit Singh and Amar Singh were elected as Gaon Buddhas of two other villages. While the Assamese Sikhs were initially farmers, there are many professors, poets, writers, civil servants, police officers, physicians, lawyers, engineers and other professionals among the Assamese Sikhs now.

### Exotic Fusion

One can see a fusion of Sikh and Assamese cultures amongst the Assamese Sikhs. While most men wear turbans, the women wear Assamese traditional dress of Cheddar Mekhela. Both Gurburabs and the Tithi of Sankardev are



All Assam Sikh Youth Association (Aasya 1989 - 2022)

celebrated with great fervour. While the Assamese Sikhs use Assamese language as their mother tongue, they are always keen to learn Punjabi language and Gurmukhi script.

### **Eminent Assamese Sikhs of Earlier Periods**

Phula Singh Chetri (1890 – 1986) of Chaparmukh was the first Assamese Sikh writer. He wrote articles on the Sikh Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh's two sons (Fateh Singh and Zorawar Singh), and the Sikh religion. He jumped into India's independence movement without completing his law studies. He also participated in Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement. Later, he went to Punjab and retired as the Principal of the Khalsa Secondary School at Nankana Sahib (now in Pakistan).

Phul Singh (1892 – 1964) was the second Assamese Sikh writer who started writing about Sikhs and Sikhism in Assamese. An outstanding footballer, he served in the British Navy for some time. Later, he served as the Headmaster of B. B. Hansaria School at Chaparmukh.

Jog Singh Chhetri (1890 – 1981) from Hatipara was the first Assamese Sikh lawyer. He was closely associated with the establishment of Nagaon Girls' Higher Secondary School, Nagaon College and Kala Mandir (a cultural institution). In due course, his two sons – Jagjit Singh Chhetri and Jogendra Lal Singh Chhetri – became District Magistrates.

Lal Singh (1902 – 1961) was a very successful Assamese Sikh businessman. He had built up a huge business empire with interests ranging from farming to car dealership. He was also associated with several public institutions. After his death, a public road at Tokobari was named after him.

Niranjan Singh (1934 – 2010) was a Sub Inspector in Assam Police. He was the first Assamese Sikh poet of humorous works. Also, he was the first person from the Assamese Sikh community who was awarded the Literary Pension by the Government of Assam.

Iqbal Kaur (1929 – 2014) was the first Assamese Sikh woman who completed M.A. and B.T. degrees.

Also, she was the first woman from the vibrant community who took up writing. She translated Japji Sahib and Rahiras Sahib into Assamese language.

Surendra Singh (1886 – 1987), Atma Singh Chhetri (1893 – 1970), Ranjit Singh (1897 – 1967), Rup Singh (1913 – 2002), Debi Singh (1917 – 1987), and Dhyani Singh (1925 – 1996) were some other important Assamese Sikhs of the earlier period.

### **Prominent Assamese Sikhs of Contemporary Times**

Many Assamese Sikhs of the present period have established themselves in diverse spheres.

Amongst these are Avtar Singh, an eminent dramatist, who has so far written more than 250 dramas for various theatre companies of Assam; his dramas usually depict love, pain, and corruption.

Manjit Singh is a famous poet, writer, essayist, and editor. He had collaborated with Jagjit Singh, an Assamese Sikh film-maker, for making Nanakjyoti which is a documentary on the Sikhs in general and the Assamese Sikhs in particular.

An outstanding writer with a great sense of humour, Gurmail Singh is the first novelist from the Assamese Sikh community. He is a regular contributor to several newspapers and magazines.

### **An excellent Assamese book based on the battle of Hadirachaki**

Dr. Nanda Singh Borkala, a senior officer in Assam Police, is presently serving as a Battalion Commandant. He is an eminent poet, writer and orator. Besides writing sixteen books of poetry, three collections of short stories, and several novels in Assamese, Dr. Borkala has also authored a unique book on the life and teachings of Guru Gobind Singh for the Assamese readers. His recent book titled Hadirachaki is a unique historical and contemporary novel based on the famous battle fought on the battleground of Hadirachaki.

Bijoy Singh, who is a Borkala-based businessman, is known as the first Assamese Sikh writer of short stories. He writes regularly for several magazines.

As there was a dire need for Assamese books on the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh faith, Bhupen Singh wrote ten informative books including biographies of the Sikh Gurus and translations of the Sikh scriptures.

Dr. Mahinder Kaur is the first Assamese Sikh writer whose books have been prescribed for M. A. level students.

Shamsher Singh, who is a descendant of General Chaitanya Singh, is the first Assamese Sikh who had attained the post of the Deputy Commissioner. He is presently a political leader of Assam Jatiya Parishad (AJP).

Jiban Singh, a senior officer of Assam Police, is the first Assamese Sikh to reach the level of Superintendent of Police and D. I. G.

Gunada Das Kaur is a famous play back singer while Ijjat Singh is known for his parody songs usually sung at cultural events.

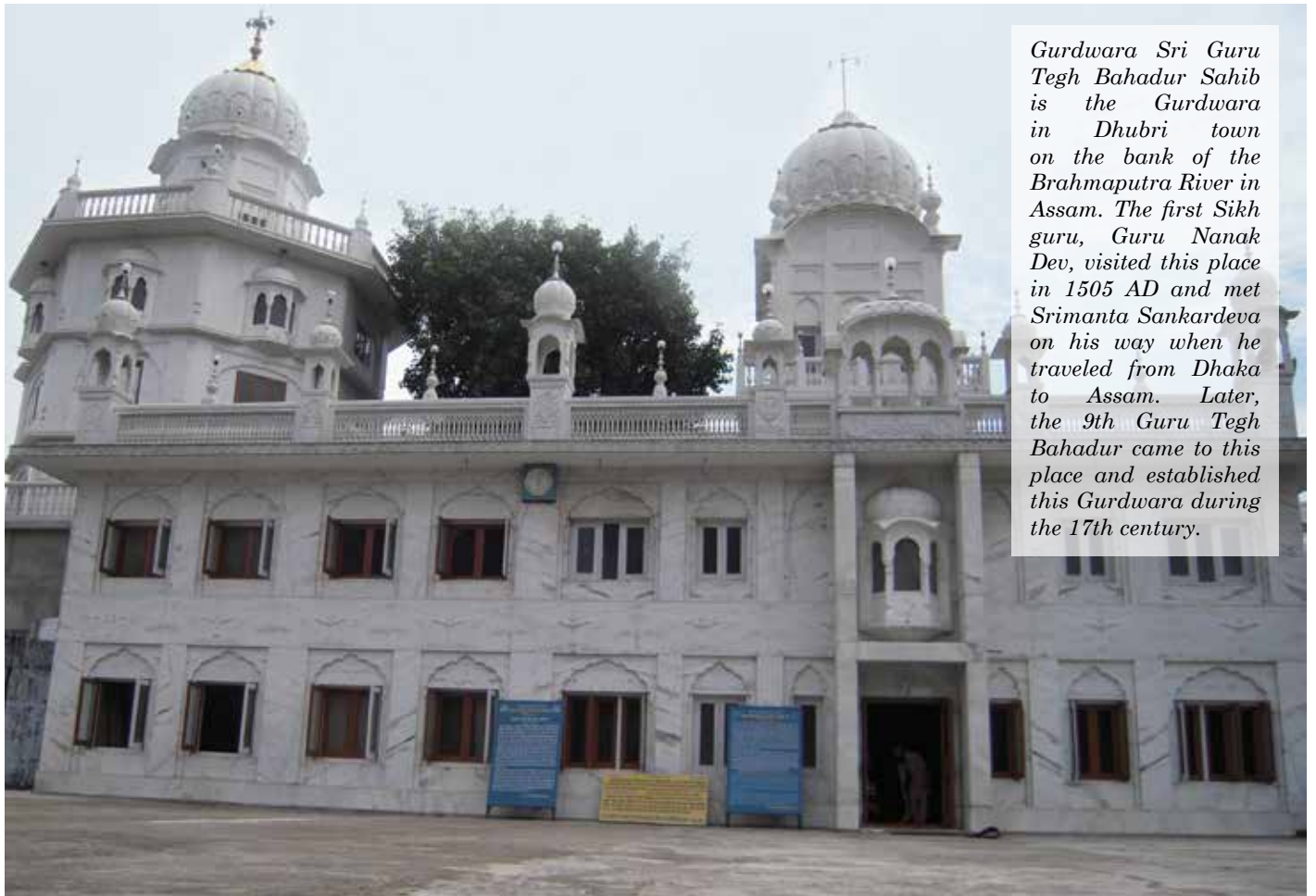
### **Sacrifices of the Assamese Sikhs**

Most mainstream Sikhs and even some Assamese people are unaware of the great sacrifices made by the Assamese Sikhs for the cause of Assam and also for India's independence movement. Chandan Singh and Karan Singh, two Assamese Sikh youths, sacrificed their lives to safeguard Assam's culture and identity when the agitation launched by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) was going on in full swing during 1979–1985. This agitation was against the illegal infiltration going on from across the border.

Many Assamese Sikhs had played a significant role in India's freedom struggle. Phula Singh Chhetri had participated in Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement. Chanda Singh (1891–1985), Kamal Singh (1898–1965), Phatik Singh (1910–1987), Mohtab Singh (1915–1975), and several other Assamese Sikhs had taken active part in India's independence movement.

### **Zail Singh, Surjit Singh Barnala and the SGPC**

Gyani Zail Singh, then Chief Minister of Punjab, visited Borkala village in 1975. He was pleasantly surprised at the way the Assamese Sikhs were following the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib. He donated Rs 25,000 for starting a library there. In



*Gurdwara Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib is the Gurdwara in Dhubri town on the bank of the Brahmaputra River in Assam. The first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak Dev, visited this place in 1505 AD and met Srimanta Sankardeva on his way when he traveled from Dhaka to Assam. Later, the 9th Guru Tegh Bahadur came to this place and established this Gurdwara during the 17th century.*

independent India's history, no other Chief Minister of Punjab ever visited any area inhabited by the Assamese Sikhs.

Surjit Singh Barnala, then Union Agriculture Minister, arrived in Borkala village in 1982. He arranged for one teacher to be deputed to Borkala to teach Punjabi to the Assamese Sikhs of Borkala and nearby villages. Accordingly, the SGPC sent Gyani Bhajan Singh who settled down at Borkala and worked sincerely for more than 30 years. After his death in 2013, the SGPC did not send another Punjabi teacher. Hence, the Punjabi school has since remained closed.

Dr. Roop Singh, then General Secretary of the SGPC, visited Borkala, Chaparmukh, Lanka and Hatipara in 2019. He announced that a Punjabi school would soon be opened by the SGPC in Guwahati for which suitable land would be provided by the Sikh Pratinidhi Board, Eastern Zone, Dhubri Sahib. Even after 5 years, the school has not opened until now.

### **Marriages and Community Life**

Most of the Assamese Sikhs marry among themselves, but there are some instances of Bihari Sikh men marrying Assamese Sikh women. There are, however, very few instances of marriages between Punjabi Sikhs and Assamese Sikhs. Interestingly, Shamsher Singh, an Assamese Sikh gentleman who had retired from the post of the Deputy Commissioner sometime back, had married Indu Kaur, a Punjabi Sikh writer and activist.

To bring the two communities closer to each other, the Punjabi Sikhs should be encouraged to marry the Assamese Sikhs without any hesitation.

### **Religious Trips**

On the invitation of the SGPC, a group of about 130 Assamese Sikhs had embarked on their maiden journey to Punjab in 2009. They visited the revered Golden Temple in Amritsar and several other historical gurdwaras also. This was undoubtedly

a memorable trip for them. In Punjab, they also attempted to find out about their Punjabi Sikh ancestors who had arrived in Assam more than two centuries ago. Unfortunately, their search did not provide many leads.

In 2014, 150 Assamese Sikhs enthusiastically visited historical gurdwaras in and around Amritsar; they also visited the historical gurdwaras of Delhi region. These religious excursions were made possible by arranging sponsorships and donations. A religious trip to Nanded (Hazur Sahib) for about 100 Assamese Sikhs was arranged about 6 years ago.

In September 2024, the SGPC financially supported a group of 45 Assamese Sikhs for their religious trip to the historical gurdwaras of Amritsar and Anandpur Sahib.

The SGPC and the DSGMC should regularly sponsor the Assamese Sikhs' religious excursions to the historical gurdwaras of Punjab and Delhi. Similarly, their religious trips

for the historical gurdwaras of Patna and Nanded (Hazur Sahib) should also be sponsored on a regular basis.

### **Punjabi Sikhs' Attitude Towards the Assamese Sikhs**

Owing to lack of information and data, many Punjabi Sikhs do not regard the Assamese Sikhs as their equals. Sometimes the Assamese Sikhs are sidelined because most of them cannot read, write or talk in Punjabi. Gujarati Hindus talk and write in Gujarati; Bengali Hindus talk and write in Bengali; and Tamil Hindus talk and write in Tamil. None of them are considered superior or inferior because of the language used by them. Why, then, are the Assamese Sikhs sometimes considered different on account of the language (Assamese) used by them?

"It hurts us when we are called 'duplicate Sikhs' or 'second class Sikhs,'" says S. K. Singh, President of the Assam Sikh Association.

The mainstream Sikhs should start treating the Assamese Sikhs as their own brothers and sisters before the Christian missionaries start penetrating in the villages inhabited by the Assamese Sikhs and conversions became common.

### **Literature on the Assamese Sikhs**

Most of the books on the history of Assam either do not include any information about the Assamese Sikhs or provide very brief information about them. Some history books like *Assam Buranji*, *Deodhai Buranji* and *Dakuraja* give information about the unification of the Ahom and the Sikh soldiers. Similarly, Edward Gait and William Robinson provide a few details concerning the Assamese Sikhs in their books titled *A History of Assam and Descriptive Accounts of Assam*.

In his novel titled *Padum Kuwari*, Rasaraj Lakshminath has unfortunately portrayed the Assamese Sikhs in a negative way. But the heroic roles played by members of the Assamese Sikh community have been depicted properly in Rajanikanta Bordoloi's novels titled *Manomati*, *Danduwa Droh* and *Rahdoi Ligiri*. The heroic acts of General Chaitanya Singh in

the battleground of Hadirachaki have been depicted clearly in Sailadhar Rajkhowa's interesting poem titled *Pashan Pratima*.

### **A superb trilingual (Assamese, Hindi and English) book on the Assamese Sikhs**

A very interesting book titled *Asomiya Sikh: Bedonar Dostabej* (Assamese Sikhs: Document of Pain) was published sometime back. This trilingual (Assamese, Hindi and English) book has a wealth of information concerning the Assamese Sikhs; several eminent scholars of Assam have contributed their erudite articles for this precious book.

### **Research on the Assamese Sikhs**

Based on his extensive field visits and thorough study of numerous primary sources, Dr. Himadri Banerjee has done outstanding research on the Assamese Sikhs. His two books titled *The Other Sikhs: A View from Eastern India* and *Beyond Punjab: Sikhs in East and Northeast India* throw light on various significant aspects of the Assamese Sikhs' glorious history.

Dr. Birinchi Kumar Medhi is known for his exhaustive research on the social aspect of the Assamese Sikhs' lives. His research thesis is titled *The Assamese Sikhs: A Study of their Social Relations in a Rural Setting*.

A lot of research still needs to be done to unearth more details about the initial history of the Assamese Sikhs. Some very precious old documents may still be lying in the archives of Lahore in Pakistan. Old Punjabi and Assamese newspapers, old official Gazettes of the Government of Assam, and old revenue records of the Assamese Sikhs may reveal many interesting facts about the earlier Assamese Sikhs' settlement in various rural areas of Assam.

### **Concluding Remarks**

At less than one percent of Assam's total population, the Assamese Sikhs are a minority amongst minorities. Dr. Himadri Banerjee, who has been closely monitoring the Assamese Sikh community, has expressed the fear that this unique historical community may become extinct in the future if proper care and support is not given by Assam's Government.

Minority status should be granted to the Assamese Sikhs without any further delay. Such a measure would definitely help them economically as well as socially. Also, they should get appropriate representation in the local bodies and the state assembly.

The Government of Assam annually allocates Rs 100 crores to each of the 20 Development Councils in the state. While the Muslims, the Brahmins and several other communities of Assam already have their own Development Councils, the Assamese Sikhs' genuine demand for a Development Council has not been conceded by the Government so far.

It may be mentioned here that while the Muslims, who migrated to Assam after 1930, are getting some additional benefits through Char Development Programme, the Assamese Sikhs are deprived of all such benefits even though they have been living in Assam for more than 200 years. For their educational progress, the Assamese Sikh students should get reservation in higher educational institutions of Assam.

The SGPC and the DSGMC should come forward to help the Assamese Sikhs in every possible way. Besides sponsoring the Assamese Sikhs' religious tours to the historical gurdwaras in Punjab and Delhi on a regular basis, the two premier Sikh organisations should also ensure publication of suitable literature on the Sikh Gurus and the Sikh religion in Assamese language.

Also, there is an urgent need to send Sikh Parcharaks/Punjabi teachers to Borkala, Chaparmukh, Lanka, Hatipara and Guwahati. Punjabi schools should be opened at such places without any further loss of time. Also, the bright Assamese Sikh students should be supported financially for their further studies, thus enabling them to get lucrative jobs in due course.

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*Santokh Singh Bains is a writer & freelance journalist based in Chicago, USA. His book titled Sikhs, Sikhism and the World was published by Sanbun Publishers, New Delhi, in 2019.*

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# Animal Symbolism of the Khalsa Singh, Singhni & Maar

Wahenoor Singh



*Photo by: Amardeep Singh*





**G**uru Gobind Singh Sahib blessed his Khalsa with “Singh” & “Kaur.” The Guru also publicly declares his beloved followers a snake. What is the symbolism of this animal imagery? How does this impact the Sikh psyche?

“It is when I make sparrows fight hawks that I am called Gobind Singh. It is when I make lions out of wolves that I am called Gobind Singh. It is when I make the lowly rise that I am called Gobind Singh. It is when I make one fight a hundred thousand that I am called Gobind Singh.”

Every male born into the Sikh tradition is given the name Singh as a middle or last name. Women may also carry this name. Everyone’s experience with their Sikh identity is a personal one. The animal imagery invoked by this name, combined with the Sikh warrior philosophy and martial tradition, leads one down the blood-filled pages of Sikh history. Three creatures are specifically used to represent the Khalsa (Sovereign who belongs to the Guru), which also stems directly from Guru Gobind Singh Sahib: lions, hawks, and the snake. Harinder Singh of the Sikh Research Institute has thoroughly explained the hawk’s significance in Sikhi and its influence on the Sikh psyche. This article will examine the relationship of lions and the snake with the Sikhs and how these animals came to represent the Sikh people, intertwining the animal symbolism with the Sikh identity and ethos stemming from the Father of the Khalsa himself.

#### **What’s In The Name?**

The Sikh people are most commonly associated with lions, a relationship cemented on 13 April 1699. The occasion of Baisakhi (also spelled Vaisakhi) marked the foundation of the Khalsa community by the tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. The Guru proclaimed all men and women initiated into the

brotherhood to take on the names “Singh” and “Kaur,” respectively. This was followed by all, including the Guru (as the Guru changed his name from Guru Gobind Rai to Guru Gobind Singh) and Mata Sahib Kaur (today known as the mother of the Khalsa). This single act helped solidify the warrior ethos of those committed to the Guru.

“Singh” is of Sanskrit origin and is commonly translated as “lion” but can also mean “hero or distinguished individual.” “Kaur/Kour” is also etymologically derived from Sanskrit, evolving from the Rajput *Kanwar/Kunwar* (meaning “prince”), which was used to indicate individual status in society. Occasionally, Kaur is translated as “lioness,” or an altogether different word, “Singhni,” is used as a parallel to the male Singh. This is evident in the Sikh *Ardas* (supplication in the form of concluding prayer in both personal and public Sikh life; collective supplication) read daily:

Meditating on the achievement of the male and female members of the Khalsa who laid down their lives in the cause of Dharma (religion and righteousness), got their bodies dismembered bit by bit, got their skulls sawn off, got mounted on spiked wheels, got their bodies sawn, made sacrifices in the service of the shrines (Gurdwaras), did not betray their faith, sustained their adherence to the Sikh faith with unshorn hair uptill their last breath, say “Wondrous Destroyer of darkness”, O Khalsa.

#### **Sikh Rehat Maryada Chapter 3 Article IV**

Prominent Sikh scholar Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha (1861–1938) translates “Singh” as “tiger” in his *Mahan Kosh* while also employing “shardool” for “lion”. The *Mahan Kosh* is the most comprehensive dictionary of Guru Granth Sahib (Sikh scriptural



*Photo by: Tany Kaler*

canon). Interestingly, the Pali variant of “singh” is “siha,” which is used to refer to a “lion,” a “woman like the lion,” an “epithet of the Buddha,” and even “lioness.”

In the Guru Granth Sahib, ਸਿੰਘ (Singh) is mentioned many times. It is mentioned by Guru Nanak Sahib, Guru Amardas Sahib, Guru Ramdas Sahib, and Guru Arjan Sahib and Bhagats (devotees) Kabir ji, Namdev ji, Ravidas ji, Sadhna ji, and Bhatt (bard) Haribans ji. According to translations, it refers to a lion, tiger, or throne.

Bhai Gurdas (1559-1637), in his Vars (odes or ballads), mentions ਸਿੰਘ, which has been translated as lion or throne. He notably uses “Bagh” when referring to tigers. Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, the father of the Khalsa, has mentioned ਸਿੰਘ many times in his Bani (message/writings). It has been translated mostly as a lion, tiger, or throne.

In his commentary of the Tenth Master’s writings, Bhai Nand Lal (1633-1713) uses “Singh” only when referring to Guru Gobind Singh Sahib himself. As mentioned previously, the terms “Singh” & “Singhni” are used in the Ardas read daily by the Sikhs to refer to male and female members of the Khalsa Panth. “Singhni” (*Gurmukhi: ਸਿੰਘਨੀ*) is not mentioned in the Guru Granth Sahib, Bhai Gurdas’s Vars, or Bhai Nand Lal’s ghazals, but it does make two appearances in the Bani of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib. In both instances, “Singhni” refers to “lioness.”

According to the *Sikh Rahit Maryada* (Sikh code of conduct), it is clear that men are given the last name “Singh” and women “Kaur” upon the naming ceremony post-birth (when born in a Sikh household) and when undergoing *Khande-ki-pahul* (Sikh initiation ceremony). Still, the meaning of these names is not directly defined.

Thus, “Singh” was not always used with the specificity this article currently examines. As discussed previously, most linguistic experts translate “Singh” as “lion.” Whether “tiger” or “lion,” the imagery of a ferocious, strong, firm, fearless - apex warrior remains instilled in the Sikh

community through its standardised naming conventions and ceremony of initiation. “Singh” and “Kaur” both represent royal titles for those initiated into the Khalsa Order, preserving individual sovereignty.

### Lions

The significance of adding “Singh” and “Kaur” to the names of members of the Khalsa Panth had a profound impact on the psyche of the Sikhs. To understand this, one must understand the reason behind this action.

“A Sikh man’s face with an uncut beard in full form resembles that of a male Lion’s, with his glorious flowing mane.”

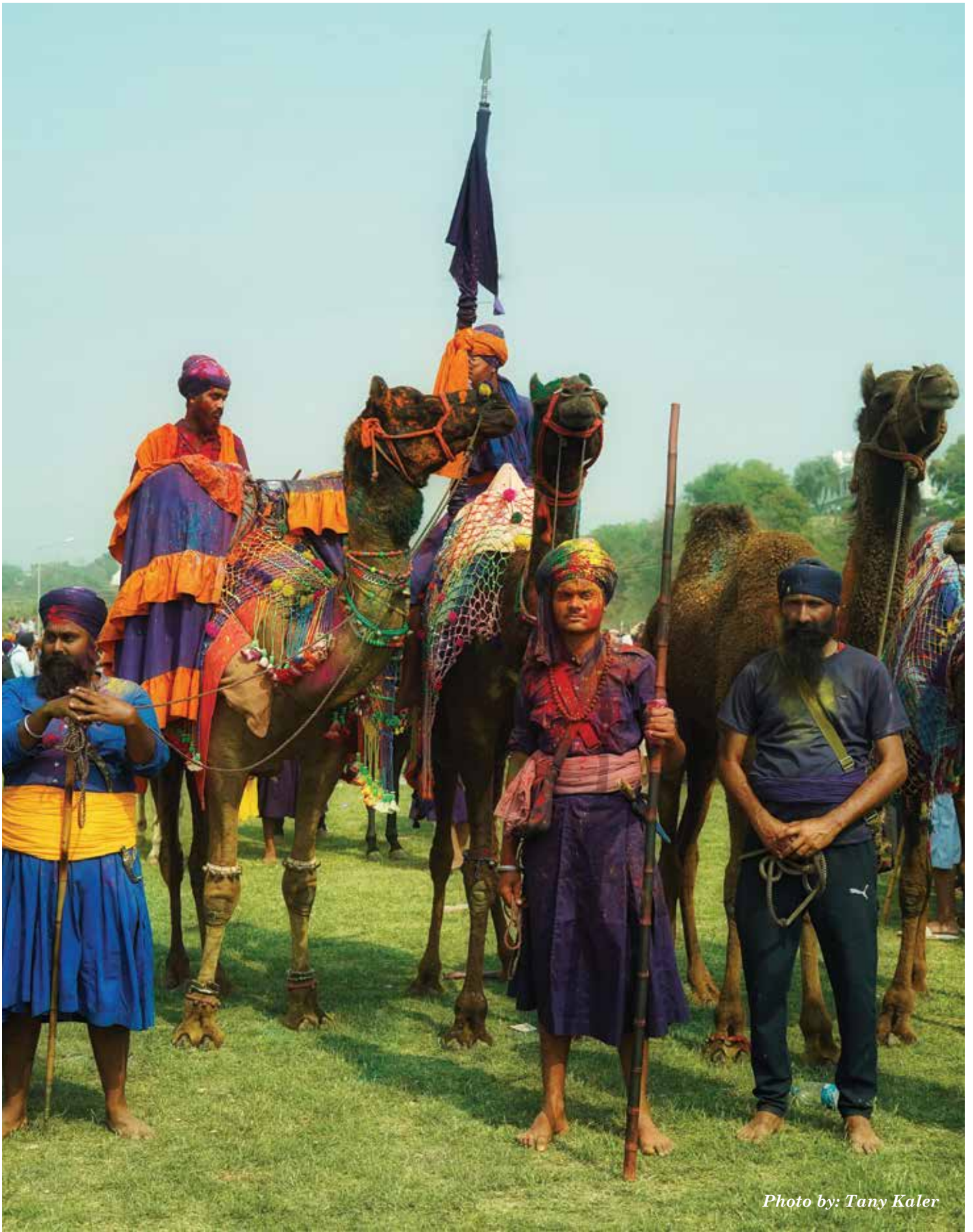
“Singh” is an ancient Sanskrit name used by the Hindu Kshatriya caste (the community of warrior aristocracy). The name “Singh” was commonly used among the Rajputs and other Hindu warriors. They added this title to their name, drawing inspiration from the Asiatic Lions and possibly the Bengal Tiger. Both of these beasts were native to northwestern India (although an animal does not need to be native to an area to be significant to a respective culture). Lions are globally known to represent military and regal symbolism, regardless of the culture.

To immaterialise the inequitable caste system, the 10th Sikh Guru conferred the name “Singh” on all initiated Sikh males irrespective of their caste background, as last names in India often represent caste. The act of taking up the name “Singh” by all male Khalsa Sikhs was an act of

defiance against the caste system. This act presented to the outside world that in the Sikh paradigm, caste, family origin, or professional background did not matter.

Kaur is historically a masculine title. Just as the adoption of “Singh” was a sign of rebellion, “Kaur” was also a new identity given to rid the segregation of women by caste, family name, or profession. The adoption of the masculine “Kaur” raised women to the same status as men, yet gave them a separate, sovereign identity, signifying their independence and ability to sustain without men. Throughout Indian society, inheritance was usually restricted to males in the majority of the cultures. Even today, the male family name moves forward after marriage as the bride usually changes her last name to adopt her husband’s last name. “Kaur,” the crown prince, invokes that the person is entitled to the same rights as men and can receive the endowment while independent of male supervision. “Kaur” announces to the world that under the Sikh vision, females now have equal status as men in all aspects of society. Under standard Sikh naming conventions, all biological men receive the name “Singh,” and all biological women receive the name “Kaur.” Both Singh and Kaur are mechanisms to fight against caste hierarchy and discrimination, and Kaur is also an uprising against chauvinism, sexism, and patriarchy.

However, the literal meaning of these names cannot be ignored. To do so would be ignoring the genius of the Guru, casting doubt on the perfect Emperor-Prophet. Lions are associated with various traits, and the similarity between a Sikh’s kes (unshorn hair) and a lion’s mane is also striking. A Sikh man’s face with an uncut beard in full form resembles that of a male Lion’s, with his glorious flowing mane. This is reflected in artwork across the internet and Panjabi songs, where a Singh’s appearance is often paralleled with a male lion’s. Lions are the most social of the “big cats” and live in units called “pride,” and are extremely defensive when encroached upon. This lifestyle is very similar to that advocated by



*Photo by: Tany Kaler*

the Sikh Gurus. The Gurus advocated leading a householder/family life in place of becoming *Sadhu* (ascetic), and many *sabads* (Infinite-Wisdom verses) in the Guru Granth Sahib highlight the importance of pursuing sangat (Sikh congregations). Guru Ramdas Sahib says:

Yoga - Union with the Divine - is not obtained by wearing religious robes; the One is found in the Sat Sangat, the True Congregation, and the Guru's Teachings. The humble Saints throw the doors wide open.

(*Guru Granth Sahib 1297*)

The Sikhs were also historically self-organised into misls (groups in the Sikh confederacy of the commonwealth) that united with each other in the face of foreign invasion and attacks. Singhnis were no less striking in their valour and spirit, for there is a reason we remember Mata Sahib Kaur, Mata Bhag Kaur, Rani Sada Kaur, and Sophia Duleep Singh to this day. It would be unjust to say that these Kaur-ageous beings were any less than lions, as they captured the true Sikh-Singhni spirit while preserving the sovereign female identity.

The bravery and military prowess of Sikhs were such that in the World Wars, they became known as the "Black Lions."

Across cultures, the image of a lion echoes power, bravery, aristocracy, intelligence, strength, fierceness, and regality. Often presented as "kings of the jungle," lions, powerful and noble, also symbolise royal status. Sikhs show pride in a positive sense. Sikh people take pride in their community's power and shared ethics. They know they are strongest when they come together around their Guru and safeguard each other. Sometimes, too much pride can become a negative trait and cause lions to behave rashly. Lions may be portrayed as egotistical creatures, thinking they are above everything and everyone else. Occasionally, this "bravery" is a misnomer for irrationality. Then there's also the adjective "lionhearted" in English, which means brave and courageous. Guru Granth Sahib also shares how these negative qualities

and glutinous behaviour can cloud our judgment and lifestyle. No matter how glorious, rich, or high-status one is, there is no excuse for behaviour driven by ego, lust, or greed. Guru Granth Sahib makes this clear: to be a lion is to be "high-minded," grounded by contentment, daya (compassion), and humility, driven by alignment and love for the One.

**“The significance of adding “Singh” and “Kaur” to the names of members of the Khalsa Panth had a profound impact on the psyche of the Sikhs. To understand this, one must understand the reason behind this action.”**

#### The Essence of Thy Name

Essentially, the Singh-Lion does not denote inherited or ingrained valor. Nor does it mean to "live life king-sized" or extend the claim that "Singh is King." It actually stands for a state of mind and being loyal supporters of the Guru. We can all be Singhs/Singhnis if we work hard every day and strive to be the most high-minded and the bravest version of ourselves. Brave enough to battle against injustice, brave enough to provide food and protection for all in need, and fight brutality and persecution in the face of all odds. This includes being brave enough to take the morally right action, even in the face of all other human impulses that may sway one away from being truly brave. In his Japu, Guru Nanak Sahib reminds us,

Good deeds and bad deeds – the record is read out in the court of the One. According to their own actions, some are drawn closer, and some are driven farther away.

Nanak says those who have meditated on the Nam (Divine Identification) and departed after having worked by the sweat of their brows, their faces are radiant in the Court of the Divine, and many are saved along with them!

(*Guru Granth Sahib 8*)

#### The Coiled Snake

In 1705, Guru Gobind Singh Sahib sent the Emperor of India, Aurangzeb, a letter written in Persian from Dina, Panjab. This letter responded to the emperor's betrayal after he had promised safe passage to the Tenth Sikh Guru and his devotees. The elder two sons of the Guru, Sahibzadas (Sovereign's children) Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh chose to give their lives for the Guru in Chamkaur. Despite a Mughal military victory in Chamkaur, which left the Sikhs and their Guru scattered and in disarray, Guru Gobind Singh Sahib claimed victory over Aurangzeb.

This was based on the fact that the Mughal forces failed to capture or kill the Sikh Guru and that Emperor Aurangzeb had broken the oath he had sworn on the Holy Quran (the central scripture of Islam) to provide safe passage to the Sikh Guru and his people. Hence, the letter was named *Zafarnama* (Epistle of Victory).

In this letter addressed to the Emperor, Guru Gobind Singh Sahib refers to his loyal followers, not just as a serpent but as a coiled serpent in the singular. "رام" (pronounced maar) means "snake" in Persian. This presents some interesting imagery for the Khalsa. This symbolism has been recorded by *dhadis* (bards) and Panjabi folk singer Harbhajan Maan in his song "Bir Khalsa." It remains popular in the circles of Akali-Nihang Singhs. Even the popular term "*Bhujangi*" means "child-snake." Perhaps the snake is a description of the strength of Guru's army at the time or of the unified Khalsa Panth.

What, if you have killed my four sons, the hooded cobra still sits coiled up.

(*Dasam Granth 1389*)



*Guru Gobind Singh on Horseback Punjab Plains, Mid-19th century*

A coiled snake is a global image, and its usage transcends cultures. For example, in Ben Franklin's *Join or Die* cartoon and the Gadsden Flag, it represents liberty, unforgiving resistance, and political/physical unity. A version of this snake was used on the first Navy Jack of the US Navy and is still featured on the seal and the emblem of the United States Department of the Army. Many hooded, multi-headed snakes are depicted in stone sculptures around the Buddhist temples in Cambodia, iconifying the tale of Mucalinda and the Buddha. Please note that the coiled snake mentioned here is not the same and does not fully hold the same meaning as the one mentioned by Guru Gobind Singh Sahib.

Snakes are often represented as powerful protectors. When certain snakes are threatened, they will maintain their territory and act to fortify their position. This occurs in a sequence, beginning with the theatrics of a threatening display, followed by aggressive behaviour, leading to fighting. Thus, snakes are seen as natural defenders who cannot easily be displaced and often fight to protect themselves. According to animal behavioural science, "Coiling does increase the distance that a snake can strike but seeing a coiled snake doesn't mean it's ready to strike. Snakes are often coiled up because it's a safer body position. Being stretched out leaves them more vulnerable to predators."

The term "snake," "serpent," and "cobra" are all mentioned in Guru Granth Sahib by Guru Nanak Sahib, Guru Angad Sahib, Guru Amardas Sahib, Guru Ramdas Sahib, Guru Arjan Sahib, Bhagats Kabir, Namdev, Ravidas, Trilochan, *Bhai Satta* and Balvand, Bhattas Kal, Kall Sahaar, and Gayandh. In *Bhai Gurdas's* vars, many references are made to "snake," "serpent," and "cobra." The Bani of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib also mentions "snake," "serpent," "cobra," and even "viper." *Bhai Nand Lal's* ghazals and vars mention "snake" once.

Terrifying and life-threatening, snakes have also culturally come to stand for fertility and deep insight. In

the West, snakes are often understood and portrayed as cunning, devious, disloyal, dishonest, and unfaithful. Serpents have been repeatedly associated with reproduction and lust. In ancient Egypt, the uraeus was a symbol of authority and high status. Egyptian people also saw the snake as stimulating and vitalising. Snakes have the ability to shed their skin, and this is symbolic of rebirth. Snake venom can be used as a toxic poison or a medication. This interconnectedness bridges the duality of fatality and revenge vs. survival and creation, thus presenting Oneness. Depending on the culture, serpents have been known to connect to both the masculine and feminine. The Rod of Asclepius, the symbol of modern healthcare and medicine, incorporates a winding snake. Serpents can be very unforgiving animals and are closely linked to intelligence. They often deal lethal bites in the absence of warning once they feel intimidated. Across the globe, serpents are usually dreaded and loathed. This culturally-recurring duality of "good" and "bad" is merely an illusion, just as Guru Granth Sahib (perfection beyond prophets) reveals to us:

A person calls others bad and good, as long as they are in duality. The Gurmukh understands the One and Only Creator; they are absorbed in the One Divine.

*(Guru Granth Sahib 756)*

### **The Tenth Nanak & His Imagery**

While both the lion and the snake are mentioned early in Sikh literature, their association with the Sikhs was cemented with the 10th Guru, much like the establishment of the Khalsa identity itself. Thus the question arises, how can lions become a snake: the Guru told his Khalsa to be Singhs/Kaurs/Singhnis. Why would the Guru call those loyal enough to lead lives by his wishes and, if needed, lay down those very lives, lions, only to publicly address them as a snake (in the collective)? Lions cannot magically turn into snakes. Perhaps it is because Sikhs formed *jathas* (organized Sikh bands) and misls like lions form prides. The misls disagreed

with each other on many things, and the various *jathebandis* (groups) still do (for example: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Akhand Kirtani Jatha (AKJ), Damdami Taksal, Buddha Dal). Hence, lions can ascertain ideological differences from one another.

A snake is long, unified, and moving toward a single, common goal, just as the Khalsa collective is to remain ever-focused on their Guru. The snake's body moves in unison when responding to the intellectual capital of its body (the brain). Aside from the physical and political symbolism of the snake, the loyal Khalsa warriors must unite as one, moving in unison in response to the glorious intellect of the Guru. When threatened, the whole Khalsa Panth should not hesitate to put aside differences and "coil upon itself."

Sikhs are often besmirched like serpents are misapprehended right from the beginning. Snakes shed skin and are capable of transformation, just as individuals can transform their personal & political paradigms upon aligning with the Guru and accepting, upholding, and living with the Gurbani (Infinite Wisdom in the Guru Granth Sahib) and Rahit (lifestyle) in their personal journey through Sikhi. Just as the Panth has historically changed direction, often after pivotal times in its history, via Sarbat Khalsa deliberations and collective decisions to undergo struggles, the Panth should continually strive to unite to allow it to progress & thrive, not just to survive.

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*Wahenoar Singh holds a BS in Biology from the University of Georgia and is pursuing a healthcare career. He attended Sidak in 2016 & 2019 to participate in Sikhi 101 & 201. After completing Sidak, he helped establish the UGA Sikh Student Association. Since then, he has helped host multiple interfaith events. Gurmat serves as the standing pillar of inspiration for him. He is currently working towards following the path described by Guru Amar Das Sahib in Anand Sahib, especially on an inward level.*

# Humanity Amidst Insanity

Tridivesh Singh Maini, Tahir Javed Malik and Ali Farooq Malik

Since the independence of India and Pakistan and the partition of the sub-continent, exhaustive research has been done on the loss of lives, rape and incendiary during this gruesome period and the role faith and nationalism have played in perpetuating these barbaric inhuman acts. While this cannot be overlooked, it is important not to obliterate some of the 'positive acts' during partition. When we say 'positive acts' we refer to instances where religion and nationalism were outweighed by humanity. Positive acts include instances where members of one community gave individuals of another community refuge, or warned them to leave whenever they anticipated danger.

For those on duty it meant controlling mobs which were creating trouble, and amongst the many other means of rescuing. Two more significant acts were protecting the honour of women and helping in the recovery of abducted women. There were also examples like that of Malerkotla, a Muslim princely state in East Punjab

(Indian side of Punjab). While other princely states, in East Punjab, could not escape the communal frenzy of the time, Malerkotla remained peaceful and many Muslims from other parts of Punjab sought refuge here. For understanding this aspect, it is important to go back to an important event. The Nawab (ruler) of Malerkotla, Sher Muhammad Khan, had in 1705 opposed the death penalty handed out to nine-year-old Baba Zorawar Singh and seven-year-old Baba Fateh Singh — the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. Sher Mohammed Khan said that punishing young children was against the tenets of the Islam. Even though Baba Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were bricked alive, in 1705, Guru Gobind Singh thanked Sher Mohammed Khan and is also supposed to have blessed the Nawab and the state of Malerkotla.

Ashish Nandy, a prominent scholar, during his interviews with survivors of partition in the course of a project on partition, is of the view that approximately 25% of Muslims

saved non-Muslims and vice-versa. These episodes included cases where individuals put their own lives in danger to save the so called 'enemy' in various ways—giving shelter, disguising them or giving the right advice to escapes.

This is not a small figure but for some reason this dimension of partition has not been given adequate attention. Nandy correctly points out that:

"Many survivors remember how, even in those bitter days, when inter-community relations were at their nadir, individuals and communities resisted the violence. Many neighbours did succumb to 'greed and the temptation to loot, but others risked their lives—and that of their families—to protect friends and even strangers from the other community. A few even died to protect their wards".

The book was co-authored by Tridivesh Singh Maini, who is a New Delhi based researcher and policy analyst, and Tahir Javed Malik and Ali Farooq Malik who are journalists based in Lahore.





## The Story of Dalip Singh Who Crossed the River Ravi with the help of Muslims

**D**alip Singh was born in Khushab (1919) — which was a Tehsil of Sargodha District then and is now a district of Sargodha Division in present-day Pakistan. While he cannot recollect his experience of the Partition, his son Jaspal Singh, born a year after Partition has heard the story of his father's escape on countless occasions.

The illustration by his son exemplifies the significance of “postmemory.” Apart from Dalip Singh's son, his grandson, too, knew how his grandfather was rescued by Muslims. Dalip Singh has repeated the story on numerous occasions. His family has also kept in touch with many families on the other side of the border, and even his grandchildren have visited Pakistan quite often.

Dalip Singh received a Bachelor's degree from Lyallpur Khalsa College and then went on to do the equivalent of an Honours in Punjabi, called Gyani. He acquired a diploma in Industrial Engineering and ran a transport business called Montgomery Transport, which was set up in 1942.

In August, when the rioting began, Dalip Singh's friends persuaded him to escape and save his life. His business was in Sargodha, and he went to Lahore around August 10th, not actually believing that the riots had broken out. As luck would have it, riots had broken out, and he was in a helpless situation. Some Muslim friends of his were kind enough to shelter him in a masjid. The next day, his friends helped him cross the Ravi river by using drums as boats and tied ropes to them from both sides. On one side, the drums were pushed by Dalip Singh's friends, while on the other, they were pulled by his friends. While in the first instance, Dalip Singh could not rescue all his family members, he returned and rescued the remaining members of his family. He finally escaped via the Dera Baba Nanak route.

His family is still in touch with many individuals from Pakistan. His son, Jaspal Singh, showed many gifts their friends from Pakistan

send frequently. They have visited Pakistan on numerous occasions and visited the religious shrines there. Prominent personalities like Aitzaz Ahsan (a prominent politician, lawyer, and author) have visited their house. The latter visited their house in 2003 when he was part

**“In post-independence India, while many refugees of Partition had developed a prejudice against Muslims, Dalip Singh (according to his son) preferred doing business with Muslims because of his past friendships and due to his love for the Urdu language.”**

of a parliamentary delegation and presented a copy of his book *Indus Saga: From Partition to Pataliputra*. Ahsan invited Jaspal Singh and offered full support for visiting Sikh shrines. The family is also in touch with other personalities of Pakistan like Sardar Muhammed Iqbal and Chaudhry Ahmed Javed, brother of prominent politician Mukhtar Ahmed Chaudhry. Jaspal Singh says:

“In 1989, I was visiting Lahore as part of a Rotary Mission. We were also accompanied by family members of the then External Affairs Minister, RL Bhatia. I was introduced to Sardar Muhammad Iqbal by Mr. Bhatia's family during this visit. The latter was a classmate of Iqbal at Lahore during the pre-partition days. Sardar Muhammad Iqbal in turn introduced us to Chaudhry Ahmed Javed, brother of Chaudhry Ahmed Mukhtar. We are very close to both families; in fact, we attended Iqbal's grand daughter's wedding in 1998 and stayed with Chaudhry Ahmed Javed during that time”.

Talking about the visits of his father and the rest of the family, he says, “My father, Dalip Singh, got a chance to visit Sikh shrines in Pakistan in the 1970s and then in the 1980s. Unfortunately, he has not been able to visit Sargodha, his ancestral place. I am a metallurgical engineer and have a business of textile machinery. So apart from visiting friends, business is one reason. In 1993 I went for a seminar to Islamabad. After that, I have been there very often. I have been 10–12 times while my daughter visits twice or thrice a year”.

Jaspal Singh makes two other interesting points. One is that his family has made a lot of friends in Pakistan as a result of attending marriages. The point that social meetings at occasions like marriages lead to sustained relations is quite common and emerges in many other cases. Second, he makes the point that Sardar Muhammed Iqbal has developed a deep interest in Sikhism ever since their first meeting in 1989. His library consists of many books on Sikhism.

Dalip Singh also makes an interesting case study. In post-independence India, while many refugees of Partition had developed a prejudice against Muslims, Dalip Singh (according to his son) preferred doing business with Muslims because of his past friendships and due to his love for the Urdu language. Since he had been a great Urdu writer, he used to receive free copies of two famous Urdu Papers, *Milaap* and *Hind Samachar*.

## The Story of Dr. Santokh Singh: “Surgeon” of Indo–Pak Bonhomie

Dr. Santokh Singh was born 1939, and is a renowned surgeon who runs one of the biggest private hospitals in Amritsar, by the name of Waryam Singh Clinic. He is also a well-known social worker of the city associated with many social and charitable causes. A few months before partition at the age of 7, he shifted to Bhikhiwind village in Amritsar district from Salamatpura, Lahore.

Dr. Santokh Singh is an interesting case study, not only because of the fact that his father, Waryam Singh was helped in August 1947 by Muslim friends while fleeing Lahore, but also because a few months after partition, his father’s friends came to the Wagah border and returned some of the belongings which he had left with them.

Ironically, the house he resides in currently was a Muslim haveli (mansion), which was built in the year 1909—also the year of his father, the late Waryam Singh’s birth. In addition to this, Dr. Singh and his family have kept their links alive with quite a few people across the border.

Narrating his story, Dr. Singh says that in his village, Salamatpura, which was on the outskirts of Lahore, close bonds existed with Muslims. The namberdar, or head of the village, was a very good friend of his father, Waryam Singh, a businessman owning a few brick kilns on the outskirts of Lahore.

In April 1947, his father decided to send his family to Amritsar as they had witnessed some Muslim mobs around their house. Dr. Singh, then a student in 2nd grade at that time, saw some Muslim league mobs coming outside his school sometime around March 1947. Apart from Dr. Santokh Singh’s father, the rest of the family settled in a village called Bhikiwind, on the outskirts of Amritsar, sometime in April 1947.

As the reality of Partition dawned on Waryam Singh, he began to look for businesses in Amritsar. During one such visit to the city—in July 1947—his father rescued a Muslim boy who had been stabbed to death by Hindus

and Sikhs and took him to a nearby hospital. By this time, large-scale rioting had broken out, and his friend, the village namberdar, told him that things were out of hand and it would be tough to save him. Until he left, the namberdar also ensured that no one caused any harm to Waryam Singh. Had it not been for this sincere advice from the namberdar, Singh may not have been able to escape safely.

He left Lahore on the evening of August 14th 1947, the Independence Day of Pakistan, and escaped to Amritsar via Ferozepur. He left some valuable

**“To be ‘Punjabi,’ rather than ‘Indian’ or ‘Pakistani,’ ‘Hindu,’ Muslim,’ or ‘Sikh,’ can, after all, facilitate cross-border with other Punjabis that is near-impossible within South Asia itself.”**

belongings with the namberdar of the village.

Dr Santokh Singh recollects that for a few months immediately after Partition, groups were allowed to meet at the Wagah border and exchange their belongings. During one such meeting, his father’s friend returned their belongings—this point seldom emerges in oral recollections.

The trust must have been very deep, as the namberdar returned certain valuables to Waryam Singh. Talking about post-partition life, the latter mentions that, ironically, the house they bought in an auction in 1947

was owned by a Muslim family, who later visited the house in the 70s. Like many others, he also pointed out that going to and fro was much easier in the 1950s. He got a chance to visit Lahore for a cricket match in 1955, where he was very well looked after by his Muslim host who was the Chief Engineer of Lahore at that time.

In the 1970s, a gentleman named Dr Rashid became good friends with his brother-in-law settled in Huddersfield, UK. This sort of friendship developing in the diaspora between Indians and Pakistanis is very common, particularly between Punjabis from both sides of the divide.

It has been aptly stated that one of the main reasons for such friendships developing outside the subcontinent is: “To be ‘Punjabi,’ rather than ‘Indian’ or ‘Pakistani,’ ‘Hindu,’ Muslim,’ or ‘Sikh,’ can, after all, facilitate cross-border with other Punjabis that is near-impossible within South Asia itself.”

It is interesting to note that while Indians and Pakistanis were reticent or unsure about their relationship within the subcontinent, it did not take them very long to gel when abroad.

Dr. Rashid, a leading gynecologist in Pakistan, visited Dr. Singh in the 1980s, visited his clinic, and performed surgery on request. This friendship turned out to be a long lasting one and has sustained with their children being good friends too. Whenever any of Dr. Singh’s friends visit Pakistan, they are well looked after by Dr. Rashid.

Recently, the former visited Pakistan on the occasion of Dr. Rashid’s son’s marriage. Dr. Singh has visited Pakistan on more than 10 occasions, and his family members also visit frequently.

Speaking about the future, Dr. Singh clearly states that the only way ahead is through peace and friendship. Amritsar, being a border city has always borne the brunt of war, whereas it could have been the biggest beneficiary of cross border trade opportunities. As it is, the economy is showing signs of improvement with trade with Pakistan, he says.

## Rana Ameer Khan: Advocate of Peace

**R**ana Ameer Khan (born 1940) is an Assistant Advocate General in Punjab, Pakistan. He was born in Moza Bheen, district Ambala (Haryana). His case is interesting because his family was rescued by Sikhs in the village and, for some days, given shelter in a Sikh shrine. Rana Ameer has also set up the Pakistan Citizens' Council, which, among other things, has Indo-Pak peace on its agenda.

Talking about the pre-partition setting of his village, Rana Ameer Khan says:

"In 1947, I studied at the government primary school, Moza Bheen. After three months, however, the school closed for summer vacation in June 1947. Hindus and Sikhs were my classmates in the primary school. My father, Rana Bashir Ahmad Khan, worked at a bank in Ambala. My grandfather, Master Mohammad Shafi Khan, was a retired teacher at the Muslim High school, Ambala, and was well respected by the Sikh and Hindu community too. My grandfather was a social worker in the village. Even Hindus and Sikhs used to take his advice regarding family matters – sometimes even marriage-related issues. My father also worked

at the Rajput Hostel where the children of Rajput families studied. Talking about the unfortunate event of Partition, Rana Ameer Khan remarks:

Muslims began to leave the village around September or October 1947. When things began to worsen, Muslims living in our village started migrating to Lahore. Sikhs were the majority in that village. Even in those bad days, communal harmony in our village was not disturbed, and Sikhs and Muslims were living peacefully. Such was the bonhomie between the two communities that Sikhs wanted local Muslims to stay put and not leave". Like many other instances, the village locals did not create any problems, but hoodlums from other villages began to foment trouble. Says Rana Ameer:

"Locals promised to protect our lives, but groups of Sikhs from other villages tried many times to attack our village—with the intent of killing Muslims. However, Sikhs in Moza Bheen village foiled all such plans".

Interestingly, it was a Gurdwara that was used to give refuge to the Muslims of Rana Ameer's village. He says: "The Sikh community hid me, my

mother, other women, and children in the Gurdwara and guarded us for many days. But later, when things got out of hand, my grandfather and other Muslims decided to migrate to Pakistan. Therefore, under the protection of our Sikh friends, we managed to reach the Ambala refugee camp, where the army was deputed for the security of refugees. Under the security of army soldiers, we came to Lahore by bus".

Rana Ameer now runs an NGO called the Pakistan Citizens' Council. It is an organisation that consists of doctors, engineers, businessmen, professors, lawyers, and journalists. This organization works on numerous issues, amongst which Indo-Pak peace is an important priority. In March 2006, the Pakistan Citizens' Council organised a seminar to which delegates from India were invited. Various issues were discussed.

An important point raised was the recognition of common heroes, especially personalities like Tipu Sultan, Bhagat Singh, and Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan. In May 2007, the Citizens' Council organised a seminar, 'Muslim Sufis and Baba Guru Nanak,' and invited a delegation from India. Rana Ameer Khan has visited India thrice.

## Harbhajan Singh: Saved by a Loyal Employee

**H**arbhajan Singh, 81, a retired government servant originally from Okara (Montgomery) now known as Sahiwal, lives in the Punjabi Bagh area of Delhi. One of his father's workers, a Muslim by the name of Afzal Khan, helped them to escape from their house to the village Gurdwara one night by disguising everyone in burqas. The other striking feature in his story is that like many others, his parents were sure that they would return to their home and so they did not even leave the keys of their household with anyone.

Talking about the pre-Partition days in Okara, Harbhajan Singh remarks, "My father was a businessman and we had Muslim employees working for

us. I did my matriculation from the local MB High School. While at one stage, I planned to attend the Sikh National College at Lahore, I gave up the idea as I received a government job with the Telephone Department".

Talking of inter-community relationships, Singh says: "There were no real communal tensions in our village and our family was reasonably tolerant in any case. I had good Muslim friends, and remember the name of one of them—Basheer. I remember I was welcome in his household and my parents had no objection to his visiting our household".

While narrating the story of how his family came to know about partition

and how they managed to escape Singh says: "In Okara, riots began around the 20th of August, later than other areas.

The day the announcement was made about the aggravation of rioting our radio was broken and there was no way we would have known that things had gone out of hand.

Singh makes another very interesting point saying that: "For other Muslims and Non-Muslims interaction was a problem as Muslims ate "halal" meat while non-Muslim ate "jhatka".

In our case, this was no problem as we were all vegetarians. I was the first member of my family who started eating meat in 1954".

## Pritam Singh Hundal

**P**ritam Singh Hundal's saga is relevant for three reasons. Firstly, he was rescued by a Muslim family and given refuge for a few days during Partition. Secondly, while his aunt had to stay back in Pakistan and convert to Islam, Hundal was able to meet her on his first post-partition visit to Pakistan, though he was not fortunate enough to meet her on his subsequent visits. Thirdly, he is the Secretary of an organization called the Jati Umrah (which happens to be the ancestral village of Nawaz Sharif) Indo-Pak Parivar Milap Trust, whose primary aim was to make separated families meet.

Hundal was born on December 20th, 1937, in the village of Khiwa Hundalan, District Sialkot.

Talking about the pre-partition social scenario, he says that the village consisted mostly of Jatts—Sikhs and Muslims, a few Hindus and non-Jatt Sikhs. Like many others, members of his own family did not take Partition seriously. When the riots started in other places, they felt their village was safe since, by and large, it had a composite culture.

When things began to get out of hand, around August 20th, they went to Balurpur, which was less than two miles from his village. Here, a Muslim family also happened to belong to the Hundal sub-caste—consisting of a few army personnel—gave Pritam Singh's family shelter for two days. Finally, the Muslim family gave safe passage to his family two days later to Hundal's village.

A few days later, Hundal and his family were part of a convoy of Hindus and Sikhs headed by one of the respected religious leaders – Sant Satgurdev Singh of Mirkpurkhas. Like many others, his paternal aunt Amar Kaur later referred to as Bebe Hundal and her husband decided to stay on in Pakistan and converted to Islam. Hundal's family reached the refugee camp at Narowal sometime around the third week of August. They crossed from Narowal and faced no problem except at Jassar, which was the last stop on the Pakistani side, where a large group of Muslims tried to attack them. Being a large group of people, however, they were spared.

According to GD Khosla, they were quite fortunate to have survived, as one of the other convoys of non-Muslims was not spared on this very track two months later.

“On October 23rd, a large batch of non-Muslim refugees left Sialkot by train. The track beyond Jassar was out of order and the District Liaison Officer, Sialkot, informed the Deputy Commissioner that it was inadvisable to send refugees by this train, as they would have to leave the train and continue the journey on foot through territory in control of Muslim hooligans. The convoy had proceeded for half a mile, when it was attacked by a large mob of armed Muslims who had been hiding in the sugarcane fields. The attack continued for two hours and refugees ran in all directions to save themselves... The entire property of the refugees was looted and many of them reached the Indian border deprived even of the clothes they had been wearing... A military officer who flew over the place where the attack took place saw the whole area littered with rags and dead bodies”.

Hundal visited Pakistan thrice in the post-partition era in 1986, 1994 and 1998.

In 1986, since he was a government servant, he went as an observer of the Indian Government along with a group of Sikh pilgrims to ensure they did not have any problem. However, he managed to meet his aunt and uncle by sending some one to their village. This person got them to Nankana Sahib. Interestingly, the individual whom Hundal sent happened to be a Christian convert originally from a Sikh family.

In 1994, Hundal visited Pakistan as a liaison officer. His aunt had died, but his uncle was still alive. During this visit, he paid obeisance at all Sikh shrines.

In 1998, he went as part of a delegation from Indo-Pak Parivar Milap Trust—headed by late Colonel Partap Singh Gill – which aims to reunite separated families. Arjun Singh, one of the members of the trust, was a good friend of Nawaz Sharif's father as they were from the same village, and the delegation was looked after by the latter.

Hundal made some interesting observations based on his personal experiences, but also about their interaction with Nawaz Sharif, where he evinced his attachment for his native village.

Firstly, Sharif was extremely warm with the delegation. Once Hundal told him the name of his ancestral village, Sharif called his protocol officer and told him to make arrangements for Hundal's visit to his village. During the visit to his village, Hundal was given a warm welcome by Chowdhary Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the resident of his erstwhile home. Khan had migrated from Ambala during Partition. Only two of his classmates, Raj Masih and Muhammad Sadique, were still alive.

Hundal also got a chance to meet his cousins, one who was referred to as Darshan Singh and became Lal Din while the ones born post-partition were called Liaqat Ali and Suba Khan.

Hundal was also struck by Nawaz Sharif's attachment to Punjab in general and his ancestral village in particular—this is a common sentiment in Jatti Umra and prevalent amongst many other Punjabis. This makes an interesting case study of Nawaz Sharif's attachment with his pushtaini place.

The Sharif family's links with Jatti Umra have carried on due to his father who kept in touch with many families from the village, even though he was born pre-partition. His father visited his village in 1982 and he has helped many youth from the village to go to Saudi Arabia.

In 1999, the Indian delegation headed by Prime Minister Vajpayee had taken the soil of Jatti Umra village as a gift for Nawaz Sharif. Sharif could not hide his emotions when he received the gift.

Last year, Hundal's brother, Surjit Singh, visited Sialkot and got a chance to meet his relatives. Hundal is still in touch with Muhammed Sadiq and in fact, exchanges letters and occasionally receives telephone calls from them. Hundal is keen to reunite separated families.

## Shaukat Ali Awan: Son of a Compassionate policeman

Chief Meteorologist Shaukat Ali Awan was born in 1948, just a year after the Partition of the subcontinent. He belongs to Sargodha and makes an interesting case study for two reasons. One, his father helped non-Muslims escape safely to East Punjab. Two, Awan got a chance to meet the Sikh leader, Master Tara Singh, around sixteen years after Partition. During this meeting, Singh could not control his emotions, so he hugged Awan's father after learning he had rescued non-Muslims.

Talking about his father and the duty assigned to him, Awan says:

‘During Partition, my father, Malik Ghazanfar Awan, was a sub-inspector in the police department of the United Punjab Government. At that time, he was 32 years old. On June 3rd 1947, after the announcement of the division of India by the Government,

time given to them, and conditions were not in their favour, and that is why they did not have the proper preparation or security to be in motion to go to their new home, where they had never lived before”

Commenting on their predicament, he says, “One can imagine how hard it must have been for those families who were forced to leave their homes. Sikh and Hindu women were crying with expressions of grief on their faces”.

Awan also makes the point that most of these immigrants took it for granted that they would return to their homes. He then goes on to narrate the episode of his father rescuing a bus full of non-Muslims from being attacked by hoodlums,

“Some criminals of the area wanted to slaughter non-Muslims migrating to India. A bunch of hoodlums attacked

the fact that a Muslim policeman saved them was a silver lining. Finally, when they left Sargodha with a heavy heart, Inspector Ghazanfer Awan's kindness was something they would never forget.

Awan narrates another interesting incident—his meeting with Master Tara Singh in 1964. Says Awan:

“When I was 16 years old, I got a chance to meet the Sikh leader Master Tara Singh during his visit to Sheikhpura. In those days, my father was a district inspector of Sheikhpura. He was in charge of the security of Master Tara Singh. When my father told Singh of how he protected a busload of Sikhs from Muslim hoodlums, Master Tara Singh thanked him for his kindness on behalf of the whole community. He could not control his emotions and hugged him”.

**“The vast majority thought that this trauma was something temporary and they were not leaving for good; they were leaving with a hope that one day they would be able to come back home to Sargodha.”**

riots spread all over the Punjab, and criminal elements started looting and killing innocents. In the pre-partition period, a composite population in Sargodha consisted of Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus. My father got an order from the police department to make appropriate arrangements for the maintenance of law and order. Seeing the rising communal tensions like in the parts of West Punjab, Sikhs and Hindus also started migrating from there. They were leaving West Punjab to reach East Punjab, India”.

Commenting on the overall scenario prevalent in Sargodha at that time, Awan says:

‘The monsoon season was on, and there was heavy rain in the area. But Sikh and Hindu families were forced to migrate even in that rainy season. Some families had umbrellas but most of them were without one. They were leaving their homes with a feeling of pain and anguish. Both the

a group of Sikhs who were on a bus. Those unlawful elements managed to stop the bus. They were about to attack the Sikh families who were sitting in the bus. Luckily, at that point of time, my father, Malik Ghazanfer reached the spot with his subordinates. They (the police) opened fire in the air, causing fear among the hoodlums. Malik and his team forced them to run, which helped the bus to depart without any looting or killing and ensured the safe journey of these families”.

Under police protection, Sikh families were able to reach the army camps safe and sound. The in-charge of the local Gurdwara of Sargodha gave his father a wall clock and a gun as a reward for his compassion and kindness. Later, Sikh families thanked Inspector Ghazanfer Awan and his police team for saving their lives. The Sikh families were leaving their homes with great sorrow, but

During his visits to India, he visited New Delhi, Agra and many historical places associated with Mughal rule. He paid tribute of Zairat at the Dargah of great Saints Hazrat Nizam-ud-din Aulia, Hazrat Khawaja Qutb-ud-Din Bakhtiyar Kaki, and Hazrat Ameer Khusro. He also wants to visit the Dargah of the Hazrat Khawaja Moin-ud-din Chishti in Ajmer Sharif, the Dargah of Hazrat Mujaddid Alif Sani, Ludhiana and some other mazars (mausoleum) of Sufi saints.

He further says, “Being in India is like being in one's second home; partition cannot overshadow the common cultural and social heritage—particularly of the Punjabs.”

Awan is a strong believer of Sufism and strongly believes that:

“We Muslims, Sikhs, and Hindus should follow the teachings of the Great Sufi saints so that peace, love, and harmony can spread in the region.”

# Lohgarh: Symbol of Courage

## Pushpindar Singh

After the victory of Sarhind and surrounding territories, the matter before Banda Singh was the location for his military headquarters (not the capital of the state) which should be strong, protective, invincible and out of sight from the enemy. The choice fell on the fort of Mukhlispur, as a base depot for his future military operations. Mukhlispur had been occupied after the conquest of Sadhaura.

The fort of Mukhlispur had been built by Mukhlis Khan under instruction from Emperor Shah Jahan who occasionally spent his summers there. This was a strong hill fort, about half way between the towns of Sadhaura and Nahan (about nine kos from Sahaura), within the boundary of the village of Amuwal, among the steep slopes of the Himalayas on an elevated summit, which could be approached only through craggy rocks and ravines. It was surrounded by two rivulets, Pamuwali and Daskawali Khols, or Khuds, which originally formed only one stream, parting into two to embrace the hillock of the fort.

The fort was in a most neglected condition when Banda Singh occupied it, but was soon repaired and given the new name of Lohgarh, "Iron Fortress". The treasures of Sarhind, the material of various expeditions, tribute and revenue from the conquered territories were stored here, and Sikhs from various areas, trans and cis-Sutlej, now flocked to Banda's standard in much larger numbers and swelled the ranks of his volunteer-soldiers, some dedicated to the noble cause of the holy war, while others were surely attracted by the prospect of wealth and position under the rapidly rising power of their co-religionists. Banda Bahadur had friendly relations with the ruler of Nahan. Nahan was in the rear of Mukhlispur and thus the place

chosen by Banda Singh Bahadur for the headquarters was ideal from the strategic point of view. Location of the fort seems to have been determined not only by the strength of the place, of which there is no doubt, but it was also taken as firm base for future expeditions. According to Khazan Singh, Banda Singh fortified and provided Lohgarh with immense stores of war.

Sadhaura fort was strengthened with an extra wall and a moat, and the Lohgarh fortress (the entire area covered with water streams and forests) was also strengthened. Lohgarh is located on a straight mountain cliff about 700 ft above the ground on the border of a thick, extensive jungle area (which even after three centuries remains a reserved forest with virtually no habitation). Banda Singh Bahadur successfully used Lohgarh as a tactical retreat or rearguard action stage, when his forces could not withhold the onslaught of Mughal armies at Sadhaura. When the combined Mughal forces, along with mercenary Rajputs and Jats, heavily outnumbered his forces and further fighting was suicidal, he would tactically withdraw his forces to Lohgarh, and after rearguard actions to stall the enemy forces, would move into the forests beyond Lohgarh. Such tactics were successfully employed in both the battles of Lohgarh in 1710 A.D. and 1713 A.D. The situation on ground clearly establishes this. The last few kilometres do not have even a cart road to the fortress and the surrounding area is totally unsuited for habitation. There are remains of fortifications for rearguard action around the fortress which would have engaged advance by enemy suicide squads.

The Sikhs from Thanesar and Sarhind had retreated towards Lohgarh when

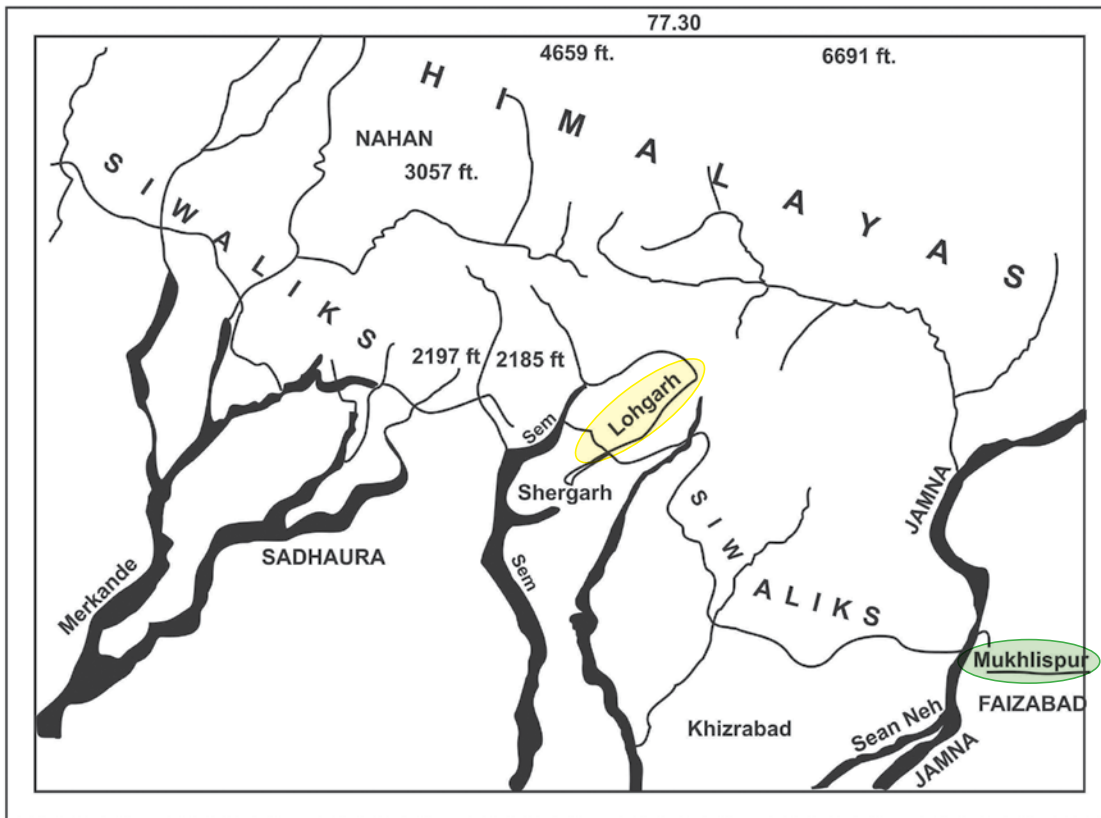
Bahadur Shah arrived at Sadhaura on 4 December 1710. Banda Singh Bahadur had also come there to strengthen his fortifications. In the royal camp it was rumoured that Banda Singh Bahadur was a "most powerful magician, greater even than the one who made a calf to talk, he could turn a bullet from its course and could work such spells that spear and sword had little or no effect upon his followers". Owing to these idle rumours the Emperor and the nobles and the soldiers were much disturbed mentally and were disheartened and some even terror-stricken.

On 4 December 1710, a strong Mughal force under Rustamdil Khan advanced from its base at Sadhaura towards Lohgarh to examine the position of Banda's defences. At a distance of 5 km they were suddenly attacked by Banda Singh's troops. Khafi Khan writes: "It is impossible for me to describe the fight which followed. The Sikhs in their faqir dress struck terror into the royal troops. The number of dead and dying of the imperialists was so large that, for a time, it seemed they were losing ground. A nephew of Firoz Khan Mewati was killed and his son wounded". In this battle Banda Singh Bahadur lost fifteen hundred Sikhs and two sardars. This battle was fought on 5 December 1710, when Banda Singh Bahadur cut off convoys and other detachments and killed two or three Faujdars. Then it rained for four or five days and the weather became very cold. Thousands of soldiers of the imperial force fell ill and many horses died. Their stench was unbearable. The soldiers attributed this calamity to the sorcery of Banda Singh Bahadur!

Another big contingent under the command of the Emperor's son, Prince Rafi-us-Shan, was then ordered to reinforce Rustamdil Khan. Kanwar

## LOHGARH AND ITS VICINITY

### Sikh Resistance, 1710



a desperate charge of cutting through the enemy. At 3 o'clock in the morning of 11 December 1710, a hollow trunk of a big tamarind tree lying in the lower parts of the hill was filled with gun powder. Just as the gun powder in the tree trunk was ignited, the guns in the fort fired simultaneously. Banda Singh and his men got through in the great confusion prevailing in the Mughal camp, and safely into the Sirmaur hills towards the mountains of the *Barfi Raja of Nahans*.

At sunrise on 11 December 1710 the imperial forces began their final assault on the fort. Gulab Singh

and thirty of his wounded soldiers and a number of women and children of the neighbouring village who had taken shelter in the Sikh fort, were taken prisoner along with some horses and camels, five elephants, three big guns, seventeen light guns, a few muskets and swords, a canopy with silver poles, gold and silver coins worth eight lakhs of rupees and from the underground, gold coins to the value of twenty lakhs of rupees.

There were great rejoicings in the imperial camp. On 12 December 1710, a 'grand durbar was held and various honours conferred on all the commanders. In the evening however it was discovered that the real Banda Singh Bahadur had escaped and that it was an impersonator who had been captured. According to Khafi Khan, "the hawk had flown and an owl had been caught".

The Emperor summoned Prime Minister Munim Khan and administered to him a sharp rebuke, the Wazir taking the insult to heart, falling ill and dying two months later.

Khan in his *Tazkirat-ul-Salatin* writes: "This humble person was then present with the troops of Prince Rafi-us-Shan and saw with his own eyes that everyone of the cursed Sikhs came out of the entrenchments, challenged the imperial troops and after great struggle and trial, fell under the swords of the Ghazis". With the setting of the sun, they retreated towards the eastern mountains and fell back upon the fort of Lohgarh. Rustamdil Khan was then raised to the title of Ghazi Khan Rustam-e-Jang, with 4,000 Zat and 3,000 Sawar.

Rustamdil Khan made a further advance of 4 km and reached the stream of Som. From there the fort of Lohgarh was visible, perched on the top of a hill. Between the stream Som and Lohgarh lay a dense forest. There were frightful sounds, at night. The imperial camp arrived there on 9 December 1710. The Prime Minister Munim Khan and his son Mohabat Khan were assigned duty to guard the royal camp. The following day, on 10 December 1710, the imperial army, some 60,000 strong, pushed forward

in battle array so as to surround the fort of Lohgarh from all sides. Wazir Munim Khan, his son Mahabat Khan and Chhatarsal Bundela were in charge of the right wing. Udet Singh Bundela and Churaman Jat commanded the left wing. Rustamdil Khan was in the centre but when they reached within range of the Sikh guns, they were heavily shelled. The Mughal troops entered the trenches at the foot of the hill. The Sikhs fought hard, and the survivors retreated up the hill even as a large number of Mughal troops were being killed.

The fort of Lohgarh was actually quite small. There was no space for storing large quantities of grain and fodder. Their supplies had run short. One Diwan Hardayal, a prominent figure in the royal camp, an admirer of the Sat Guru, helped Banda Singh Bahadur with provisions as far as he could, but this could no longer suffice.

The besieged were also said to have eaten their horses and other beasts of burden to appease their hunger. The last hope now left to the Sikhs was



### Remnants of Lohgarh Fort

The Sikhs made fifty two defensive entrenchments around the Lohgarh fort. These entrenchments with small supporting walls were made in a manner that each supported the other. Enemy forces moving up the hillock to the fort received deadly fire throughout their advance, from every entrenchment. The fear of Sikhs kept the Mughal commanders and their forces long at bay. Remains of the fort still exist in the forest area. Lohgarh was the Khalsa Raj's headquarters whereas Mukhlispur was the 'capital city'.







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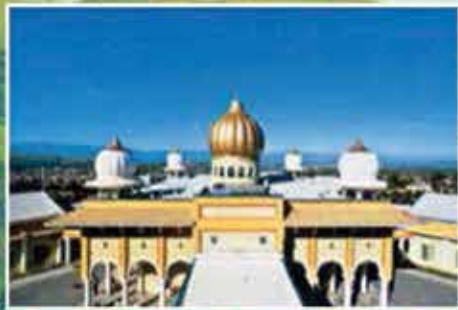
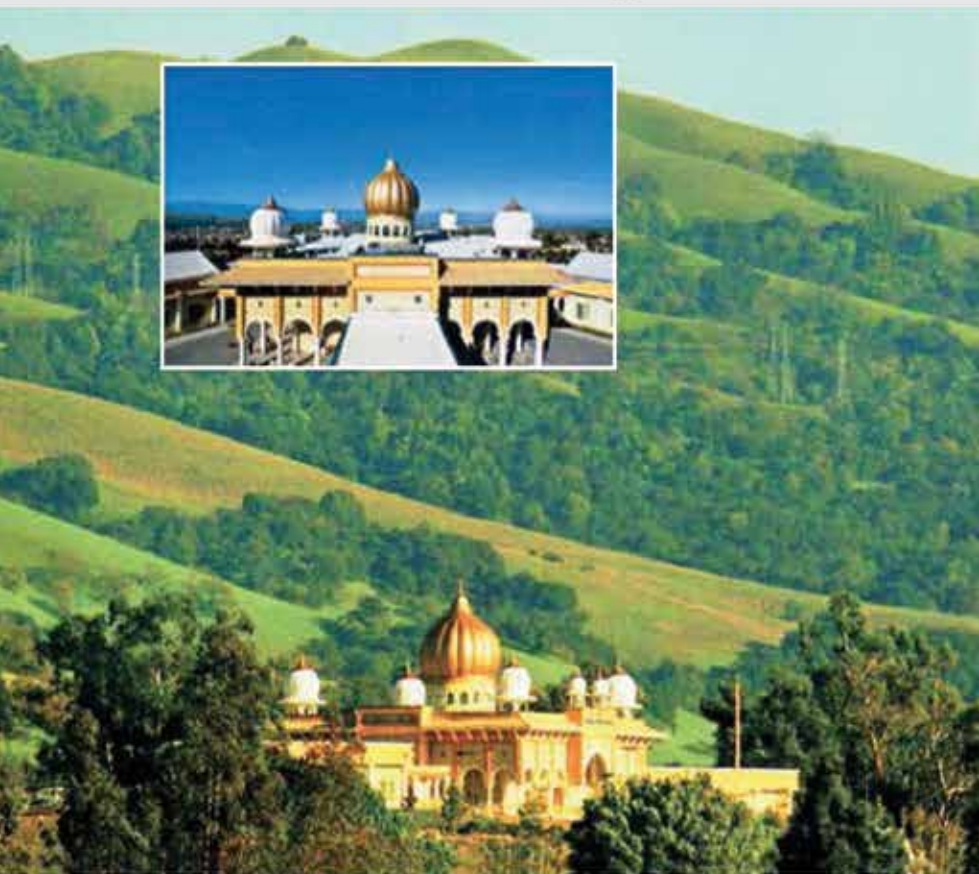
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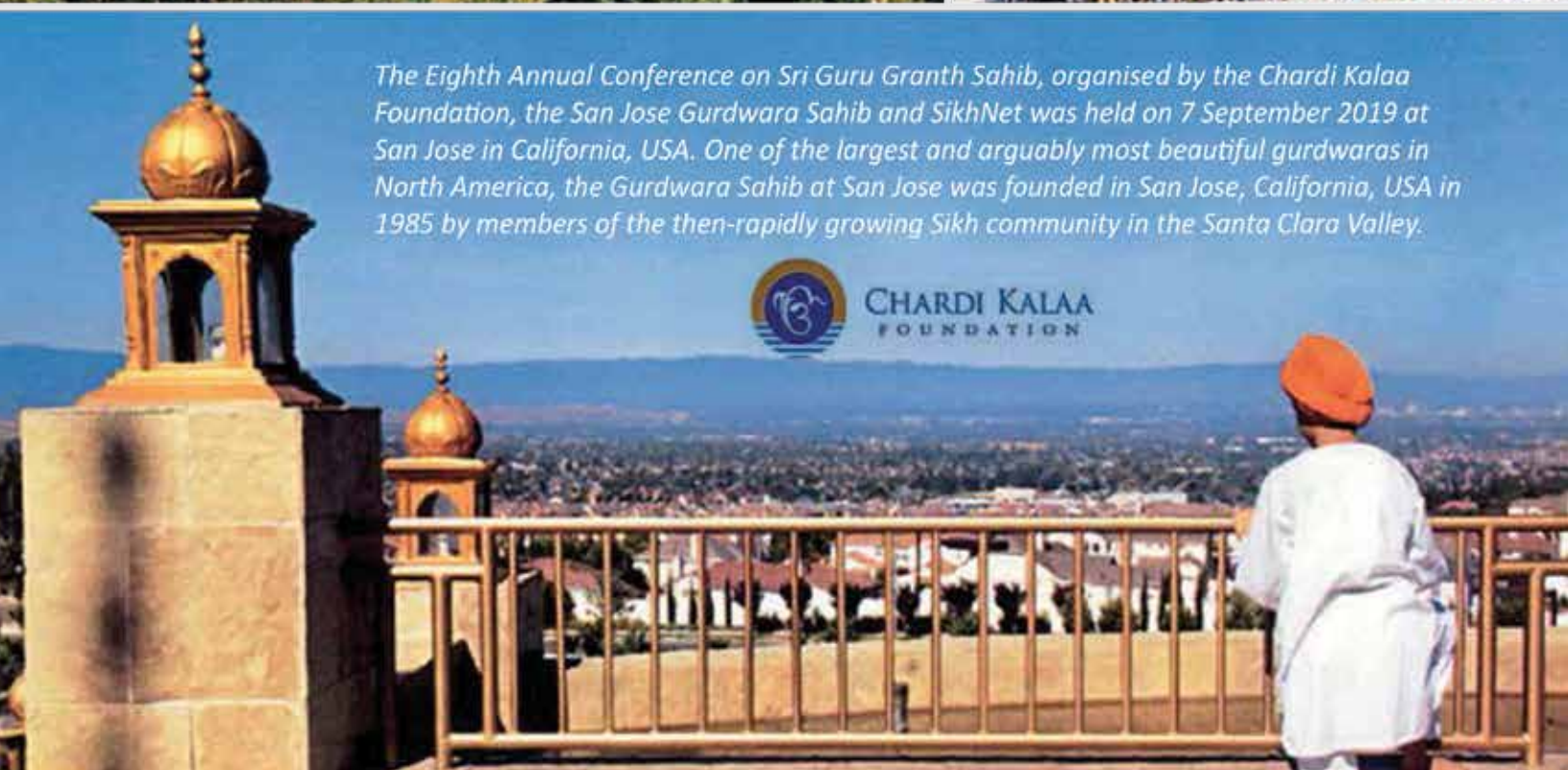
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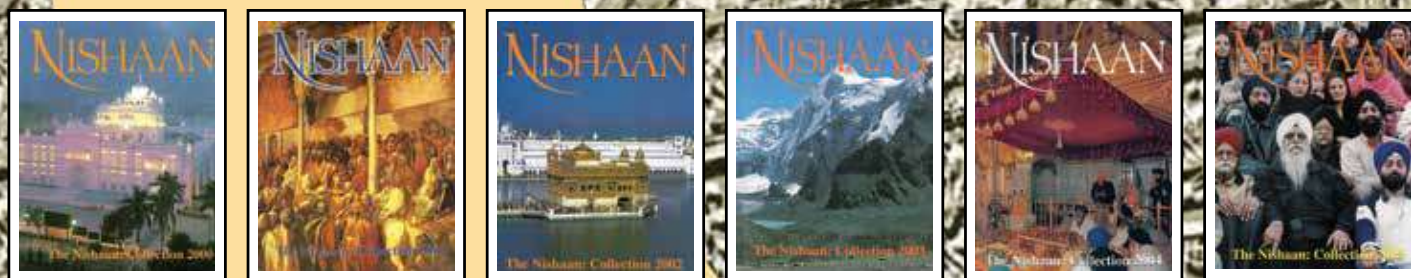


*The Eighth Annual Conference on Sri Guru Granth Sahib, organised by the Chardi Kalaa Foundation, the San Jose Gurdwara Sahib and SikhNet was held on 7 September 2019 at San Jose in California, USA. One of the largest and arguably most beautiful gurdwaras in North America, the Gurdwara Sahib at San Jose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

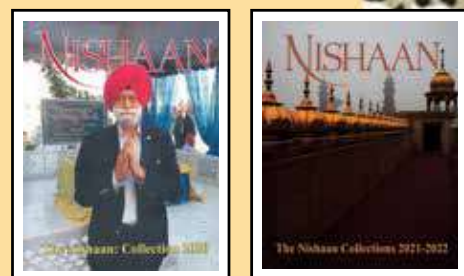
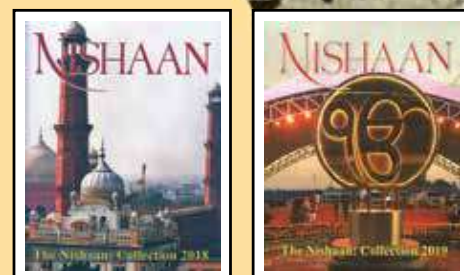


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